

TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES

May 24, 2012

MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Councillor Reg Rankin, Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts, Vice-Chair
Councillor David Hendsbee
Councillor Darren Fisher
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal
Councillor Debbie Hum
Councillor Bob Harvey

OTHERS

PRESENT:

Councillor Tim Outhit
Councillor Peter Lund

REGRETS:

Councillor Jackie Barkhouse

STAFF:

Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation & Public Works
Ms. Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 26, 2012

Councillor Watts made an amendment to her comments on page 6 of the April 26, 2012 minutes.

MOVED by Councillor Fisher, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal, that the Transportation Standing Committee minutes of April 26, 2012 be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

Additions:

9.1 Hammonds Plains Road Improvements (information report)

The Committee agreed to move item 9.1 to follow the presentation item 4.3.1.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Hum, that the order of business be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Correspondence

4.1.1 Correspondence from HRM Medallion Agency dated May 11, 2012

Correspondence from the HRM Medallion Agency dated May 11, 2012 was before the Committee.

The Chair indicated he had spoken with Mr. Kevin Hindle, Regional Coordinator, Taxi, Limousine & License Standards, regarding to this correspondence. Mr. Hindle indicated that he will incorporate this correspondence into the report he is preparing with regard to the presentation by the Agency at the last Transportation Standing Committee meeting. The Chair noted a report from 2008 relating to this matter that will also be addressed in the forthcoming report.

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Harvey, that the Transportation Standing Committee table the correspondence from the HRM Medallion Agency dated May 11, 2012. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4.2 Petitions - None

4.3 Presentations

4.3.1 MusGo Rider Cooperative Ltd. – Eastern Shore Community Transit Service

Ms. Lucie Quigley, General Manager, MusGo Rider, presented an overview of the MusGo Rider Cooperative Ltd. to the Committee. A copy of Ms. Quigley's presentation is on file.

Ms. Quigley concluded her presentation with the following request for:

- Support to obtain vehicle financing from the Credit Union for the financing of a bus;
- \$10,000 to offset operating costs (and consideration of using Councillor's discretionary funds for this);
- HRM's commitment to prioritize rural transportation concerns.

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the Transportation Standing Committee ask for a staff report discussing the three following requests made by MusGo Rider during the May 24, 2012 presentation:

- 1. For HRM to assist MusGo Rider with obtaining vehicle financing for the bus from the Credit Union, where they will utilize a Provincial program of small business loans for Social Enterprises;**
- 2. For \$10,000 in financial support from HRM to offset MusGo Rider operating costs, possibly through Councillors' district capital funds;**
- 3. For support and commitment from HRM to prioritize rural transportation concerns.**

Ms. Quigley responded to questions of clarification from members at this time, noting the following:

- If MusGo Rider is not able to purchase a van outright, they may be able to finance a vehicle through the provincial small business loans for social enterprise program;
- There is an annual membership fee of \$25/year, although this is not required to use the service, and the service would be open to everyone for a flat rate of \$5 one way.

Members noted support for the initiative, and requested that Ms. Quigley provide staff with a business plan and financial information.

At the request of the Committee, Ms. Quigley indicated that they were hoping to have the service established by early summer, to keep the support of the community and avoid losing provincial funding.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9.1 Hammonds Plains Road Improvements (information report)

An information report dated April 20, 2012 was before the Committee.

Councillor Harvey reviewed that the report outlines that Hammonds Plains Road does not fully meet HRM red book standards in five areas:

- Travel lanes are too narrow
- Paved shoulder is too narrow
- Gravel shoulder is too narrow
- Ditch slopes are too steep
- Vertical curves are too short (blind crests)

Councillor Harvey commented on the petition seeking redress of these issues signed by 2400 people. The report suggests undertaking an "Intermediate" cross section plan.

MOVED by Councillor Harvey, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee, that the Transportation Standing Committee endorse the "Hammonds Plains Road Improvements" report dated April 20, 2012, which discusses the upgrading of the Hammonds Plains Road from the intersection of the Kearney Lake Road to Westward Boulevard from the existing configuration to the "intermediate road standard"; and that this upgrading shall be included in the five year budgetary planning process such that the upgrades be completed within the next five fiscal years.

The Committee discussed the transfer of ownership of Hammonds Plains Road from the province to HRM, and the state of the road at that time.

Mr. Ken Reashor, Director, Transportation and Public Works, commented on the agreement at that time, and additional attempts to garner additional funding from the province for roadway improvements, which was refused.

At the request of Councillor Watts, Mr. Reashor clarified that a minimum 1.5 metre bike lane would be included in the intermediate plan.

At the request of Councillor Hum, Mr. Reashor indicated that this will be coming back to Council with the capital plan, with this project included.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Harvey left the meeting at 2:10 p.m.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - None

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – None

7. REPORTS

7.1 STAFF - None

7.2 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

7.2.1 Councillor Watts – Update on Commuter Rail Feasibility Study

The Committee agreed to allow Councillors Outhit and Lund to speak on this item.

Councillor Watts commented that she would like an update on the status of discussions with CN on this matter.

Ms. Patricia Hughes, Supervisor, Planning, Metro Transit, updated that the study has not progressed. She noted that HRM staff have not been able to obtain the agreement of CN to be involved in the study because of ongoing litigation between CN and HRM. CN have indicated they are not willing to be involved in the study until the litigation is resolved. CN owns the land and the infrastructure and their insight into operations and technical aspects are imperative to the study.

Councillor Outhit inquired whether there could be a funding opportunity for commuter rail through the provincial NSTRIP program. He noted participation from CN is crucial, and it is unfortunate that HRM and CN could not use this as an opportunity to get together and talk about the potential for commuter rail as a transportation solution for HRM.

Councillor Lund commented that litigation may take a long time and inquired whether there is an alternate plan. He suggested talking to Via Rail or other passenger providers in Canada.

Ms. Hughes clarified that the land and infrastructure needed would be owned by CN, and Via Rail would only be an operator. She noted that the study would benefit from having CN involved early and without a commitment for involvement from them, any work undertaken would be at HRM's risk.

The Committee discussed writing to federal ministers and Via Rail to gain support.

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Hum, that the Transportation Standing Committee request that Regional Council write to the Honourable Steven John Fletcher, Minister of State (Transportation) asking him

to encourage the establishment of a commuter rail service in HRM for the Halifax-Bedford-Sackville corridor.

Councillor Watts requested that, due to the lack of certainty with CN's involvement in the study, that this item come back to the next Transportation Standing Committee meeting to discuss the issue further with staff as to whether there is a partnership opportunity with Via Rail.

MOTION WITHDRAWN.

This matter will be deferred to the next meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee.

7.2.2 Councillor Hum - Truck Route Traffic on Kearney Lake Road

A Councillor request for information form from Councillor Hum was before the Committee.

Councillor Hum spoke of the traffic and safety concerns with regard to truck traffic on Kearney Lake Road.

MOVED by Councillor Hum, seconded by Councillor Watts, that the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report to consider further restricting or eliminating Kearney Lake Road as a truck route (allowing local traffic only) with consideration to seek alternative route(s) for truck traffic, particularly in the area of the Highway 102/Exit 2 ramps, southerly to Kearney Lake Road and the Bedford Highway.

The Committee discussed options such as restricting the time frame for truck traffic, and that this would require enforcement from the Department of Transportation.

Councillor Hum clarified that she is not asking to have truck traffic removed from Kearney Lake Road, but options addressed to improve truck traffic and safety issues.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

7.3 MATTERS REFERRED FROM REGIONAL COUNCIL - None

7.4 MATTERS REFERRED FROM STANDING COMMITTEES - None

7.5 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7.5.1 Update from Councillor Watts (verbal)

Councillor Watts updated that the Committee have been looking at feedback on the corridor study and looking at a new model of bike boulevards and traffic calming

corridors used elsewhere. The Committee will be involved in the Active Transportation plan review and the Centre Plan. She further noted that Bike Week starts tomorrow.

7.6 ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7.6.1 Update from Councillor Blumenthal (verbal)

Councillor Blumenthal updated that the Committee continue to work with Planning and Infrastructure staff to ensure HRM owned and operated buildings are accessible. He also noted that the Committee is hosting a Town Hall meeting on Accessibility on June 20th at 5:30 p.m. at the Bloomfield Centre.

8. MOTIONS

8.1 Councillor Watts

“To request a staff report on options for increasing funding of transit services, including looking at partnerships and how other municipalities fund transit services.”

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee, that the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report on options for increasing funding of transit services, including looking at partnerships and how other municipalities fund transit services.

Councillor Watts noted that she would like to see more creative solutions to funding for Metro Transit and this report will allow for a full discussion by the Committee.

Councillor Hendsbee suggested that transit should receive federal and provincial funding. He also suggested a ticket levy on Metro Centre or Halifax Commons concerts, that would give purchasers free access to Metro Transit transportation FOR the events, and also provide extra funds for transit services.

Councillor Fisher inquired whether the National Transit Strategy presents any opportunities for increased funding.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9. ADDED ITEMS

9.1 Hammonds Plains Road Improvements (information report)

This item was moved earlier in the agenda. See page 5.

10. NOTICES OF MOTION - None

11. NEXT MEETING – Thursday, June 28, 2012

It was noted that June 28th is a high school graduation day, and many members of Council have commitments that day. The Committee agreed to move the meeting to Thursday, July 5, 2012.

It was noted that the remainder of the meetings for 2012 will be held at the Dartmouth Council Chamber at 90 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth (waterside entrance) due to exterior construction on the Barrington Street side of Halifax City Hall.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

Jennifer Weagle
Legislative Assistant

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Transit Stop Annunciation – Information Report dated April 13, 2012
2. Hammonds Plains Road Improvements – Information Report dated April 20, 2012
3. NSTRIP – Grant Application – Information Report dated May 9, 2012