

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
MINUTES**

**February 18, 2008**

**PRESENT:**                   **Ms. Helen McFadyen, Chair**  
**Mr. Gary Russell, Vice-Chair**  
**Ms. Mary Newcombe**  
**Ms. Rebecca King**  
**Ms. Helen Cianfaglione**  
**Ms. Sanaz Gerami**  
**Mr. Tom Boyd**  
**Councillor Patrick Murphy**

**ABSENT:**                   **Ms. Joanne Coffey (with regrets)**  
**Mr. Alan Farquhar**  
**Councillor Mary Wile**

**STAFF:**                   **Superintendent Cliff Falkenham, HRP**  
**Ms. Sandra T. Riley, Legislative Assistant**

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Ms. Helen McFadyen, Chair, in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

2. **INTRODUCTIONS**

Ms. McFadyen asked members of the committee to announce their presence for the benefit of visually impaired members. She also requested each person identify her/himself, audibly, when making a motion or voting, for clarification.

3. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

It was noted that Kevin Bulley's name should be removed from 'Regrets' list.

**MOVED by Mr. Russell, seconded by Councillor Murphy that the minutes from January 21, 2008 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

4. **APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

4.1 **Guide and Service Dog Run for HRM - Proposal**

4.2 **Request for Metro Transit to announce all major and requested stops along bus routes**

4.3 **Curb-Cuts - Snowplowing and Sidewalk Corners.**

**MOVED by Ms. Newcombe, seconded by Councillor Murphy that the order of business, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

5. **REPORTS**

5.1 **Todd Hacquoil "Metro Transit - Low Floor Bus Service" presentation.**

Mr. Todd Hacquoil, a member of the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee; Chairperson of the Low Floor Bus Committee, gave a presentation on Metro Transit's Accessible Transportation along with a seven-page handout. He explained six abbreviated terms used in his presentation as follows:

- LFB - Low Floor Bus
- ALF - Accessible Low Floor Bus/Low Floor Bus on an Accessible Route

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- ALF Bus Route - A bus route that has been set up as an Accessible Route
- ALF Stop - An accessible bus stop on an ALF Bus Route
- AAB - Access-A-Bus
- ATAC - Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee.

Mr. Hacquoil informed the Committee that Metro Transit presently has 270 buses. He advised that 64 are short buses with stairs; 14 are articulated buses; and three Community Transit buses. That amounts to 81 buses that are not wheelchair accessible. The remainder are wheelchair accessible, with 145 of them being LFBs. He added that there are 20 Metro Link Buses that are ALF, and 24 Access-A-Buses. He further advised this means that 70% of the Metro Transit fleet are in one form or another wheelchair accessible. The Halifax/Dartmouth and the Halifax/Woodside ferries are also fully accessible.

Mr. Hacquoil described some of the assets of the Low Floor Buses :

- There are no stairs at either the front or the middle doors
- There is room for two wheelchairs on each bus
- These buses have the ability to 'kneel' or lower the height
- A foldout wheelchair ramp is located at the front doors

Metro Transit identifies its ALF routes with the international symbol of accessibility (a wheelchair within a blue square) that appear in the Metro Transit Riders Guide, on the Metro Transit bus stop signs, and on all route maps. Currently, there are 16 ALF bus routes as indicated below with the route number and destination:

3	Manors	53 Notting Park
6	Quinpool	54 Montebello
7	Robie	56 Dartmouth Crossing
9	Barrington	61 Auburn/North Preston
14	Leiblin Park	66 Penhorn
15	Purcell's Cove	77 Portland Hills
16	Parkland	87 Downsview
51	Shannon	88 Duke - Sackville

MetroLink Routes:

159 Portland Hills                      165 Woodside Ferry 185 Sackville Link

Mr. Hacquoil explained that there are many considerations before a regular transit route can be changed to an ALF bus route which include the following:

- Ridership - If the current route is already running at full capacity there is no room for a wheelchair.
- The type of bus servicing the route. Regular Transit buses with stairs carries 47 passengers with additional standing room. Articulated buses hold 78 passengers with

- additional standing room.
- A Low Floor Bus carries 36 passengers. Additional buses and drivers would be needed to service the same route.
- Infrastructure:
  - Sidewalks - A street with sidewalks on one side will have ALF stops on that side of the street only.
  - Landing pads - Landing pads would be needed at the bus stops for the ramps to deploy. The cost of putting in landing pads ranges from a few hundred to as much as ten thousand dollars.

Mr. Hacquoil added that some bus routes have as few as 15 stops while others have over 200 stops. He pointed out that most streets have stops on both sides. He stated that HRM has 2300 bus stops in total, while only 25% are currently accessible. He advised that there are many LFBs in Metro Transit right now due to the Americans With Disabilities Act; which resulted in these being the only types of buses now manufactured.

Mr. Hacquoil continued with his presentation addressing the following questions outlined in his handout:

- Why can't I get my wheelchair on a LFB that is servicing a non ALF Bus Route?
- What are the requirements to using ALF?
- What are the advantages to using ALF over AAB?
- Can I use both AAB and ALF?
- Will I ever be forced to use ALF if I am an AAB user?
- What are some people's concerns about using ALF?
- What is coming in the future to Metro Transit?

Mr. Hacquoil added comments on the recent changes and problems faced by AAB. He added that there are 50 -75 new applications per month with many ending up on a waiting list.

Ms. McFadyen enquired as to whether there were any statistics to identify how many are using the ALF system daily. Mr. Hacquoil responded that there was a questionnaire and Mr. Russell added that he would bring a copy of the statistics for the next Advisory Committee for Person's With Disabilities' meeting.

Mr. Boyd enquired about tie-downs on the accessible buses and concerns regarding snow removal. Mr. Hacquoil demonstrated how the tie-downs would work on the buses and the fact that the driver would secure the chair. He also pointed out that there is a two-ring system in place which alerts the driver a person with disabilities is requesting the next stop. Regarding snow removal, the response was that Metro Transit is responsible for this snow clearing around bus stops and Halifax Water Commission is responsible for clearing around hydrants.

Mr. Hacquoil closed his presentation and question period by offering his contact information if any other concerns should arise. **39:06**

**5.2. Minutes of January 27, 2008 Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee meeting - submitted by Mr. Gary Russell, Vice-Chair ACPD, Chairperson ATAC**

Mr. Russell advised that in the meeting of January 21, 2008, the Chair requested information regarding the voice activation service on Metro Transit buses and who would be the representative to contact. He advised that Ms. Erin Flaim is the new Supervisor in charge of Access-a-Bus and conventional Transit. He read from the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee meeting minutes of January 23, 2008, item number 15 - Voice Stop Notification, Metro Transit. Item 15 read as follows:

“It was brought to the attention of the Committee that a new service is being provided by some Transit companies whereby certain landmarks or streets are announced when travelling on buses to assist visually impaired passengers. Erin stated that at this time, this is not something Metro Transit is looking at but perhaps could in the future. “

Mr. Russell advised that the voice notification will not happen until the budget has improved.

Ms. MacFadyen suggested that the Committee get involved and have other organizations make recommendations on this issue and organize training in terms of how to deal with passengers who have disabilities.

Mr. Russell advised that these issues were raised to Metro Transit last year and that the hierarchy are aware. He stated that it has been sent to Legal, however there are no plans in the coming year to do that.

Ms. McFadyen stated she would like to see more consistency and commitment from Transit. She suggested a target date should be identified and a financial examination of what it would cost should be undergone. Mr. Russell advised that it would probably be done after budget negotiations in the Fall of 2009.

**MOVED by Ms. Newcombe, seconded by Councillor Murphy, that the Advisory Committee for Persons With Disabilities will send a request to have Lori Patterson, the acting Manager of Metro Transit, attend a meeting. The Chair, Ms. McFadyen, will submit the request. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**5.3 Report to Mayor Kelly and Council Members, submitted by Chair, Helen McFadyen, re: Hybrid Automobiles**

Ms McFadyen submitted a report to the Mayor and Council regarding hybrid automobiles along with other correspondence. The Committee is awaiting a response.

**6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS None**

7. **CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS**

7.1 **Letter from Chair to Mr. Denis Huck, Manager, Transportation and Public Works, Municipal Operations re: curb cuts**

Mr. Gordon Hayward, Winterworks Superintendent, Transportation and Public Works, Municipal Operations, came to address the Committee in place of Mr. Denis Huck. Mr. Hayward pointed out some of the challenges that present themselves in terms of snow removal. He advised some times there is very little window of opportunity to have snow removed between rain, snow, freezing rain, and other winter weather. There is not always time for detailed removal before it hardens. He stated that a lot of the problems that are created can only be corrected through hand work as machines cannot get everything when it comes to curb cuts. He asserted that when snow freezes and turns to ice it is more difficult to deal with.

He stated that the Transportation and Public Works, Municipal Operations clears the main arterial and Transit routes on the Peninsula and Spryfield; Districts 10, 15, 16, Bedford, Sackville, Dartmouth, Cole Harbour, Eastern Passage, as well as clears all sidewalks in the same areas. He advised that this leaves a number of intersections on the Peninsula that are still the responsibility of the residents and they must be cleared within 72 hours of a storm. He clarified further that Service Standards on the main arterial routes are 12 hours following the end of a snow fall; transit routes -18 hours following; residential sidewalks - 36 hours following the snow fall.

Mr. Boyd expressed a few concerns regarding the curb cuts including the fact that the cuts are often wide enough for wheelchairs but there is a hump between right angles. He stated that he noticed that the new cuts have a sweep and are avoiding that hump. He inquired as to whether this would be the common practice. Mr. Hayward responded that he would find the answer as that is not his area of expertise. He offered that he knew the hump used to be left as a reminder, but is not sure presently.

Ms. McFadyen wanted to know the recourse against home owners who are negligent in clearing the front of their homes in the time allowed. Mr Hayward responded that the complaints should be made to 490-4000, from there it goes to Bylaw Enforcement and a notice would be issued to the homeowner. If action is not taken within 24 hours, there are subsequent notices and even liens put against the property if others have to do the clearing.

Regarding other concerns voiced, Mr. Hayward advised that all complaints should be made right away so that action can be taken as quickly as possible.

Ms. McFadyen enquired as to how the Bylaw is enforced and who decides the priorities. Mr. Hayward informed the Committee that he will investigate and attempt to have some one come in and speak to the Committee from Bylaw Enforcement.

**MOVED** by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Ms. Newcombe, that the Chair will invite Tanya Phillips, Manager, By-Law Services, to the next Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities on March 17, 2008. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**7.2 Correspondence from Mr. Alan R. Farquhar, former Chair ACPD, to Mr. John Charles, Real Property Planning, Infrastructure & Asset Management HRM**

To be addressed in next meeting of March 17, 2008.

**8. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES - None**

**9. ADDED ITEMS - None**

**10. NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities will be March 17, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, City Hall.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:22pm.

Sandra T. Riley  
Legislative Assistant