

**NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

Wednesday, April 20, 2005

PRESENT: Mr. Phil Cox, Chair  
Mr. Bill Chaffey  
Mr. Alastair Lawrie (7:13 pm)  
Mr. Ron McKinnon  
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth

ABSENT WITH  
REGRETS: Councillor Brad Johns  
Mr. John Merrick  
Mr. Troy Mitchell

STAFF: Mr. Edward Robar, Coordinator, Transit Scheduling  
Ms. Lisette Cormier, Public Affairs Coordinator, Metro Transit  
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant (7:07 pm)

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm in the Charles Fenerty Room, Sackville Library, 636 Sackville Drive.

**2. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS**

**Additions:** 7.1.1 Invitation to Committee - Legislative Assistant  
7.1.2 Draft Report to North West Community Council - Legislative Assistant  
7.1.3 U-Passes - Mr. Ron McKinnon

**Move:** Item 4.1.7 to be dealt with immediately following the approval of the minutes.

The agenda was **approved as amended**.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - March 16, 2005**

**Clarification:** Mr. Bill Chaffey requested the minutes indicate the intersection mentioned in item 4.1.2 is the River Lane - north side intersection at the Bedford Place Mall as there are three intersections in the area.

**MOVED BY Mr. Ron McKinnon, seconded by Mr. Gunther Seyffarth that the minutes be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

4.1 Status Sheet Item

4.1.7 BRT Update

- A copy of the presentation, *Metro Link - Introducing a New Metro Transit Service to Halifax Regional Municipality*, was circulated to the Committee.

Ms. Lisette Cormier, Public Affairs Coordinator, Metro Transit, presented an update on the Bus Rapid Transit service - Metro Link. Ms. Cormier advised:

- The name chosen for this service is METRO LINK as it is a Metro Transit service that will link communities together and provide more *direct* service. The name BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) gave the impression that there would be *express* service

- and in actuality the service will be more direct, not necessarily faster.
- The colour scheme - gold, grey and blue - is similar to the conventional metro transit fleet and HRM colours but distinct enough to be recognized as an alternative to the conventional service.
  - Buses will accommodate two (2) wheelchairs.
  - All seats are forward facing except for the portion at the front that will accommodate the wheelchairs.
  - Buses are air conditioned, carpeted on sides/ceilings and have more comfortable seating with reclining seats.
  - Bus Shelters for the METRO LINK will have solar powered lighting, garbage/recycling receptacles.

The Committee made the following comments during the ensuing discussion:

- Glad to see the change in logo from "*Where ever life takes you*" to "link". Why is it still METRO LINK? Metro is urban. Mr. Robar explained the Metro Transit service, services the metro core. There may be a change with the new Regional Plan. Possible names - Communitylink - as it will be a Community Bus. Ms. Cormier explained the fast ferry will be known as the HARBOUR LINK.
- Suggest an airport service that could be called the AERO LINK.
- Premium fare maybe \$2.50 for the METRO LINK which means a few dollars more for a monthly pass. Will the rider be able to use one pass for both transit services? Ms. Cormier commented the pass could be used for both. She further responded to the Committee by adding advertising will not be permitted on the fast ferry. The METRO LINK buses will not have advertising but may have route maps/information placed in the interior of the buses.
- Would it be possible to have a sound system on the METRO LINK buses to announce the next stop. Mr. Robar advised that the Federal Government grant did allow for that technology.
- French / English monitors will be at the ferry terminals. Ms. Cormier added there will be braille plates for the bus stops and possibly in the buses as well. Work is ongoing with CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind) on this matter. Also, crosswalks at the terminals will have tactile warning strips for the visually impaired.
- Will riders be able to transfer from the regular transit routes to the METRO LINK? Ms. Cormier and Mr. Robar responded that Metro Transit wants to make it as easy

as possible for the drivers and passengers and there will be absolutely no elimination of service. Riders will not be forced to take the new service. It is a premium service and people will have an option.

- Will there be peak hour service or all day ferry service to Woodside? Mr. Robar explained one additional ferry will be required. Staff is preparing for the possible increase in Woodside Ferry use due to the construction of the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) campus in Dartmouth.
- This is an example of what “government money” can do (Bus Rapid Transit). More subsidy for transit service in HRM is needed.

Ms. Cormier responded to the Committee that there will be a public display of the BRT bus and it will be shown at festivals during the summer.

- What is the time line for the Sackville Terminal? Ms. Cormier advised perhaps winter 2006. It is still possible that the Sackville Terminal could be ready by November 2005. Portland Hills will be operating in August. There has been no discussion regarding whether the Cobequid Terminal will be upgraded to accommodate the BRT service. Mr. Robar advised the Sackville BRT terminal will alleviate some congestion from the Cobequid Park and Ride but new ridership is not anticipated.

The Committee thanked Ms. Cormier for her presentation.

#### 4.1.1 Bench for the Fenerty Road Bus Shelter

Mr. Edward Robar advised the bench is on the list and he will confirm with Mr. Ken Silver on the time line for installation. Mr. Robar also confirmed the request to repair the hole in the shelter’s roof was sent. Mr. Gunther Seyffarth will confirm with Mr. Robar whether or not the repairs were done.

#### 4.1.2 Snow Removal at Signalized Crosswalk Intersections

Mr. Bill Chaffey indicated he noticed the push buttons were inaccessible after a snowfall (between Christmas and New Years) due to snow accumulation. He added that it took six weeks for the snow to melt away as the snow was not cleared in a reasonable time by staff. The Legislative Assistant advised that at the recent budget presentations, Transportation and Public Works staff indicated snow clearing for these areas (intersection crossings/pedestrian push buttons) will be included in the budget for next

year.

**The Committee requested this item be left on the status sheet for next winter.**

#### 4.1.3 Dockyard Change in Hours

Mr. Robar indicated he will obtain the statistics for the Barrington Street stop. Mr. Cox commented there is a safety issue here and someone is going to get hit running across the street as there are five lanes of traffic travelling at a speed higher than 50 km per hour. It was suggested the bus stop be moved closer to the pedestrian activated push button at Artz Street.

Mr. Chaffey commented that pedestrians are also running across the highway at the Bedford Place Mall intersections.

Mr. Lawrie added there is a similar concern with people running across Highway 101 in Sackville. Mr. Cox added that previous discussion had been held on the fact that there is no official shoulder or crosswalk at the Highway 101 location and there are vehicles travelling at high speeds coming off the ramp.

**This item to be added to the status sheet** and sent to Mr. Geoff Wright of Metro Transit.

#### 4.1.4 Transit Subsidies

- A copy of Mr. Robar's *Ridership Statistics* was circulated to the Committee.
- A copy of Mr. Chaffey's "*North West Transit Advisory Committee April 2005 Meeting Preliminary Notes to Accompany Charts*" was circulated to the Committee.

Mr. Chaffey presented his information. The Committee made the following comments during the ensuing discussion:

- Have all information on one chart to show the "problem areas" such as where riders are being left behind and where riders are having to stand (the routes and duration of trip). The information could be shown in a similar format as a traffic flow chart. Put the ridership numbers and the bus stops on one chart, perhaps on a map that will show the problem areas and also include the times where seating capacity is at a premium, also when and where people are being left behind due to a bus being already full. Colours work well to distinguish the information but if you want to fax the information "thickness" would work better.

Mr. Robar will work with staff to create one chart indicating the problem areas/times in

regards to riders being by-passed due to an already full bus or riders standing for the majority of their trip.

- The information is to show that there are people standing on the buses and the initiatives shown in current HRM budgets will not change that. We need more buses. We need transit subsidy. People standing on the buses is a safety issue as the bus can do 70 km per hour along the Bedford Highway.
- Mr. Robar will talk to his staff and obtain additional information including: by day and isolating trips by blocks of time. This information will assist when presenting to Council as you may have a Councillor who thinks the transit service in his area is fine, this data may change that opinion and gain support for our recommendation.
- Once the research is complete and the report drafted, it will be presented first to the North West Community Council with a recommendation that they support it and forward it on to Regional Council. The report should be ready to forward to NWCC by November.
- There are many motorists who would use transit if it were available.
- Our goal is to get more buses, so we have to talk dollars and cents, and that means we have to go after a subsidy for transit service. Ridership is going up and even if we added 20 buses right now, it would not make a difference. We have to keep an eye on our conventional service as well as the BRT and fast ferry.
- Route 87 should have all day service, if it was you would see a drop in ridership on the Route 80. Mr. Robar commented it is good to track this trend as when a service is implemented, the real affect is not seen for six months to one year.
- This Committee came out with the fact that you cannot introduce a service and then take it away six months later as it takes time. Mr. Robar advised transit is seeing a 30% increase in ridership on some routes that saw no changes last year. For example, the Route 52 (Mumford to Dartmouth Shopping Centre) is faster than the #1 as it can go from Mumford Road to Dartmouth in 18 minutes. The #1 will start dropping in ridership as a result. It is good to follow these trends and statistics.
- We should include time information in the report as well - how long it takes from point A to point B and also record for off peak hours as well. People will take the fastest route. Mr. Robar added the software for "trip planner" would be good to have at Metro Transit.
- Route 87 service running over the bridge may not come for another six months to a year. Dal u-pass is coming, we may need to look at this. Mr. Robar advised Dal will have 20 minute service in January 2006.

Mr. Robar will provide additional statistical information to Mr. Chaffey. Committee

members are encouraged to forward ideas/suggestions to either Mr. Robar, Mr. Chaffey or through the Legislative Assistant.

#### 4.1.5 Dal U-Pass

Mr. Robar advised the Dal U-Pass will go forward. The cost to the students (as part of their tuition) will be \$115 for the year. He added eight existing buses will be refurbished to accommodate the expected increase in ridership. The buses will be available for January 1, 2006. Mr. Robar will confirm whether or not Kings College is included in the Dal U-Pass and also whether METRO LINK will be accommodating the U-Pass.

The Committee commented that although it is desirable to encourage more transit users, it is not desirable to degrade the service to the point that it becomes undesirable (buses that are too crowded for example).

#### 4.1.6 Shelter for MSVU

Mr. Robar advised the shelter for MSVU is on the list. The shelter was turned around but it is not big enough to handle the number of riders who use this stop. Mr. Robar responded to Mr. Phil Cox that information could be requested on whether a Councillor could put some money toward a shelter from the Councillor's District Fund.

#### 4.1.7 BRT Update

This item was dealt with earlier in the meeting. See page 3.

### **5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - None**

### **6. REPORTS - None**

### **7. ADDED ITEMS**

#### 7.1 Added Items

##### 7.1.1 Pedestrian Push Buttons at Signalized Intersections

- An Information Report dated, April 12, 2005, from the Traffic Authority was before the Committee.

The Committee raised the following comments during the ensuing discussion:

- Pedestrians want the same rights as cars and do not want to have to wait for the next signal to cross the intersection.
- More green time going through Bedford - if the lights hold green longer it is better for cars and buses.
- Mr. Cox suggested staff analyse a couple of the pedestrian push buttons to determine if they are actually doing what they were intended to do and have staff time the sequence.
- Analyse a Bedford intersection as there is enough traffic coming out of side streets that you could not make it any longer for pedestrians to cross. Leave the traffic lights there but put a pedestrian light in further up. What is our concern, keeping the traffic going or getting the pedestrians across? Pedestrians never get across.

**MOVED BY Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Mr. Gunther Seyffarth that the North West Transit Advisory Committee recommend that the North West Community Council request that pedestrians get a walk light when they push a pedestrian push button. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

## 7.2 New Business

### 7.2.1 Transfer Issue

The Committee commented that a rider should have the right to transfer from a higher service (METRO LINK) to the regular service. Mr. Robar commented he will provide further information on the transfer issue from regular service to Metro Link. He added there may be three different tickets: one for regular service, one for the Metro Link and one for the difference between the two services (transfer tickets).

The Committee further commented that the Metro Link service will start at one point and arrive at another with few or no stops in between which means the rider will still have to transfer to the regular service to reach their destination. For example, someone travelling from Sackville to one of the hospitals will take the METRO LINK to Scotia Square but would then have to transfer to another bus to reach the hospital. Inbound/outbound will be an issue as well. When you arrive at Scotia Square you are "Inbound" but if you transfer to continue your trip to the hospital, you are now "Outbound" and you currently cannot do that with a transfer. **Mr. Robar commented this is an important point and he will look into this.**

Mr. Robar further advised that the entire block near the back stairs at Scotia Square will be redeveloped for the METRO LINK service.

7.2.2 Review Metro Transit's Promotional logo "*Where Ever Life Takes You*" - Mr. Ron McKinnon

Mr. McKinnon asked if it were possible to change the promotional logo "*Where Ever Life Takes You*" used by Metro Transit to something more trendy such as THE LINK. Mr. Robar explained the logo is part of CUTA and the promotion is part of the national campaign. A change in logo probably will not be able to be considered until 2008. Further, there are larger issues to be resolved first such as core service issues.

Mr. McKinnon advised this issue could be removed from the status sheet for now and perhaps discussed again in a few years.

**8. NEXT MEETING DATE - Wednesday, May 18, 2005**

Mr. Gunther Seyffarth gave regrets for the May meeting (he will be away from May 5<sup>th</sup> to June 2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant