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**NORTH WEST COMMUNITY COUNCIL**  
January 25, 2007

TO: North West Community Council

FROM:   
Phillip Cox, Chair  
North West Transit Advisory Committee

DATE: November 10, 2006

SUBJECT: **Notification of Proposed Metro Transit Service/Budget Cuts**

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**ORIGIN**

October 18, 2006 meeting of the North West Transit Advisory Committee.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The North West Transit Advisory Committee recommends that the North West Community Council:

**Provide notification to the North West Transit Advisory Committee in regard to any proposed reduction in operating funds or services to Metro Transit that would directly impact transit service.**

**DISCUSSION:**

The Northwest Transit Advisory Committee (NWTAC) expressed concern that they were not informed, in advance, that the Metro Link weekend service (Saturdays) would be discontinued. Upon subsequent discussions with Metro Transit staff as to why the Metro Link weekend service was discontinued, it was determined that the discontinuation of Saturday service was due to a request for Metro Transit (and all HRM Departments) to reduce their operating budgets by 10% during budget deliberations in June 2006. Due to low ridership on the weekends, the Metro Link weekend service was chosen as one area in which Metro Transit was able to reduce costs.

As the only transit advisory committee for HRM and, as an advisory committee to the North West Community Council (NWCC), the NWTAC would have expected that the NWCC would communicate any information to them that may indicate a possible impact on transit service, such as a proposed budget cut. The NWTAC could have offered advice on where to, or not to, cut services and Committee members would have been aware, in advance, of the proposed changes.

Given the serious service deficiencies that currently exist within HRM's transit services, any cut to transit service is detrimental especially to a new service, such as the Metro Link. The Metro Link service is continuing to attract commuters to the point that there are already commuters standing on the weekday Metro Link runs.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:**

None.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The North West Community Council may choose not to advise the North West Transit Advisory Committee in regard to any proposed reduction in the operating funds Transit or services to Metro that would directly impact transit service.

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210 or fax at 490-4208.

Report prepared by: The North West Transit Advisory Committee

**EXTRACT**

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#### **4.1.2 Metro Link - Sackville Terminal**

##### **i) Parking**

Mr. Robar advised that work is progressing on the 138 parking spaces at the Sackville Metro Link terminal. The additional parking spaces will alleviate congestion in the main road and gravel sections but will fill the parking lot. He added that he has been attempting to improve service to the facility rather than increase the parking lot in an effort to reduce the volume of cars. Mr. Robar explained that, with the aid of new software that permits staff to flag changes and determine the impact, a synchronization study is underway to assist with better alignment of the routes.

The Committee commented as follows during the ensuing discussion:

- The best connection for the Metro Link to Cobequid Terminal is to disembark in Burnside and wait for the Route 87 which is only 4 minutes behind the link bus. The Route 87 will take you directly to the Cobequid Terminal.
- The Metro Link service was not planned for connections, it was planned for those travelling by car to the terminal.
- Mr. Robar advised that Metro Transit is attempting to have more attractive connections during the morning and afternoon peak periods so that the rider could, in theory, get a bus with only a ten minute wait. He further advised that the Route 82 and 83 have good connections at night but the Route 83 will miss its connection to the link by fifteen minutes. The connection will match up with the Route 82 as the ridership is higher.
- Ridership on the 80 series buses cannot increase until parking is provided in the outlying areas or expanded at Downsview. To develop Sackville as a transit hub, outlying areas have to be developed to provide parking in order for people to leave their cars. Mr. Robar responded that the goal is for better service to the terminal rather than more parking facilities.

##### **ii) Scheduling**

Mr. Robar advised that the Metro Link weekend service (Saturday's) was cut as Metro Transit was required to cut \$1 million from its operating budget. Cutting the weekend Metro Link service, which had low ridership, will save approximately \$352,000 per year. He advised that every department in HRM was told to cut 10% from its current budget. To continue weekend Metro Link service would require staffing the Thornhill site in Burnside seven days per week instead of five. The Metro Link showcase funding was for start-up costs not operational costs.

The Committee commented as follows during the ensuing discussion:

- On a recent Friday night approximately twenty people were riding the Metro Link at 10:00 pm.
- Metro Link service should be seven days per week. Perhaps not full service on the weekends but some service as the service has to be offered to attract riders.
- Metro Transit should be putting creative thought into other uses for the Metro Link service. It is a shame to have buses sitting idle when there is such demand for

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- increased service.
- Perhaps ridership will increase with Sunday shopping/bar patrons.
- It is alarming that a cut to transit service would occur with no input from the NWTAC. The NWTAC could have prepared recommendations for consideration.
- Perhaps consideration should be given for the NWTAC to hold summer meetings since this cut to transit service occurred in late June/July when NWTAC does not meet.
- Some Committee members commented that the Councillor representative on the NWTAC should have brought the budget cut/service cut to the attention of the Committee.
- The only direct route to downtown from Sackville, without the weekend Metro Link service, is the already overcrowded Route 80.

Mr. Robar responded that the Metro Link buses are branded and are for commuter service only. The Metro Link (weekend) route was not an established route so it was easier to cut the weekend service. The weekend ridership on the Metro Link was expected to be lower but not quite as low as it had been. Other routes had low ridership on weekends but if that service were cut the area would have no transit service. Metro Link buses were used during the Rolling Stones concert and successfully cleared commuters from the concert grounds in 1.5 hours. He further explained that the use of Metro Link buses at events would be warranted by the number of people expected for the event. Mr. Robar added that if there were anyway that he could have kept the Metro Link weekend service, he would have.

**MOVED BY Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Mr. Terry Churney that the North West Community Council be requested to notify the North West Transit Advisory Committee of any change in budget restrictions that would affect transit service. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**