



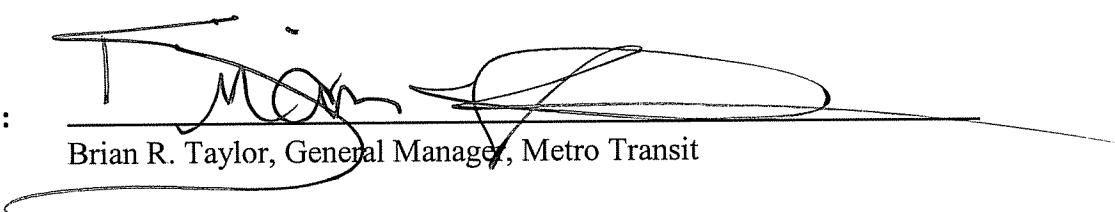
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Halifax Regional Council
February 1, 2005

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


Brian R. Taylor, General Manager, Metro Transit

DATE: January 27, 2005

SUBJECT: Accessible Taxi Service

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the January 11th, 2005 meeting of Halifax Regional Council, item 10.2.1, staff was requested to come back to Council with an approach for the upcoming budget to provide accessible taxis through Metro Transit; and, further, that HRM look to all levels of government to assist with the establishment of such a service for disabled persons throughout Nova Scotia.

BACKGROUND

Since 1994, privately owned accessible taxi service has operated in HRM. In November, 2004, the only accessible taxi, operated by Ace Y Taxi Co. Ltd., ceased operation. This has left no alternative on-demand transportation service in HRM for non-ambulatory passengers.

DISCUSSION

Since this issue came to public attention, there have been a number of enquiries at the HRM Taxi Licensing Office and Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations from private groups and individuals interested in establishing accessible taxi service in HRM.

HRM staff are holding discussions with staff from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations to develop a program to provide assistance with the purchase of vehicles for the purpose of providing accessible taxi service within HRM.

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations has received enquiries from interested individuals and groups in applying for assistance. An "Expression of Interest" to provide financial assistance for the purchase of accessible taxi vehicles is currently being finalized and will be advertised shortly. It is expected that the evaluation and award of the financial assistance program will be completed within three to four weeks. Additional time will be needed for the ordering and receipt of vehicles by any recipients.

As an interim solution and until such time as a privately owned and operated accessible taxi service is available, Metro Transit, unless otherwise directed by Council, is prepared to provide an on-demand shuttle service, through Access-A-Bus, to non-ambulatory persons requiring accessible transportation. Metro Transit will provide the on-demand shuttle service with a recently retired 2002 Access-A-Bus vehicle. On-demand shuttle trips will be charged on a distance based rate. A new telephone line will be added to the Access-A-Bus booking lines to take shuttle requests and during periods when there is no demand for shuttle trips, the shuttle bus will be used to provide additional service to Access-A-Bus clients. Metro Transit has proposed one additional bus and two additional shifts in Access-A-Bus service in the 2005/06 operating budget.

The intention is to continue this service until such time there is a privately operated accessible taxi service operating in HRM. At that time, the shuttle service will be discontinued and the vehicle will be moved into regular Access-A-Bus service to meet demand by registered Access-A-Bus clients.

Hours of operations for the shuttle service will be as follows:

Monday to Thursdays	7:00 am until 6:00 pm
Fridays and Saturdays	7:00 am until 1:00 am
Sundays	9:00 am until 6:00 pm

This on-demand shuttle service can commence in approximately two weeks allowing for time to hire new operators and promote the new service.

Once accessible taxi service is in place, HRM will support the service by referrals from the Access-A-Bus booking lines, promotion on the Metro Transit website, inclusion in the annual Access-A-Bus User's Guide and other printed materials promoting accessible transportation.

Information will also be available through the HRM Taxi Licensing office promoting the benefits of accessible taxi licenses. These include:

- no limits have been placed on the number of Accessible Taxi licences
- accessible taxis are not subject to zone requirements
- no restrictions on providing taxi service to able bodied customers
- recent amendments to Nova Scotia Utility & Review Board regulations allowing for the purchase of a wider range and cost competitive vehicles for use as accessible taxis
- promotion and referrals from HRM
- accessible taxis able to serve the Halifax International Airport through the HIAA

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

These costs, estimated at approximately \$10,000 net per month, will be contained within the existing projections. Given the interest by private industry to resume this service, it is not anticipated that the HRM interim solution would be in place more than one to two months. Provision has been made in the upcoming budget in the event that private industry, for some reason, is unable to resume this service. Depending on the outcome of the Expressions of Interest, these monies may be reallocated, however, this can be discussed during budget deliberations.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

n/a

ATTACHMENTS

None

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 490-4208.

Report Prepared by:

Brian R. Taylor, General Manager, Metro Transit

490-6608