

Item No. 1

**Halifax Regional Council
June 10, 2008**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council



SUBMITTED BY: _____
Mike Labrecque, P.Eng., Director of Transportation & Public Works

DATE: May 21, 2008

SUBJECT: Regional Youth Advisory Committee - Youth Transportation

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Report item 10.4.1 - March 25, 2008 Halifax Regional Council meeting.

BACKGROUND

At the March 25, 2008 meeting of the Halifax Regional Council, it was requested by Regional Council that a staff report be prepared providing for:

- 1) the possibility of allocating funds from the 'Transit Trust Fund' for improving suburban and rural transportation,
- 2) consideration of changing the age limit of the Metro Transit child's ticket from fifteen (15) to eighteen (18) years old ; and
- 3) consideration for the implementation of an HRM youth discount pass. This was based on a request by the Regional Youth Advisory Committee to examine this issue.

The request is as a result of the Youth Advisory Committee meeting of March 17th, 2008 where it was determined after several meetings that accessible and affordable transportation is a high priority issue for youth in HRM.

DISCUSSION

With Council's support and subsequent approval of Metro Transit's 5-Year Plan, during recent 2008/09 Budget deliberations, new rural bus routes will be introduced and core and suburban services will be improved. While these service improvements may not be directly attributed to the 'Transit Trust Fund', they are included in capital budgets and operating budgets (to be approved each year) over the next five years.

The new **Rural Express Service** with Phase One scheduled for introduction as early as November 2008, includes the following three bus routes to run primarily in peak commuter times into the downtown core:

- Hwy 103 Corridor, running from regional centre to Tantallon (late 2008)
- Hwy 118/102 Corridor, running from the regional centre to Fall River, Halifax International Airport & Enfield (2010)
- Hwy 107 Corridor which extends from the regional centre to Preston, Lake Echo, Porters Lake and Musquodoboit Harbour (2010)

After the establishment of the Rural Express Service, **Local Rural Bus Service** is being planned potentially for implementation in 2012/2013, within the communities of Tantallon, Enfield, and Musquodoboit. The Rural Bus program will involve either small buses or/taxi to transport clients from within those communities to a designated drop off point where they would then transfer to the Rural Express service.

Meanwhile, to address current **Conventional Route** service gaps, Metro Transit will receive and place into service 15 new expansion buses in 2008/09 to address current route deficiencies on core routes.

There are also plans to further expand the successful premium, limited stop service, MetroLink, which was introduced in the suburban areas of Portland Hills in summer 2005 and Sackville in early 2006. More Link service is being planned for other suburban areas such as Clayton Park and Spryfield, beginning in 2011/12.

Attached is a chart which depicts Metro Transit's Five Year Strategic Approach, including the actions outlined above.

Metro Transit has no plans at present to change the age limit of the Metro Transit Child's fare from fifteen (15) to eighteen (18) years old, due to budget implications.

- Canadian Transit systems usually all use the same parameters in setting age restrictions for the various transit fare categories. Most 'child' categories are the (5 - 15) years.

Metro Transit will not be implementing any additional Youth Discount Passes at this time. Once

new farebox technology can be purchased and implemented, as outlined in Metro Transit's Five Year Strategic Approach, our fare strategy will be reviewed.

- New Farebox technology will be purchased and implemented in 2009/2010 at which point Metro Transit will be able to revisit its fare structure and potentially offer greater flexibility in fare structures i.e., 10 day passes; day passes, etc.
- In the meantime, young adults may take advantage of other discounts currently offered such as a Monthly Student MetroPass, which provides a further discounted fare (\$54) from regular cash and pass fares, or through U-Pass Programs offered to 29,000 students at participating institutions, Dalhousie, Kings', SMU, MSVU, and NSCAD. (Avg. \$115 for school term- discount made possible due to large numbers of mandatory participants)

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

If the age limit is changed from 15 to 18 and an HRM youth discount pass is implemented, transit fare mediums would change across the board. Ages 16 to 18 would now be eligible to use Child MetroPasses (\$42), rather than the Student MetroPass (\$54). This shift alone would have a budget impact estimated to be over \$100,000. The group currently using Adult tickets and cash for after-school activities/work would also become eligible for the use of Child tickets at \$1.40 a ride, impacting the budget by ten's of thousands more dollars. Also, the HRM School Board would require a reduction on passes currently sold to them which would result in another reduced revenue stream of tens of thousands of dollars.

With no city to use as a model and no electronic fare system, a conservative estimate of the potential loss in revenue stream to Metro Transit would be approximately \$175,000 plus or minus 20% or \$35,000.

Specifics regarding Metro Transit's five year capital plan can be found under the Discussion section.

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.

ATTACHMENT

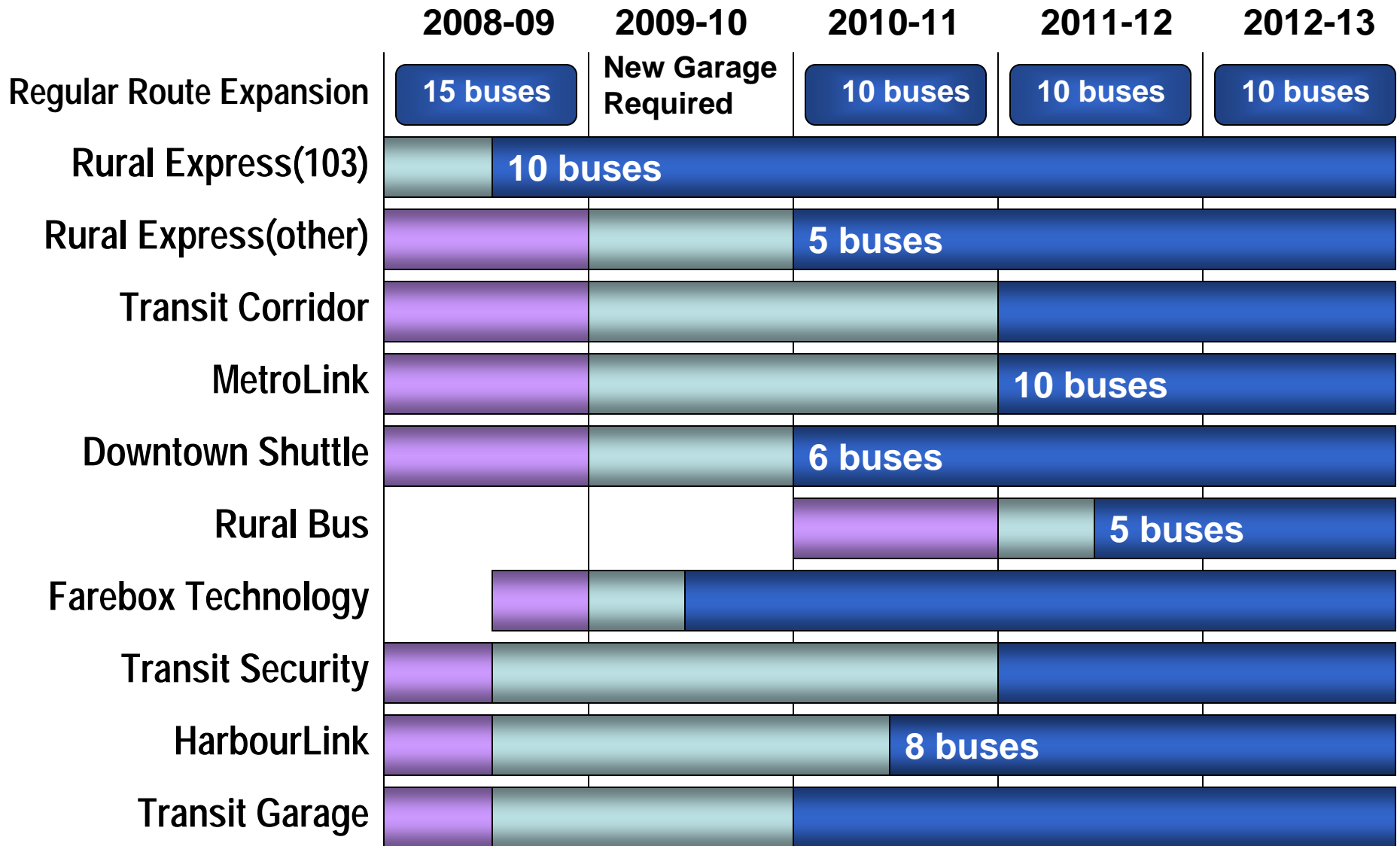
Metro Transit's Five Year Strategic Approach

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared and

Approved by:


Lori Patterson, Acting General Manager 490-6609



KEY: *Planning/Design* [purple box] *Construction* [teal box] *Operation* [blue box]