

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 10, 2008

**SUBJECT: Municipal Government Act Amendment - Dartmouth Bridge Transit
Terminal**

ORIGIN

This report is being brought forward by staff to facilitate the construction of a new transit terminal on the Dartmouth Common, including draft language for a legislative amendment to permit this construction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council approve, in principle, the concept of creating a new transit terminal on the Dartmouth Common.

It is further recommended that Halifax Regional Council approve the recommended amendment to the *Municipal Government Act* in relation to the Dartmouth Common and that the recommended amendment be forwarded to the Province of Nova Scotia for consideration for the Fall 2008 sitting of the Legislature.

BACKGROUND

Metro Transit's Bridge Terminal is the busiest terminal in the entire public transit system, averaging 17,000 passenger on/off's per weekday. It plays a broad regional role, hosting routes that provide service to most of the urban communities in HRM. Service to the current terminal on the Dartmouth Common has outgrown its capacity and the replacement of this facility has been identified as a priority by Metro Transit staff.

A preferred site has been identified by staff which would require expansion of the existing terminal, utilizing more of the Dartmouth Common lands. The selection of the Dartmouth Common site by staff is consistent with the Dartmouth Municipal Planning Strategy which states:

Notwithstanding the need for the open space, there is a requirement for a transit terminal near the intersection of Nantucket Avenue and Wyse Road, to provide an efficient transit system to the Metro area. The only land available is on the Common between the bank and the Sportsplex.

HRM holds the Dartmouth Common in trust for the inhabitants of the municipality and there is provincial legislation (section 529 of the *MGA*) protecting the Dartmouth Common. The legislation does not permit: (1) HRM to sell, lease, license or otherwise alienate the Dartmouth Common, or (2) a person to build on the Dartmouth Common unless it is an addition to a building on the Sportsplex parcel and the building and addition are both totally located on those lands.

It is necessary to seek a legislative amendment to the *MGA* to permit the construction of the new transit terminal and clarify that part of the existing terminal may be used by the Sportsplex for additional parking.

DISCUSSION

Rationale:

The current terminal cannot efficiently accommodate existing bus traffic, and cannot accommodate any future growth in bus traffic. As a result, Metro Transit cannot add any additional service to the terminal, either by adding new routes, or by making significant service frequency increases to existing routes. Without this new terminal, future growth of the Metro Transit system will be severely constrained.

The current terminal is deficient in safety, and operator/customer amenities. Passengers must walk through, and stand in, an active bus lane in order to board other buses in the outer lanes at the terminal. Due to the terminal configuration and physical characteristics, we are unable to load passengers using mobility devices onto our wheelchair accessible buses. This is a significant constraint, given that this is our busiest transfer point and will be serviced by seven accessible routes as of August 2008 (with that number projected to grow significantly in the coming years).

Metro Transit staff have been working closely with Halifax Regional Police members to develop this terminal such that improvements to public safety in the area will be realized.

Since the proposed terminal concept would increase usage of the Dartmouth Common, an amendment to the *MGA* with respect to the Dartmouth Common is required in order to build the terminal. This new terminal is an appropriate use of commons land for the following reasons:

- A transit terminal is a “green”, common use of the land;
- There is the potential for improvements to the local area, including improvements to surrounding parks;
- Public safety/security in the area can be improved;
- Land has been recently returned to green space on the former Dartmouth City Hall/Library/Museum site;
- An improved terminal helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging increased transit use, and;
- This is the best public use of the land, and will benefit the highest number of HRM residents.

The need for this terminal, and its contribution to increased transit usage, is supported by key HRM policy, including the Council Focus Areas, and the Regional Plan.

The construction of this new terminal would require the relocation of some Sportsplex parking spaces. Hence, the amendment to the *MGA* also address the requirement to maintain the current number of Sportsplex parking spaces, and to ensure the terminal does not hinder future Sportsplex expansion.

Amendment:

It is recommended that subsection 529 (4) be renumbered to 529 (4)(a) and clause 529(4)(b) be added as follows:

- (b) The Municipality may build, expand or improve:
 - i) transit facilities, fronting on Nantucket Avenue; and
 - ii) parking lots for the Sportsplex,on the Dartmouth Common to a maximum of 6 acres.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None.

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

Halifax Regional Council may choose not to approve the recommendation in this report and direct staff to consider alternative sites for the transit terminal. However, it should be noted that during the previous site selection process, no other equally suitable sites were apparent.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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.

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