

Item No. 5
Halifax Regional Council
June 24, 2014

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Eddie Robar, Director, Metro Transit

DATE: May 20, 2014

SUBJECT: Metro Transit Bridge Tolls

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

On December 7, 2010 Halifax Regional Council passed the following motion:

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Uteck, that the matter be referred to the Halifax Harbour Bridges Commission and HRM Metro Transit staff for consideration and input on possible partnerships/service exchange in regard to alleviating bridge toll charges for Metro Transit buses.

MOTION TO REFER PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Regional Council has no legislative authority to set tolls for bridges operated and maintained by the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission.

BACKGROUND

At the November 25, 2010 meeting of North West Community Council, a report prepared by the North West Transit Advisory Committee was discussed. The report recommended that Halifax Regional Council request that the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission exempt Metro Transit buses from paying bridge tolls. It further recommended that Halifax Regional Council permit the North West Community Council and North West Transit Advisory Committee to write to Halifax Harbour Bridges requesting that they exempt Metro Transit buses from paying bridge tolls.

At the December 7, 2010 meeting of Halifax Regional Council, a report prepared by North West Community Council was presented to Halifax Regional Council recommending that Halifax Regional Council request that Halifax Harbour Bridges exempt Metro Transit buses from paying bridge tolls. The following motion was made:

MOVED by Councillor Johns, seconded by Councillor Harvey, that Halifax Regional Council request that Halifax Harbour Bridges Commission exempt HRM's Metro Transit buses from paying bridge tolls. Through discussion, it was established that as the only source of revenue for the Bridge Commission is tolls, the removal of the \$471,000 in tolls would require the commission to find funding elsewhere. Without a vote being taken on the motion on the floor, the following motion was made:

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Uteck, that the matter be referred to the Halifax Harbour Bridges Commission and HRM Metro Transit staff for consideration and input on possible partnerships/service exchange in regard to alleviating bridge toll charges for Metro Transit buses.

MOTION TO REFER PUT AND PASSED.

DISCUSSION

Interest in alleviating tolls on transit vehicles was reflected in the HRM 2011-2012 Government Relations Priority Areas Report which stated the following:

“HRM is committed to pursuing external partnerships to improve transportation services and patterns. Increased support could take the form of shared Gas Tax funds, elimination of bridge tolls for transit buses, new government grants for transit, and Capital Cost Contributions.”

In addition, in both the March 2010 and 2011 Budget Submissions made to the Department of Finance, Mayor Peter Kelly, on behalf of HRM, urged the province to consider increasing funding for public transit by eliminating bridge tolls.

In July 2010, the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission submitted an application to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board to amend its toll structure to incorporate a 33.3% increase for each class of vehicle. This proposal excluded Access-A-Bus vehicles and buses with a seating capacity of 16 or more persons, for which there was no toll increase proposed

On January 27, 2011, the application was approved. As a result, a cash toll increase was effective April 1, 2011, and a MACPASS toll increase was effective April 1, 2012¹, but there was no toll increase for Metro Transit buses.

Currently, Metro Transit pays the following rates per crossing:

¹ The MACPASS toll increase was phased in over two equal steps April 1, 2011 and April 1, 2012

Metro Transit Vehicle Type	Average Cost per Crossing
Access-A-Bus	\$0.60
Conventional Bus	\$1.20
Service Supervisor Vehicles	\$0.80

The following table summarizes Metro Transit's expenditure for bridge tolls between 2010/2011 and 2014/2015, as well as the approximate impact the increase in tolls would have had, had it been applied to transit vehicles April 1, 2012:

Budget Year	Metro Transit Bridge Tolls	Impact of 33.3% toll increase
2010/2011	\$457,959	\$0.00
2011/2012	\$308,088	\$102,695
2012/2013	\$406,922	\$135,639
2013/2014	\$415,457	\$138,484
2014/2015	\$422,000*	\$140,665

*This value represents the 2014/2015 budget for bridge tolls

Metro Transit does not offer any services that would be suitable for a partnership or service exchange with the Bridge Commission. Any decision to enter into a partnership with the Bridge Commission would require the approval of Council and the development of a partnership or service agreement.

Should Regional Council wish to pursue the alleviation of all or a portion of bridge tolls for transit vehicles, then Council could initiate formal correspondence with the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission. If the Commission were to support this request, they would be required to submit an application to the Utility and Review Board to amend tolls. Alternately, when the Commission next submits a formal application to amend the toll structure, then Halifax Regional Municipality or Metro Transit could apply to the Board to be an official intervenor.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications have not been evaluated as part of this information report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement took place as part of this report.

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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Original Signed

Report Approved by:

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