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**Information Item No.1  
Transportation Standing Committee  
September 10, 2014**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Transportation Standing Committee

*Original signed*

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Eddie Robar, Director, Halifax Transit

**DATE:** August 22, 2014

**SUBJECT:** The Halifax Transit Moving Forward Together Plan Update

### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

On February 26, 2013, Regional Council approved the planning process for the new Halifax Transit five-year strategic framework:

**MOVED by Councillor Karsten, seconded by Councillor Nicoll that Halifax Regional Council approve the Metro Transit planning process for a new, five-year strategic framework.**

#### **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

On January 14, 2014, Regional Council endorsed the four Moving Forward Principles and an expansion of the scope of work initially proposed for the plan:

**MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Whitman that Halifax Regional Council:**

- 1. Endorse the four (4) Moving Forward principles; and**
- 2. Endorse the change in scope of the “Moving Forward Together Plan” from a five year plan to an overall system review, as outlined in the January 8, 2014 report to Committee of the Whole.**

#### **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Section 69(1) of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides the legislative authority for the municipality to provide a public transportation service. Section 79(1)(o) provides the authority for Council to expend money required by the municipality for public transportation services.

In addition to the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, authority is also provided by Section T-8 of the August 2006 *Regional Municipal Planning Strategy* which reads “HRM shall prepare a Public Transit Functional Plan as part of the overall Transportation Master Plan to improve existing services and develop new services.”

## **BACKGROUND**

In February 2013, Regional Council approved Metro Transit's request to prepare a strategic framework for service provision over the next five years. At that time, it was intended that this plan would be similar in scope to the previous Five Year Plan, and that it would identify the incremental changes to take place in the transit network over the next five years.

In order to reflect the values of the plan and the importance of engaging the public and stakeholders in the planning process, the plan was named *Moving Forward Together: The Metro Transit Five Year Service Plan*.

The first round of public consultation for the Moving Forward Together Plan took place in the fall of 2013. At in-person meetings and online, members of the public and stakeholder groups were asked to provide overall direction for the development of the transit network over the next five years.

The Moving Forward Principles were developed in part to reflect the findings of the consultation, and were endorsed by Regional Council in January 2014. The intent of the principles is to direct the development of the plan, and to guide decision making over the life of the plan.

The Moving Forward Principles are:

1. Increase the proportion of resources allocated towards high ridership services.
2. Build a simplified transfer based system.
3. Invest in service quality and reliability.
4. Give transit increased priority in the transportation network.

In order to ensure that the transit network best meets the intent of the Moving Forward Principles, Regional Council approved an expansion in the initial scope of work proposed as part of the Moving Forward Together Plan to include a comprehensive review of the entire transit network.

## **DISCUSSION**

Following the direction from Regional Council in January 2014, Halifax Transit began the process of conducting a comprehensive review of the transit network. The intent is to propose a draft plan and network design that has a consistent, cohesive, approach to transit planning, reconciling the inconsistencies in the existing network.

The process has been informed by a variety of data sources including census "Journey to Work" data, the National Household Survey, ridership counts, terminal surveys, the regional VISUM traffic model, and future proposed developments across the region. Also reviewed were a number of surveys and other documentation prepared by other organizations related to transit needs, including Capital Health, the Greater Burnside Business Association, Dalhousie University, and the Main Street Business Improvement District.

The drafting process has been iterative, and has been focused on finding the right balance of transfer based and single seat trips for Halifax. As the network evolves, staff are testing the system by comparing typical trips which are made on the Halifax Transit network today, with trips that would be made in the proposed conceptual network.

It has been determined through the drafting process that a network that is entirely transfer based is not the ideal transit service for Halifax. Although the system would be simplified and the number of overlapping routes would be significantly reduced, a number of constraints exist, including the size of the Municipality, the funnel-like nature of the road network, and the inability to achieve a high enough frequency to make travel times attractive for passengers. It was important for the process to draft and test this alternative to understand the implications; however, it was determined that this type of network would

require a high number of transfers to complete trips, and overall, would not result in improved service for passengers.

In addition, Halifax Transit provides the third highest number of service hours per capita in Canada, exceeded only by Toronto and Ottawa, and has approximately 98,000 daily boardings, and 2.6 million annual boardings. It is clear that there are aspects of today's transit network in Halifax which work well and are meeting the needs of passengers. With this in mind, the alteration of high performing routes to fit a transfer based model is not always advantageous.

Halifax Transit is now focusing on a concept that uses the elements of the transfer based model that are best adapted to the geography and road network in Halifax, and builds on some of the most successful services and routes currently operating in the network. It attempts to accommodate the most significant travel patterns with minimal transfers, but uses transfers strategically to simplify the system and create efficiencies. Staff are now in the process of refining and testing this network.

In the previous update to Council, it was tentatively projected that the draft plan would be completed in Fall 2014. As the network drafting phase of the project is now well underway, staff are better able to estimate the time required to prepare the draft plan for public consultation. An updated timeline is summarized in the table below:

| <b>Stage</b>          | <b>Original Tentative Timeline</b> | <b>Revised Timeline</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Draft Plan Complete   | October 2014                       | January 2015            |
| Stage II Consultation | October/November 2014              | Jan/Feb/March 2015      |
| Final Plan Submitted  | April 2015                         | September 2015          |
| Plan Implementation   | Fall 2016                          | TBD 2016                |

**Table 1: Updated Schedule**

It is now anticipated that a draft plan will be released in January 2015, and a robust multifaceted consultation will take place in early 2015. The extended window for consultation (from six weeks to approximately ten weeks) has been introduced to allow Halifax Transit staff to facilitate a larger consultation process that will include more opportunities for participation.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report as it is an information report only.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement took place as part of this report.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/standing.php> then choose the appropriate Standing Committee and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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