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**Item No. 2**  
**Transportation Standing Committee**  
**December 8, 2016**

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

Original Signed

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Dave Reage, Director, Halifax Transit

**DATE:** October 19, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Use of Accessible Transportation to Support Access-A-Bus Services

**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

March 24, 2016 motion of the Transportation Standing Committee:

Moved by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Mosher; that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council direct Halifax Transit staff to develop an Expression of Interest to explore the viability of a partnership with HRM Accessible Transportation service providers to support Halifax Transit Access-A-Bus service.

April 12, 2016 motion of Regional Council:

Moved by Councillor Outhit, seconded by Councillor Craig; that Halifax Regional Council direct Halifax Transit staff to develop an Expression of Interest to explore the viability of a partnership with HRM Accessible Transportation service providers to support Halifax Transit Access-A-Bus service.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Administrative Order One, Schedule 7, section 6 "The Transportation Standing Committee shall (a) review and oversee policy direction and long term funding approach to promote and encourage Transit alternatives as outlined in the Regional Plan."

**BACKGROUND**

At the March 24, 2016 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, the Committee received a presentation from staff regarding a recommendation report dated February 25, 2016. The presentation outlined the increased pressures on the accessible transit system and the need for an innovative, multi-faceted approach that includes among its components an exploration of potential partnerships with other accessible transportation providers.

At the April 1, 2016 meeting of Halifax Regional Council, Council directed staff to develop an Expression of Interest (EOI) to explore the viability of partnerships to support the Halifax Transit Access-A-Bus service. The aim of this report is to update the Committee on that effort in the context of the other initiatives discussed during the March 24, 2016 meeting.

## **DISCUSSION**

In preparation for drafting an EOI document, staff issued an open invitation to accessible transportation providers in HRM to meet on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Ragged Lake Transit Centre. During that meeting, staff communicated the aim of the effort and gathered feedback on both challenges and approach in order to guide the creation of the document.

Staff issued EOI E16-069 on May 19, 2016 with a closing date of June 8, 2016. The aim of the document was to determine:

1. Existing and planned accessible resources (staff and vehicles);
2. Service coverage, hours of availability and schedules;
3. Industry perspectives on potential models for support for the Halifax Transit operation and pricing;
4. Challenges experienced with operating accessible units to date;
5. Challenges experienced with the training and conduct of accessible vehicle drivers; and
6. A detailed assessment of known risks and associated strategies for mitigation.

Staff received three written responses to EOI E16-069. The responses related industry conditions and some specific challenges with the relatively high cost of procuring and operating accessible taxis, and staff training/skills maintenance with a transient workforce. Of note, the number of accessible taxis serving HRM is currently in decline, which reduces the potential for effective and sustainable partnerships. While the information gathered is useful, there is no indication that a discreet initiative to augment the Access-A-Bus service would be beneficial relative to the challenges.

Work on a holistic review of the Access-A-Bus service continues, with the results and recommendations presented to the Transportation Standing Committee via a staff initiated report in spring 2017. An update on related initiatives follows.

### Upgrades to Scheduling Software

The Halifax Transit Access-A-Bus operation is supported by a scheduling solution known as Trapeze PASS. The vendor conducted a comprehensive assessment of the solution implementation in February 2016, and advanced PASS training was provided to Halifax Transit technical personnel in September/October 2016 under a “train the trainer” model, with user training to follow.

Related, Halifax Transit plans to engage a Business Analyst from the Halifax Transit Technology Program team to develop and document a revised set of business processes and staff roles based on industry best practices, work with Trapeze to upgrade and reconfigure the scheduling solution, and tailor future user training accordingly. This effort will commence immediately.

### Revised Eligibility Criteria

Staff continues to develop a revised set of eligibility criteria that will reflect industry best practices and the evolution of the Halifax Transit fleet of vehicles.

### Migration of Para-Transit Users to Conventional Transit

Staff is working to develop partnerships with local stakeholders to expand the established Travel Training program, with the express intention of developing familiarity and confidence within the para-transit

community to better leverage the capacity of the conventional transit system to provide transportation to registered paratransit users.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications to this information report.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In preparing the EOI, staff issued an open invitation to local accessible transportation providers to inform the document. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016, staff provided an update to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the process, but not the results, associated with the EOI effort.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

No Attachments.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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