

TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 28, 2013

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor Reg Rankin, Chair
Councillor Jennifer Watts, Vice Chair
Councillor Barry Dalrymple
Councillor Darren Fisher
Councillor David Hendsbee
Councillor Wayne Mason
Councillor Tim Outhit
Councillor Russell Walker

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Steve Craig

STAFF: Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Ms. Kirby Grant, Senior Solicitor
Mr. Ted Aubut, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. in the Council Chamber at 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 28, 2013

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Mason that minutes of February 28, 2013 be approved, as presented. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETION

Additions:

- 9.1 Deputy Mayor Rankin – Future of the North West Transit Advisory Committee
- 9.2 Appointment of two Transportation Standing Committee representatives to the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee
- 9.3 Councillor Hendsbee - Information Item 2 regarding dual left-turn lane off the Macdonald Bridge onto Wyse Road

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Dalrymple that the agenda be approved, as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

4.1 Correspondence

4.1.1 Letter from the Halifax Cycling Coalition regarding cross-town bike route on Agricola Street, dated March 20, 2013

A letter from the Halifax Cycling Coalition dated March 20, 2013 was before the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee acknowledged receipt of the letter.

4.2 Petitions – NONE

4.3 Presentations

4.3.1 HRM Corporate Communications regarding Pedestrian Safety and Metro Transit Ridership campaigns

Mr. Colin Fenby, Marketing Manager explained that Corporate Communications, the Halifax Regional Police and Transportation & Public Works had launched two marketing campaigns in March 2013 to (1) promote pedestrian safety and (2) to increase ridership on Metro Transit.

The pedestrian safety campaign, *Distractions Kill*, encouraged citizens to stay alert in light of increased incidents and fatalities in 2012 and early 2013. Mr. Fenby indicated that the advertisements appeared on CBC and CTV, in poster format in transit terminals, and on the Chronicle Herald's website. In each instance, citizens were directed towards a website, distractionskill.ca, which has received 1600 visits and 5000 page views so far. Social media was also an important component of the campaign.

Mr. Fenby commented on the tone of the advertisement, noting that the depiction shares blame between the driver and pedestrian, both of whom are distracted. This approach has provoked important discussions in the media. He indicated that the ad may be brought back in the future to remind the public of their shared responsibility for street safety.

Mr. Fenby explained that HRM has hired Corporate Research Associates to survey residents pre and post campaign to measure its success. The first poll, conducted in February, found an elevated public concern about the issue, with many drivers and pedestrians doubting that the other is alert. One-third of drivers admitted that they have been distracted as they approach crosswalks.

As for the transit campaign, *Do it on the Bus*, Mr. Fenby explained that it promoted the benefits of using Metro Transit instead of travelling by car. HRM committed to this campaign shortly after the 2012 transit strike.

The advertisements, which he described as purposefully provocative, aimed to positively shift the perception of transit service. Like the first campaign, this one took many forms: it ran on radio, television, on the side of buses ('half-wraps') and, starting in May, will appear in movie theatres in Bayers Lake and Dartmouth. Mr. Fenby explained that this second campaign had more of an online presence than the first.

Mr. Fenby noted that pre-wave research was conducted by Market Research Associates, which polled 476 residents. Of those, approximately half used Metro Transit, frequently or infrequently. Few people cited the 2012 strike as the reason for not using transit. Less than 2% were aware of any news or promotions about transit prior to the campaign. Mr. Fenby explained that post-wave research will be conducted by the same company to assess the impact of the campaign.

The Chair thanked Mr. Fenby for his presentation and invited members of the Standing Committee to ask questions.

Councillor Dalrymple noted that he has received more emails than usual about pedestrian safety and public transit since the roll-out of the campaigns. Both have successfully generated discussion. He suggested that future campaigns run ads in community newspapers targeting suburban and rural residents.

Councillor Watts wished to know if Corporate Communications received feedback from residents about the pedestrian safety campaigns. If so, she asked that it be shared with the Standing Committee and Regional Council. As for the transit campaign, she wondered if it will continue in the medium term as a means to encourage participation at Metro Transit's upcoming public consultations.

Mr. David MacIsaac, Transportation Demand Management Program Supervisor indicated that Metro Transit will be working with Corporate Communications to encourage high turn-out at upcoming public consultations. He noted that the Standing Committee will have the opportunity to comment on the consultation plan before it is rolled out.

Councillor Outhit explained that residents in his district preferred the pedestrian safety campaign. He wondered if HRM had been successful in negotiating with media outlets to minimize advertising costs.

Mr. Fenby replied that HRM has benefited from discounted rates, citing as an example the fire safety campaign that ran during the Christmas holidays. In this case, HRM received 30% bonus advertising.

Councillor Outhit noted that he would be open to having a special meeting to discuss Metro Transit's public consultation plan. Alternatively, staff could send it to members electronically.

The Chair congratulated staff for the campaigns, noting that they were a good return on investment.

Councillor Watts asked that the Clerk post Mr. Fenby's presentation to the web.

5. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

5.1 Regional Parking Strategy Implementation

An extract from the minutes of February 28, 2013 was before the Standing Committee.

Mr. David McCusker, Regional Transportation Manager explained that the parking strategy is a 25-year plan that was approved in 2009. Since that time, parking has remained an important issue, particularly downtown as evidenced in a recent employer

survey. It found that the high cost and low availability of parking results in businesses locating outside of downtown.

Mr. McCusker explained that the parking strategy identifies three short-term goals:

- Creation of a parking manager position and a Parking Advisory Committee
- Implementation of on-street residential parking programs
- Introduction of parking technology

He noted that two of these three figure in the 2013 business plan.

Mr. McCusker described a number of initiatives underway, including the installation of pay stations with display technology near the Halifax Commons. He also discussed efforts to consolidate decision-making, noting that current parking decisions are diffused across the organization rather than managed by a single office. Finally, he touched on the Smart Trip program through which HRM works with employers to explore different commuter choices, such as carpooling, transit, cycling and teleworking.

Councillor Watts indicated that the business community, including the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia, is eager for the parking strategy to be implemented. She wondered if it would be appropriate for HRM to establish a parking advisory committee and for HRM to get in the business of owning parking facilities.

The Chair asked that the discussion focus on parking issue as they relate to the next fiscal year.

Councillor Mason noted that the addition of 500 parking spots underneath the Nova Centre will likely alleviate the parking problem. However, there is a larger perception problem at play: residents believe there are no spots downtown even when parking lots are not at capacity. He believed that smart metering and improved user information could resolve this.

Mr. McCusker concurred, noting that lack of information is a large component of the problem.

Councillor Mason wondered if, given HRM's budget constraints, it would be possible to proceed with smart metering in parts, rather than across the entire municipality.

Mr. McCusker indicated that partial coverage was a possibility but in either case, the challenge will be to coordinate actions with parking providers, given that HRM does not own or manage downtown parking lots.

Councillor Mason explained that he will soon be meeting with the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia and the Downtown Business Commission to discuss parking issues, and asked that staff attend. He then asked about the allocation of monthly versus casual parking spots.

Mr. McCusker shared his concern that more spaces are being reserved for monthly pass holders than casual parkers in part because of parking facility's funding models. He noted that HRM, as part of Regional Planning discussions, had discussed the possibility of regulating parking to reach a balance between short-term and long-term parking.

Councillor Outhit noted that residents have told him that there is not enough parking downtown and that available spots are cost prohibitive. Businesses share these concerns. However, he noted that the cost of parking is more expensive in the urban core and that it is unrealistic to provide the same price and convenience as at a suburban shopping centre. HRM does not own parking facilities and it does not control the price of parking. Given this, he believed that it should focus encouraging businesses to settle downtown and on expanding transit options so that employees can easily get there.

The Chair asked staff to comment on next steps.

Mr. Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer indicated that the issue at hand is funding the parking strategy's implementation. He suggested that Councillor Mason, if his stakeholder meeting is fruitful, may wish to address Regional Council, so it can consider budget implications.

Councillors Hendsbee and Fisher exited the meeting at 2:00 pm.

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - NONE

7. REPORTS

7.1 STAFF

7.1.1 Update – Active Transportation Plan Review

Mr. David MacIssac, Transportation Demand Management Program Supervisor explained that HRM is conducting a five-year review of the Active Transportation Functional Plan, the goal of which is to gather feedback from stakeholders and to benchmark progress.

Mr. MacIsaac indicated that staff have met with over 50 stakeholders and have scheduled 6 open houses, including in Clayton Park, Bedford and Lower Sackville. An online survey has also been developed to capture feedback. To date, HRM has received 400 responses.

Councillor Mason noted that the open house for Peninsular Halifax, held on March 21, 2013, was well organized and well attended.

7.2 MATTERS REFERRED FROM REGIONAL COUNCIL - NONE

7.3 MATTERS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS – NONE

7.4 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7.4.1 Update from Councillor Watts (Verbal)

Councillor Watts had no update to provide.

7.5 ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7.5.1 Update from Councillor Watts (Verbal)

Councillor Watts indicated that the Accessibility Advisory Committee is gaining momentum. It has new members, has set a new strategic vision, and has received the support of the Mayor. As it broadens its scope beyond physical mobility, she suggested that it may be appropriate to review whether it should continue to report to the Transportation Standing Committee.

8. MOTIONS - NONE

9. ADDED ITEMS

9.1 Deputy Mayor Rankin – Future of the North West Transit Advisory Committee

The Chair invited Councillor Craig, of North West Community Council, to speak on this matter.

Councillor Craig noted that the North West Transit Advisory was established in 1997 and since that time has played an important role, particularly in discussions around MetroLink and MetroX service, fast ferry service and on the placement of bus shelters. Recently, however, the decision-making process has changed; there are fewer districts and HRM now has a Transportation Standing Committee. These and other factors have eroded the Advisory Committee's effectiveness. He believed it important that citizens be given the opportunity to provide input and that citizen appointees be given meaningful work. He wondered if a regional transit advisory committee would add more value than the current advisory structure.

Councillor Outhit indicated that North West Community Council had discussed this issue a year ago. It voted to disband the Advisory Committee but rescinded the motion shortly thereafter. He thought it worthwhile to strengthen the effectiveness of the Advisory Committee instead of disbanding it. Alternatively, it could be brought into a new structure. He asked that a staff report explore these and other options.

Councillor Mason saw merit in developing a regional advisory committee. He suggested that members of the North West Transit Advisory Committee be invited to comment on the possible creation of a regional entity.

Councillor Watts asked that staff consider a range of engagement models through which citizens could provide input on transit issues. She recognized the important role of community groups, like Fusion Halifax and the HRM Alliance and asked that they be taken into account in staff's deliberations.

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Outhit that the Transportation Standing Committee direct staff to prepare a report identifying engagement models through which citizens can advise HRM on transit issues.

Councillor Walker expressed concern over the number of committees that already exist. He questioned the value of adding another, especially given that community groups are already active in this area.

Councillor Outhit indicated that the success of the community groups cited shows that the public wants to shape active transportation policies. Given this, a committee may be warranted.

Councillor Dalrymple noted that a regional transit advisory committee could help community groups reach consensus and learn about how individual transit projects fit into the larger picture.

Councillor Craig indicated that the North West Transit Advisory Committee has reached its end and should not be maintained for the sake of being maintained.

Councillor Watts hoped that many of these comments would be considered as Metro Transit moves forward with its public consultation process.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9.2 Appointment of two Transportation Standing Committee representatives to the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Walker that Councillor Fisher and Councillor Dalrymple be appointed to the Crosswalk Safety Advisory Committee. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

9.3 Councillor Hendsbee - Information Item 2 regarding dual left-turn lane off the Macdonald Bridge onto Wyse Road

Councillor Dalrymple moved the following motion on behalf of Councillor Hendsbee, who was no longer present:

MOVED by Councillor Dalrymple, seconded by Councillor Outhit that the Transportation Standing Committee request that the Information Report regarding the dual left-turn lane off the Macdonald Bridge onto Wyse Road be referred to the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

10. NOTICES OF MOTION - NONE
11. IN CAMERA - NONE
12. NEXT MEETING – April 25, 2013
13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 pm.

Ted Aubut
Legislative Assistant