

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
MINUTES**

March 12, 2007

PRESENT: **Councillor Patrick Murphy**
Ms. Helen Cianfaglione
Mr. Alan Farquhar
Mr. Gary Russell
Mr. Kevin Bulley
Ms. Sanaz Germani
Ms. Rebecca King
Ms. Helen McFadyen
Ms. Mary Newcombe

REGRETS: **Councillor Gary Meade**

STAFF: **Mr. Larry Hilton, Supervisor, Special Services**
Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation
Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant, Human
Resources
Ms. Chrissy White, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 1841 Argyle Street, Halifax.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The Clerk called for nominations for the position of Chair.

MOVED by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Ms. Helen McFayden, that Mr. Alan Farquhr be nominated for position of Chair. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair.

Moved by Ms. Rebecca King, seconded by Mr. Kevin Bulley, that Gary Russell be nominated for the position of Vice-Chair. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF REPRESENTATIVE

The Chair introduced Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant as the new Staff Representative for the Advisory Committee.

Councillor Murphy requested a package with the last two years of reports be sent to new Committee Members.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Corrections:

4.1 Change the word ramp to curb cut.

7.1 Change wording from "re-open the facility" to "keep the facility open."

MOVED by Mr. Kevin Bulley, seconded by Ms. Helen Cainfaglione, that the minutes from November 20, 2006 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

The Committee agreed to move item 9.2 to the first presentation.

MOVED by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Ms. Mary Newcombe, that the Order of Business be approved as amended. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. **BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES- NONE**

7. **CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS-NONE**

8. **CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS- NONE**

9. **REPORTS**

9.1 **Accessible Pedestrian Signal Guidelines**

The Committee decided to hear the presentation on the above noted following item 9.2.

9.2 **Metro Transit Accessibility - Larry Hilton, Supervisor, Special Services**

- A PowerPoint presentation was presented to the Committee.

The Committee welcomed Mr. Larry Hilton, Supervisor, Special Services.

Mr. Hilton advised that there are currently two Metro Transit facilities operating in HRM at 120 Isley Avenue, Dartmouth and 150 Thornhill Drive, Dartmouth. He advised that Metro Transit operates 223 regular transit buses, 20 access-a- buses, 117 low floor buses (with wheel chair access), and three ferries. Mr. Hilton further advised that 103 Fleet Services staff care for all Metro Transit buses, and the vehicles are inspected by the Utility Review Board twice a year.

Mr. Hilton provided the Committee with an overview of Metro Transit's 2006 statistical information, advising that Metro Transit:

- Services 17.2 million passengers per year;
- Travelled 10.5 million km's last year;
- Clocked 520,000 service hours;
- Burned 7.2 million litres of fuel;
- Counted 1 million staff operating hours;
- Access-A-Bus has 20 vehicles, 29 operators and three dispatchers. Each individual bus travels 45,000 km's throughout HRM per year.
- In 2006, Access-A-Bus made 76,000 trips, received 6, 400 phone calls a month, received 11,211 cancellations, and has an average waiting list of 25/50 people.
- Access-A-Bus will travel to suburban areas provided the client residence is located 610 metres from an urban transit route. Transit will be reviewing the current Access-A-Bus boundaries in the upcoming months.

Mr. Hilton advised of eligibility requirements to ride Access-A-Bus. He noted that a client must use a wheel chair or a scooter, must be unable to step up or down a 35 centimetre step unassisted, must be unable to walk 175 metres outdoors unassisted, must have 20/200 vision, must be a dialysis patient, must be unable to use conventional transit service due to cognitive disability, or unable to communicate orally or through sign language (this inability must be associated with another significant disability).

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, Mr. Hilton advised:

- Access-A-Bus can not accommodate “single post” wheelchairs due to Public Utility Standard Regulations. Persons using these chairs will be requested to transfer to a bus seat. The chair can not be tied down with the client in it until it has been modified to meet regulations. Mr. Hilton advised that Access-A-Bus clients should check in advance to ensure their chair is transit ready.
- 20 new Access-A-Buses will be purchased over the next three years. Four of the new buses will go toward expansion and 16 will be utilized as replacement vehicles.
- The Access-A-Bus fares are the same as a conventional Metro Transit Bus.
- People interested in becoming an Access-A-Bus client can register online or receive an application via mail.
- A physician must assess and approve a persons need to use Access-A-Bus. Metro Transit is in the process of reviewing the application process.
- Most Access-A-Bus bookings require two weeks notice, and the bus can be utilized five times per day by the same client.
- The demand for Access-A-Bus has increased significantly. In 2004, the bookings almost doubled.
- Access-A-Bus services a large clientele of dialysis patients.
- 100% of Access-A-Bus funding comes from HRM.

A brief discussion regarding possible improvements to the Access-A-Bus service ensued. The following was noted:

- The Chair suggested partnering with the Province or Non-Profit Organizations to cost share funding for enhancements to the Access-A-Bus service.
- Mr. Russell advised that the HRM Access-A-Bus system is the only system in Canada that is not funded by the Province.
- Ms. McFadyen suggested using smaller busses (vans)for people who do not use wheelchairs.
- It was suggested that Access-A-Bus partner with the hospitals to help accommodate the large number of dialysis patients who use the service.

The Committee thanked Mr. Hilton for his presentation.

9.1 Accessible Pedestrian Signal Guidelines

- A draft document titled “*Guidelines for Understanding, Use and Implementation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals,*” was before the committee.

The Committee welcomed Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation.

Mr. McCusker advised that he is a member of The National Committee on Standards for Traffic Control Throughout Canada. He further advised that the above noted committee is in the process of developing a National Guideline for Accessible Pedestrian Signals. The guideline document will outline changes that will be made to the locator tone and the placement of access buttons at cross walks. Mr. McCusker advised that these changes have been researched and vetted through various community groups and have been well received. Mr. McCusker advised that through research it was concluded that visually impaired pedestrians believed the chirping locator tone was too closely related to the natural sound of a chirping bird. The tone has been altered to resemble a beeping sound that is not similar to any natural sound. Mr. McCusker advised the sound signal will not be activated unless the push button is pressed, and there will be locators installed to assist the visually impaired. The guidelines document is currently in draft form and will be adopted in the fall. Mr. McCusker further advised that The tone is sensitive to ambient noise levels and at night time the volume will drop.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, Mr. McCusker advised:

- Municipalities will not be required to follow the new guidelines, but HRM intends to fully comply.
- It will be recommended that all Provinces follow the new guidelines, but it will not be law.
- A criteria for determining priority intersections has been established, and the Traffic Services budget will predict how many will be done per year.
- There have been two installed in the last five years.
- The biggest cost for HRM will be relocating the push buttons.
- It is the prediction that most big cities will follow the guidelines.

The Committee thanked Mr. McCusker for his presentation.

9.3 Written update from Mr. Jeff Spares- Argyle Street Curb Cut

- An e-mail on the above noted was before the Committee.

Members of the committee provided comments on the above noted.

Mr. Russell advised that he does not agree with Mr. Spares comments made in the above noted e-mail. He advised that he feels there is enough space to create a curb cut on Argyle Street.

After a brief discussion on the above noted issue, the following motion was placed:

MOVED by Mr. Russell, seconded by Mr. Bulley that a staff report regarding a curb cut on Argyle Street be submitted to the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Mr. Russell advised that he is happy with the work that has been done on Spring Garden Road, but he would like an update on the status of a landing pad at the Professional Centre on Spring Garden Road.

9. ADDED ITEMS-NONE

10. APPROVAL OF THE 2007 MEETING SCHEDULE

A brief discussion ensued regarding meeting during the summer months. The Committee decided to revisit the meeting schedule at the June 18th, 2007 meeting to decide if meeting in July and August is necessary.

MOVED by Ms. Helen McFadyen, seconded by Mr. Russell, that the 2007 meeting schedule be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Murphy suggested inviting a representative from The Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) to the next meeting to advise of any issues they feel the Committee should be aware of.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities will be April 16, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. in Halifax Hall, 2nd Floor City Hall, 1879 Argyle Street, Halifax.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Chrissy White
Legislative Assistant