

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES  
MINUTES**

**February 22, 2010**

**PRESENT:** Mr. Tom Boyd, Chair  
Ms. Theresa Horwill, Vice Chair  
Councillor Mary Wile  
Councillor Jerry Blumenthal  
Mr. Gary Russell  
Ms. Helen McFadyen  
Ms. Mary Newcombe  
Mr. Troy Nauffts

**STAFF:** Mr. Laughlin Rutt, Diversity Consultant  
Supt. Cliff Falkenham, HRP  
Ms. Krista Tidgwell, Legislative Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CALL TO ORDER .....	3
2.	APPROVAL OF MINUTES - January 18, 2010 .....	3
3.	APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS - ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS	3
4.	BUSINESS ARISING/DEFERRED ITEMS	
4.1	Committee Representative Appointment to the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee .....	3
4.2	Committee Representative Appointment to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee .....	3&7
4.3	2010 Work Plan .....	7
5.	NEW BUSINESS - None .....	8
6.	CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS	
6.1	Correspondence - None .....	8
6.2	Petitions - None .....	8
6.3	Presentations	
6.3.1	Bill Wilson, MindSea Development Inc. - GPS System for Bus Stops .....	8
7.	REPORTS - None .....	10
8.	ADDED ITEMS	
8.1	Tory Nauffts - Fredericton Access-A-Bus Website/Schedule .....	10
9.	NEXT MEETING DATE .....	10
10.	ADJOURNMENT .....	10

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m. in Halifax Hall, City Hall.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - January 18, 2010**

**MOVED** by Mr. Gary Russell, seconded by Ms. Theresa Horwill, that the minutes of January 18, 2010 as presented, be approved. **MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Additions:

8.1 Troy Nauffts - Fredericton Access-A-Bus Website/Schedule

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

**4. BUSINESS ARISING/DEFERRED ITEMS**

**4.1 Committee Representative Appointment to the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee**

- A memorandum from Gary Russell regarding the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee meeting of February 11, 2010 was circulated to the Committee.

Councillor Blumenthal provided an update to the Committee regarding the extension of Committee members' terms, which have been extended to November 2010, pending a review from the Governance and District Boundary Review Committee. Council is looking into the option of setting up Standing Committees with sub-committees and groups under those Committees.

During the discussion, the Committee determined that Item 4.1 - Committee Representative Appointment to the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee and Item 4.2 - Committee Representative Appointment to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee are similar topics of discussion and agreed to proceed with discussion of the two items under Item 4.1.

Ms. Horwill indicated that she would like to know more about the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee (TLAC) and the Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC).

Mr. Boyd provided an overview of the ATAC, noting that cyclist within HRM have a strong interest and participation with the Committee. The Committee's intent is to encourage travel by way of non-motorized modes of transportation for trails and roads. He expressed the importance of having a representative from the Committee on the ATAC to provide comments and suggestions regarding the needs of persons with disabilities.

Ms. McFadyen requested the Legislative Assistant provide the Terms and Reference for both Committees, as well, the dates and times of their meetings for the next ACPD meeting.

During the ensuing discussion it was **MOVED by Ms. Theresa Horwill, seconded by Ms. Helen McFadyen, that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities extend Mr. Tom Boyd's term as a Committee Representative to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee for the 2010 term.**

**MOVED by Ms. Theresa Horwill, seconded by Ms. Helen McFadyen, that the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities extend Mr. Gary Russell's term as a Committee Representative to the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee for the 2010 term.**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the above motions, pending a review of the Terms of References, and bring forward the motions at their meeting.

Mr. Russell provided a review of the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee February 11, 2010 meeting.

The Committee raised the following points and concerns:

- taxi drivers are not authorized to pick up passengers from a zone they do not work in, even if they have just dropped off a fare from that location
- certain taxi drivers are not aware of the information guide for taxi drivers in HRM regarding passengers with disabilities; the information guide should be more widely distributed
- certain taxi drivers are refusing to take people with service dogs, in a wheelchair or with groceries; drivers are not obligated to take a call when it comes in for their zone
- there is no audio system in place for visually impaired people to confirm that the fare is accurate when they reach their destination; visually impaired people are reliant on driver providing them with the fare amount

Mr. Russell advised that Derek Mathers, a taxi broker, will be attending the ACPD meeting in April to review the Committee's concerns. He noted that taxi drivers are

required to take service dogs and people in wheelchairs under the Charter of Rights, unless there is medical documentation on file stating that the driver cannot lift a wheelchair into their vehicle. Mr. Russell expressed concern with airport taxi drivers refusing to lift a wheelchair into their vehicles.

**MOVED by Ms. Helen McFadyen, seconded by Councillor Jerry Blumenthal, to accept Mr. Gary Russell's memorandum, submitted by way of email on February 17, 2010, as Information Item #2 of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities February 22, 2010 Agenda Package. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

Mr. Russell indicated that accessible taxis have to be owned by a particular tax operator and at the present time, an accessible taxi is a major expense. There is no funding available from the taxi company or HRM to have an accessible taxi. The company, Need-A-Lift, have accessible taxis; however, the cost to go from Halifax to Bedford is approximately \$45 and therefore, people do not use this service unless absolutely necessary. Access-A-Bus is available within HRM limits and individuals can use a bus ticket for fare. HRM is looking at extending the limits to where community transit travels.

Further points and concerns raised were:

- there is an incentive for taxi drivers to expedite receiving a taxi license for an accessible taxi; this is not proving to be successful because many drivers do not choose this option and it does not seem to generate the same revenues as standard taxi service
- one option would be that there be two accessible licences for a certain percentage of taxi licences
- an objection could be to integrate accessible taxis into the regular fleet; drivers would be taking regular and accessible fares

Ms. McFadyen suggested the Committee put together a list of points, questions and concerns regarding taxi matters, which can be submitted to Mr. Mathers during the April meeting.

Mr. Rutt commented that there was some resistance between the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee and the front line taxi drivers who were upset that other drivers were jumping the license process to get a license, that eventually drivers did not want to operate an accessible taxi.

Ms. McFadyen commented that accessible taxis is an item in the Committee's 2010 Work Plan and suggested it be made a priority. She further suggested drafting a recommendation to Council with regard to support for accessible taxis.

Mr. Rutt indicated that this matter requires a fresh set of eyes for review. He noted that taxi companies will not want to be forced into a focus system of applying accessible vehicles. Council could look at having another party review the issue and determine what works and does not work within other municipalities and apply the findings to HRM.

Mr. Nauffts asked where HRM is in regard to hybrid taxis. Mr. Russell indicated that the hybrid taxis are small in regard to the trunk's capacity and doors. He noted that most of the hybrid models will not hold a wheelchair. There is also a problem with the vehicle frame and the wheels are smaller as well. \$10,000 was allocated to 10 taxi driver who wanted to operate a hybrid vehicle and there was only three drivers interested.

Ms. McFadyen suggested recommending to Council an independent third party assessment of national accessible taxis within other municipalities and how processes in those municipalities could be implemented within HRM.

The following points and concerns were raised regarding accessible taxis:

- when HRM had accessible taxis, they were used in conjunction with Access-A-Bus; Access-A-Bus had taxi money and made up a number of calls
- accessible taxis ran mostly during the day, which created problems because those taxis were not available during the evenings
- money was cut for accessible taxis being used by Transit
- concern that people with disabilities do not have the ability to get around HRM past 10:30 p.m. because they can not get an accessible taxi
- there are approximately 250 taxi drivers who want to get a permit for a light for their roof and are not able to

Mr. Russell suggested inviting the owner/manager of Casino Taxi to the April meeting. The Committee determined this was not necessary.

**MOVED by Mr. Gary Russell, seconded by Councillor Jerry Blumenthal, that the Legislative Assistant prepare a series of questions based on concerns raised during the February 22, 2010 meeting related to taxi matters. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

It was noted that Committee members could forward additional concerns to the Legislative Assistant.

In regard to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee, Mr. Boyd noted that the ATAC has been discussing the option to have bicycle traffic lights, where the traffic will stop in all directions to allow bicyclists and pedestrians to cross the street. HRM is

presently trying to get visually impaired people to understand audio signals for crossing the street in either direction. A recognizable system would need to be developed to allow for this type of crossing.

The Committee raised the following concerns:

- there is never one straight bicycle lane from one point to another to travel to the downtown core; bike lanes stop and start in various areas
- streets are not wide enough to support bicycle lane in some areas
- it is hard to retrofit an old city

In response to questions raised by Ms. McFadyen, Mr. Boyd noted that a representative from Metro Transit has not been appointed to the ATAC. The Committee has indicated that representatives from Metro Transit can be invited to their meetings when needed. Mr. Boyd further indicated that new buses being purchased by HRM are equipped with a bike rack and HRM is retrofitting the older buses.

#### **4.2 Committee Representative Appointment to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee**

This item was discussed under Item 4.1 - Committee Representative Appointment to the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee. See page 3.

#### **4.3 2010 Work Plan**

- The 2010 Committee of Council Annual Work Plan for the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities was before the Committee.

Ms. McFadyen requested an update regarding the Point Pleasant Park accessible washroom.

It was noted that the audio signals at the Alderney Ferry Terminal are not presently working. Mr. Nauffts asked whether media releases are sent out to the public when items such as the audio signals are installed. Ms. McFadyen noted that there are some media releases that are usually done in collaboration with other related organizations; however, there are not individual releases for each item.

Mr. Rutt raised concern that it seems to be an ongoing issue getting disability related information to the public. Councillor Wile suggested that this information could be forwarded to HRM's communications department.

The Committee requested the Legislative Assistant contact Jennifer Church, Managing Director of External & Corporate Affairs, to see if she is available to attend their next

meeting.

Mr. Rutt suggested adding an accessible webpage to HRM website that would indicate items/features within HRM that are accessible.

Mr. Russell suggested obtaining an advertising spot on Eastlink Television and having a representative from the Committee provide information to the public on various disability items once or twice a week.

Mr. Rutt suggested the Committee place matters that keep coming back for discussion on the Work Plan.

It was noted that an annual report is submitted by the Committee to Council regarding the Committee's work.

**5. NEW BUSINESS - None**

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**6.1 Correspondence - None**

**6.2 Petitions - None**

**6.3 Presentations**

**6.3.1 Bill Wilson, MindSea Development Inc. - GPS System for Bus Stops**

- An article entitled "A GPS Guide to Bus Stops" dated January 23, 2010 was before the Committee.

Mr. Bill Wilson, MindSea Development Inc, delivered an overview of the GPS application for the iPhone to the Committee. Highlights were as follows:

- the project was started around March of 2009 to make transit more user-friendly
- transit in Halifax is quite difficult to navigate
- the application can be found under hbus.ca; it allows individuals to plan bus routes
- the application indicates what buses to take, the distance and directions to the bus stop
- Mr. Wilson is currently in receipt of data from Metro Transit regarding the 2,200 bus stops; Metro Transit also released data in July 2009 to Google for the Google Transit system
- Application includes information regarding the bus stops, ferry terminals and link buses
- Mr. Wilson will look into whether the accessible buses are included as part



- of the information available
- information can be searched based on the bus stop number that is located on the sign or through GPS
- there is a number of accessibility enhancements on the iPhone, including zooming features, high contrast screens and screen readers
- the cost of an accessible iPhone on a three year contract is approximately \$199; to buy the phone outright would cost around \$699; it is not anticipated that the price will decrease
- other software developers are able to access the application and modify it to make it more accessible

Ms. McFadyen asked whether the iPhone would work in conjunction with Metro's Go Time system. Mr. Wilson indicated that should HRM chose to release the real time data, it would be possible to have the data streamed to the application.

- there are plans to launch this application within 28 cities; an application version can be downloaded for a particular location if the data has been released
- the formats for the application have been written for Apple iPhone and will only work on this device; however, the data is in a text file format called Google Transit Feed and can be converted into other points of interest with GPS coordinates
- a feature could be available within the application that will announce a bus stop as an individual approaches the location

Councillor Blumenthal exited the meeting at 5:28 p.m.

Mr. Nauffts indicated that with his Trekker device he is not able to download points of interests from a website because the applications would need to be in a CSV (Comma Separated Value) file format. Mr. Wilson suggested Mr. Nauffts contact him and he would assist him with obtaining the necessary information.

Councillor Wile exited the meeting at 5:38 p.m.

Mr. Wilson provided a demonstration of the iPhone application noting that the phone has a touch screen. The software provides the routes once. If there is a bus stop with the same route, the application will not repeat it. Bus signs are announced under one announcement and the stops are announced in the order of the buses departing from the stop.

In response to a question raised by Mr. Nauffts, Mr. Wilson noted that the application does not have the ability to announce a bus stop as an individual approaches the sign.

Mr. Wilson noted that context updates are necessary to make the application more accessible for visually impaired persons.

**7. REPORTS - None**

Mr. Russell exited the meeting at 5:47 p.m.

**8. ADDED ITEMS**

**8.1 Troy Nauffts - Fredericton Access-A-Bus Website/Schedule**

- An Accessible Bus Schedule for the City of Fredericton was circulated to the Committee.

Mr. Nauffts provided an overview of the City of Fredericton accessible bus website in regard the schedules format. Highlights were as follows:

- Fredericton's accessible bus schedule opens in an HTML format; there are no other links on the page, which make it very user friendly when using a screen reader
- the schedule provides a description of the route's directions
- Mr. Nauffts suggested recommending this format to Metro Transit
- there is a separate webmaster for Metro Transit's webpage
- Metro Transit bus schedules presently open in a table in a PDF format

Mr. Nauffts suggested the Metro Transit convert the bus schedules into an HTML format and provide a description of the directions for each route.

Ms. McFadyen suggested the Committee invite Kelly Marney, Webmaster, E-Commerce & Web, to a meeting to address the Committee's concerns.

Mr. Rutt suggested the Committee also invite a representative from Metro Transit to the meeting.

**9. NEXT MEETING DATE - March 22, 2010**

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

**INFORMATION ITEMS**  
**February 22, 2010**

---

1. Access-A-Bus Transit Study - Public Information Session (IBI Study)
2. A memorandum from Gary Russell regarding the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee meeting of February 11, 2010