

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

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NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

NOVEMBER 17, 2004

PRESENT:

Phil Cox, Chair  
Ron McKinnon  
Troy Mitchell  
Gunther Seyffarth  
Councillor Brad Johns (7:15 pm)

ABSENT

WITH REGRETS:

Bill Chaffey  
Alastair Lawrie

STAFF:

Eddie Robar, Scheduling Coordinator, Metro Transit  
Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Phil Cox, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm in the Program Room, Bedford Library, 15 Dartmouth Road, Bedford.

**2. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

**Added Items:**      7.1      Membership

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - September 15, 2004 and October 20, 2004**

Approval of September 15, 2004 minutes **deferred pending clarification from Mr. Eddie Robar on item 6.2.**

Approval of October 20, 2004 minutes **deferred until such time as members who were present at the October 20, 2004 meeting are in attendance to make the motion.**

*Councillor Johns arrived at 7:15 pm.*

**4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**4.1 Status Sheet Items - see item 5. Consideration of Deferred Business**

The Legislative Assistant advised an ongoing review of the Status Sheet is underway. She will advise the Committee of any further updates at the December meeting.

**5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**

**5.1      Intersection of Spring Garden Road/Barrington Street and Spring Garden Road/Summer Street - report from the Downtown Business Commission**

Mr. Eddie Robar advised in item 5.1 of the October 20, 2004 minutes he noticed he erroneously indicated a report was prepared by the Downtown Business Commission on this issue. The report is actually the Downtown Traffic Study. He will confirm with the LA which group is doing the study. **The Committee suggested Mr. Dave McCusker be invited to present or send a report on this issue.**

**5.2      2005/06 Proposed Projects/Priorities - update from Mr. Robar**

Mr. Robar advised that he and Mr. Ken Silver of Metro Transit have reviewed the priorities list

sent to them from this Committee.

The following are the changes that will be implemented in 2005/06:

- < A new route for Bedford Highway. It will run to Larry Uteck Boulevard, down to the Bedford Highway continuing to Lower Water Street, Halifax. This route will help alleviate congestion on the Route 80. This new route will fall in between the 80 so there will be ½ service along the Bedford Highway. Mr. Robar advised Metro Transit will keep the route as close to the Bedford Highway as possible due to future construction/development possibilities for Bedford.
- < In 2005/06 there will be an increase in times for the Route 80 and Route 86 at peak. The fast ferry project is supposed to be underway by 2006. Mr. Robar circulated an information flyer prepared by Mr. Dave McCusker on the Fast Ferry project.
- < November 2005 - Sackville (corner of Walker Road and Old Sackville Road) and Cobequid BRT construction will start as soon as snow is gone. 200-250 parking spaces will be available at the terminal.
- < New Year's Eve service on the Route 83 will not be available this year but will be available in 2006 and each year after that. Mr. Robar explained it was not possible to provide the service this year due to union regulations (drivers have already chosen their schedules and you cannot *force* a driver to work extra hours). **The Committee requested Mr. Robar ask the driver if he would consider the extra time for this New Year's Eve. Mr. Robar advised he would ask.** He further advised the cost would be approximately \$70 per hour for each extra hour worked. The Committee agreed if the driver's answer is "No" for this year, that is all we can do. The service ***will*** be available beginning in 2006.
- < Obtaining thirty minute service to some of the 80 routes will take a lot longer as there are overload problems that are priority. Metro Transit has to extend some routes to get people to and from work first. **Councillor Johns requested a ridership count for Route 83. Mr. Robar advised he could supply that information but Route 83 is not a peak service route.**

Mr. Robar responded to Mr. Mitchell that Community Transit was not included in the priorities. Mr. Mitchell advised he pays an Urban Tax rate in Beaverbank but has Community Transit. Mr. Robar explained there will be fifteen minute service coming from Sackville. Councillor Johns added once the BRT is running there will be an increase in service from the Sackville area as the BRT will be running every fifteen minutes. Mr. McKinnon commented there should be more frequency on the feeder routes to get to the BRT. Mr. Robar responded Metro Transit has to justify doing this and right now ridership in that area does not supercede other areas.

- < Service from Sackville to Bayers Lake will be available in 2006/07. Mr. Robar explained Metro Transit has to budget their increases with the reception of buses and only five buses are received each year (at a cost of between \$400,000 to \$600,000 per bus).

Councillor Johns commented the proposed Gas Rebate may change things. He explained the Federal Government is looking for projects that will relate to Kyoto credits. The money must go toward items such as transit and ferry service. He added reality seems to be the money will go where the gas money is generated such as larger areas like HRM. There could be an influx of monies for long term projects which would free up HRM committed funds (such as the \$10 m Ferry Reserve) for other projects such as streets and roads.

The Committee suggested HRM lobby the Provincial and Federal Government for regular transit funding as no funding is currently provided from either level of government. Councillor Johns advised with the Gas Rebate, there will be money forthcoming. He added he attended a portion of the Atlantic Mayors Congress when the presentation was given on this matter. He further advised new planners are being hired to work on such projects.

Mr. Robar explained Metro Transit does have a priorities list and is compiling information on statistics such as; passenger count surveys, user/ridership of various routes as Metro Transit cannot order buses until the money is received. Metro Transit is in the planning stages of determining how many buses will be required. Mr. Robar advised Metro Transit had to shift plans with the BRT advancement to take advantage of the money available at the time for BRT. He added five or six buses per year are not enough.

**Mr. Cox suggested the GAS REBATE be added to the Committee's status sheet for regular updates on the planning/funding that will be available.** He further suggested this Committee may have a roll to play in the Regional Plan regarding transit. Perhaps this Committee should have more contact/input with the Regional Planning Committee. **The Legislative Assistant will contact Mr. Dave McCusker regarding this committee becoming more involved with the Regional Plan. Also, a membership list for the Regional Planning Committee is requested (who will be represented).**

- < Airport Service unfortunately will not be provided soon. Mr. Ken Silver will invite Acadia Lines to use Metro Transit's BRT Terminal in Sackville to provide that service. The Committee agreed it makes sense to have commercial bus lines mesh with municipal services and further suggested that any charter bus line should be offered the same service.
- < Mr. Robar responded to an e-mail received today from Mr. Alastair Lawrie. The concern has been forwarded to Mr. Doug who will monitor the situation. ?. The situation is the Route 84 4:15 pm bus is "missing". A ten year rider of that route advised he used to have to wait for the bus but is now lucky to make it on time. The

problem seems to be a hold up in the Burnside area near Farley and Stevens and Wright Avenue.

The Committee suggested perhaps a study be done of the traffic lights to see if a change is warranted. Mr. Robar advised Wright Avenue will have a queue jump lane and that might help the situation as the buses will be able to "jump" the lights. He added transit priority lights have passed through legislation and there are two transit priority lights in Halifax (one at North Street and MacDonald Bridge and one at Mumford Terminal) but are not in use at present. Mr. Robar added the new BRT buses will be fitted with an *opticom* system so they can change lights at intersections.

Councillor Johns advised he had received comments that the park and Ride at Cobequid was not ploughed and there are concerns with vehicles parking erratically.

Route 82 and 84.

**Councillor Johns requested a report from Metro Transit on the criteria for transit service to a community. To be included in the report are issues such as:**

- < **When can a community expect regular transit v. community transit. Beaverbank residents are paying extra for community transit which they have had for seven years. Would this usage justify a transit route?**
- < **Could the Route 83 be extended to cover the Beaverbank area? When does it become legitimate to step up the service? It has been requested that service be extended to Lucasville and Beaverbank, is there any criteria to increase/expand transit service?**
- < **Would like to have a hard core definition of the criteria.**

Mr. Robar circulated a copy of the *Metro Transit Strategy* (MTS) to the Committee. The MTS is what Metro Transit uses to determine their priorities. He added the priorities outlined by this Committee are also used. He further explained that passengers per hour is one determinate to increased service. If a route continuously has more passengers than capacity this would substantiate an increase in service. Mr. Robar clarified there will be no extended services until Metro Transit gets control of the current overloads.

Councillor Johns further questioned if a community is paying an urban rate and does not receive transit service, or if the transit service is paid by an area rate, should this not be reflected in the tax rate? Beaverbank does not have all the urban services and could possibly be dropped to a suburban tax rate. If the community has no other services except transit then we have to review if it is in the best interest for the tax payer to even have transit.

**Mr. Phil Cox requested a report from the Traffic Authority regarding the situation on**

**Magazine Hill regarding traffic backing up from the Farley and Stevens Ford dealership to Wright Avenue.** Vehicles are not able to get into the intersection, it is a gridlock as too much priority is given at the lights for people coming down the hill from Burnside.

The following comments were raised during the ensuing discussion:

- < Route 84 bus sat for one hour trying to get up the hill at this location.
- < The traffic light at Wright Avenue is longer. Sequencing at the MacDonald light may be the problem. Once you get past Wright Avenue it is fine, no problem and the traffic is clear.
- < The longer light may be to let people get from/to the Parklow.

Mr. Robar advised Mr. Silver is aware of the problems as he saw for himself three Route 84's were back to back as the buses catch up with each other.

Mr. Robar further advised seats will be changed on the new low floor buses. There will be four facing forward for a total of 38 seats. Mr. Robar explained it is only necessary to have access to the front door for passengers with disabilities.

## 6. **REPORTS**

### 6.1 Metro Transit Improvements

*See Item 5.2 2005/06 Proposed Projects/Priorities.*

## 7. **ADDED ITEMS**

### 7.1 Membership

The Legislative Assistant advised there is a person interested in joining the Committee (from District 20). Unfortunately there are no vacancies at present. **The Committee requested a report be sent to the North West Community Council to allow for the appointment of an additional member-at-large from each District in the North West community Council. This would increase membership by a maximum of three.** The Committee agreed to the appointment of the individual as it is always good to have interested volunteers.

Mr. Mitchell advised due to the boundary changes he no longer resides within the boundary of the North West Community Council. He is now a resident of District 2. He added he would like to remain a member of the North West Transit Advisory Committee. Councillor Johns advised North West Community Council is the only group with a Transit Advisory Committee. He commented the criteria has to be reviewed as it is valuable to have the Beaverbank

section of District 2 remain a part of this Advisory Committee.

The Legislative Assistant advised membership on all Boards and Committees will remain status quo until details are finalized regarding the new boundaries of the various Community Councils. **The Committee requested North West Community Council be asked to approve the appointment of a resident from an adjacent district, such as District 2, In this instance, Mr. Troy Mitchell is to be appointed as a representative of an adjacent Community Council. Further, that it be made possible for a future appointment of a representative from another adjacent Community Council as required.**

The Legislative Assistant advised this would increase the membership of the Committee from 8 to 11 with the possibility of additional members from adjacent Community Councils if required. She further advised this would not affect the quorum requirements for the Committee as the Terms of Reference for the North West Transit Advisory Committee states only three members are required for quorum.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** - Wednesday, December 15, 2004.

9. **ADJOURNMENT** - The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant