

**NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

Wednesday, January 19, 2005

PRESENT: Mr. Phil Cox, Chair  
Mr. Bill Chaffey  
Mr. Alastair Lawrie  
Mr. John Merrick  
Mr. Troy Mitchell  
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth  
Councillor Brad Johns

ABSENT: Mr. Ron McKinnon

STAFF: Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Transportation Regional Planning  
Mr. Edward Robar, Coordinator, Transit Scheduling  
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm in the Charles Fenerty Room, Sackville Library, 636 Sackville Drive. The Committee welcomed the newly appointed member Mr. John Merrick.

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

- Addition: 7.1.1 Update on BRT Advisory Committee Meeting - Alastair Lawrie  
7.1.2 Graffiti - Councillor Johns  
7.1.3 Delivery of Agenda Packages - Phil Cox

The Committee agreed to the agenda as amended.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - DECEMBER 15, 2004**

**MOVED BY Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Councillor Johns that the minutes be approved as circulated. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES**

4.1 Status Sheet Item

- 4.1.1 Intersection of Spring Garden Road/Barrington Street and Spring Garden Road/Summer Street

Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Regional Planning Transportation, commented a consultant was hired to do traffic modelling exercises in the downtown area. One task for the Consultant was to provide a model for the value of doing pedestrian only phases for three intersections, two of those intersections are being discussed here. He added staff are aware of the delays with traffic/buses trying to make a left hand turn at those intersections due to the steady stream of pedestrians.

Mr. McCusker further explained some cities have dealt with the issue of high pedestrian volume and high conflicting turning volumes by running three phases: an East/West Phase, North/South Phase and a Pedestrian Only Phase. The Consultant was asked to model these phases and found the delay increased for all three intersections and therefore recommended against this option. The Consultant did suggest an overlap which would start the pedestrians off a few seconds before the green light and then leave the light green a little longer to give time for all pedestrians to cross. Mr. McCusker suggested another option may be to put in a

red light and a green turning arrow which would indicate to pedestrians and vehicles that it is now time for the vehicles to turn and pedestrians to stop crossing. He added this would be a fairly simple change for HRM to make.

Mr. McCusker further advised other considerations are curb extensions on Barrington Street for possible transit shelters or waiting areas for passengers. When Barrington Street was converted (from two lanes and no parking to two lanes and one lane of parking) on street parking was intended to be a six month trial. Bringing the curb out into the street mid-block would create more room for transit amenities such as benches or shelters. This would eliminate parking on Barrington Street altogether.

The Committee raised the following comments/concerns during the ensuing discussion:

- There should be no parking on Barrington Street at least during rush hour. Problem is when two buses try to pass each other and a car is parked. With snow issues in the winter, it is difficult. Mr. McCusker added truck loading/unloading is more of a concern than the parking.
- When Purolater moved their office from Barrington Street the situation improved as there was always a vehicle parked there.
- When change was made to allow parking on Barrington Street, was that before the Tex Park was there? Mr. McCusker advised the change was before the Tex Park but was a recommendation from the business development group at that time to be a traffic calming effort and an attempt to bring life back to the area. The recommendation was for curb extensions which are difficult to do on a temporary basis.

Mr. McCusker reported some changes to the intersection will be seen this year. **He will prepare a more substantial report for the next meeting.**

- Could a recommendation be made to have only buses/taxies/multi-person vehicles running north on Spring Garden Road during rush hour? Mr. McCusker advised the Business Association asked HRM to consider converting Spring Garden Road to a one-way street. He added this was part of the study done by the Consultants but requires a little more work. He advised a further meeting will be held with the Downtown Business Association, perhaps with a representative from this Committee in attendance. The Business Association recommended reducing bus traffic on Barrington Street and HRM took a very firm stand on this issue and advised the best that could be done would be to keep to a minimum any increase in bus traffic on Barrington Street.
- There are some crosswalks (one on Spring Garden Road and one by the Ferry Terminal on Lower Water Street for example) that are not at lighted intersections and pedestrians cross in a "free for all" manner. Have those been addressed in the study? Mr. McCusker responded that signalised pedestrian crossings are working well on Quinpool Road. Pedestrians are pleased but vehicle traffic have complained that there

appears to be more delay on Quinpool Road due to the pedestrian signal lights. He added the decision to add more such crossings would be a Traffic Authority decision. **He will provide more information for the next meeting.**

**Mr. Cox suggested Mr. McCusker contact the Legislative Assistant if a member from this Committee is to attend the next meeting with the Downtown Business Association.**

#### 4.1.2 Ridership Count for Route 83

Councillor Johns requested a comparison in ridership numbers between the Route 83 and the Beaver Bank Community Transit route. Mr. Robar, Metro Transit, replied the Community Transit route would have a lower ridership as there are fewer trips per day. He added per trip it may be roughly the same ridership. **Mr. Robar will provide detailed information at the next meeting.**

Councillor Johns suggested large parking lots in the area, such as the Atlantic Gardens property or the Church property at the corner of Millwood Drive, be considered as possible Park and Ride locations. In Upper and Middle Sackville areas, the residences are so far apart that running a transit service through those subdivisions may not realistically be the best option. In this case, Park and Rides seem to be a good option. There will be future development in the area and incorporating Park and Rides should be considered to service those developments (Brushy Hill - possible 200 home mobile home park and another subdivision). Mr. Robar responded Metro Transit has considered leasing properties in the past for Park and Rides.

**Mr. Cox requested future development and possibility of Park and Rides for that area be added to the Status Sheet.**

#### 4.1.3 Gas Tax Rebate

Councillor Johns advised he attended a meeting today hosted by the Halifax Regional Development Association. He asked at the meeting what the priorities would be for the monies provided by the proposed gas tax rebate. The Chief Administrative Officer for HRM replied the priority would be transit. **This item to remain on the Status Sheet for further updates.**

#### 4.1.4 Regional Planning (Interim Transportation) Committee Composition

- Information from Mr. Rick Paynter, Regional Planning, on the composition of the Interim Transportation Committee was before the Committee.

Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager Regional Planning Transportation, reviewed the mandate and proposed composition. He advised there has been an invitation extended to the North West Transit Advisory Committee to have a representative serve on the Interim Joint Transportation Committee. Mr. McCusker commented one objective of the Regional Plan is to provide transit service to more people. Advancements will be focussed on areas with high volumes of traffic (downtown - Universities - and Burnside for example) to encourage people out of their cars and onto transit.

The Interim Joint Transportation Committee is a precursor to a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) that is in process of being formed with the Province. The notion is that the RTA will be an authority with the ability to expand the transportation system as needed and to collect the revenues needed to sustain the transportation system either through the gas tax and/or user charges such as road tolls. The purpose of the Committee will be to shape what that RTA would be. HRM has set aside in its budget five full-time staff positions for the administration of this authority.

Mr. McCusker advised the responsibilities of the Committee would be to:

- Review and advise Regional Council on the implications of the transportation network through review of HRM's Regional Plan, major development plans and the plans of the Province.
- Create strategies and programs for implementing transportation demand management measures.
- Implementation of strategic service capital and operation plans for the transportation network including the transportation plan. This would include establishing a gateway concept to facilitate transportation of goods and people into, through and out of HRM.

Mr. McCusker outlined the suggested composition of the Committee as follows:

- Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for HRM
- Deputy Minister of Transportation for the Province of Nova Scotia
- General Manager of the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission
- A representative from the Gateway Council
- A representative from the Chamber of Commerce
- Two citizen representatives: one from the Bikeways Advisory Committee and one from the North West Transit Advisory Committee.

The first meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2005 at the Halifax Ferry Terminal Building on George Street, Halifax from 2:00 - 4:00 pm.

**Mr. Alastair Lawrie agreed to be the representative for the North West Transit Advisory Committee with Mr. Phil Cox acting as Alternate. Councillor Brad Johns volunteered to attend any daytime meetings of the Committee in the event Mr. Lawrie/Mr. Cox are unable to attend.** Councillor Johns commented he was pleased to see the Transportation Authority recognize the North West Transit Advisory Committee and extend

the invitation to participate on the Interim Joint Transportation Committee.

#### 4.1.5 Criteria for Community Transit Services

Mr. Robar circulated the Fall River Community Transit Schedule as requested.

Mr. Robar advised there is no criteria other than identifying a need for the community and a willingness to pay the area rate. Councillor Johns advised there are guidelines to establish an area rate. Mr. Robar clarified for Councillor Johns that 35 passengers per hour would be required for small community service. The frequency of service would be every two hours (an hour and twenty minutes). If ridership increased the next step would be to implement local transit service. **Item to be removed from the status sheet.**

#### 4.1.6 Magazine Hill / Wright Avenue Congestion

Mr. Robar advised there had been no change to the traffic light at the intersection. He added staff had contacted him for more information on the issue. Mr. Cox advised the situation is much better than it was. Mr. Troy Mitchell suggested no slow moving vehicles (such as back hoes) be on that hill during rush hour traffic. The Committee commented another problem with the area is drivers heading to Bedford travelling in the passing lane. **Item to be removed from the status sheet.**

#### 4.1.7 Bus driver

Mr. Robar advised that the driver recently assaulted by a passenger suffered a black eye but is okay.

### 5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - None

### 6. REPORTS

#### 6.1 Membership

- A report dated December 16, 2004 for the January 27, 2005 meeting of the North West Community Council was before the Committee.

The Legislative Assistant explained the report is a request for North West Community Council to appoint Mr. Troy Mitchell as a representative of an adjacent district, District 2 to the North West Transit Advisory Committee.

### 7. ADDED ITEMS / NEW BUSINESS

## 7.1 Added Items

### 7.1.1 Update on BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) Advisory Committee Meeting

Mr. Alastair Lawrie, NWTAC representative on the BRT Committee, provided a verbal update. He advised the first meeting of the group was held on Tuesday, January 11, 2005 and provided the following information:

- Project Manager is Mr. Geoff Wright, Metro Transit
- Nine members on the Committee comprised of: members of the public, Nova Scotia Department of Energy, a representative from HRM's Bikeways Advisory Committee, Accessible Transportation, TRAX Ecology Action Centre as well as academic involvement.
- Terms of Reference lists the purpose of the BRT Advisory Committee as: *“Established for the purpose of advising, assisting and providing recommendations on public outreach and customer amenity matters pertaining to Metro Transit’s new Bus Rapid Transit Service. This includes providing feedback on issues dealing with the development and promotion of the terminal and bus service amenities, park and ride lots including car pool area, accessibility, other passenger amenities and customer information issues.”*
- Committee will meet every six weeks.
- An overview of the Urban Transportation Showcase project was given.
- Focus was on the Portland Hills terminal as it is under construction and will be the first BRT terminal open and is to be completed by May. Actual service will not start until August.
- Sackville/Beaver Bank BRT terminal will have service starting in fall 2005. New Beaver Bank terminal (Wheaton’s property) will join BRT shelters and amenities at the Cobequid terminal and a new terminal in Burnside (behind MacDonald’s) which is more capital intensive.
- BRT buses will be arriving in March 2005 and will require additional work to install queue jumping equipment, radios etc. The BRT buses comply with the newly passed legislation regarding accessibility and will be able to accommodate wheelchairs with front and rear door access. Cost of each bus is approximately \$500,000.00.
- Service will be at peak times (6-9:00am and 3-6:00 pm) with service on Saturday but not Sunday.
- There are two routes out of each terminal. Portland Hills to Woodside Ferry Terminal and one going over the old bridge to downtown Halifax. Sackville route from Beaver Bank terminal (Wheaton’s) directly to downtown and one from Cobequid to downtown Halifax.
- Branding: The word “rapid” will probably not be in the name as there is really not a time saving when compared with regular service. (You may save some time as the buses will not be stopping and starting). The focus is on premium service, comfort of ride (air conditioning, head rests etc.).

- Other issues discussed: bike racks, park and rides etc.
- No fare worked out at present but it will most likely be a premium over regular service (maybe \$0.50 more).
- Next meeting will be held on February 22, 2005 at 12:00 noon.
- Please forward any comments/suggestions to Mr. Lawrie.

Mr. Robar commented twenty buses are expected for the first corridor with nine additional buses and two spare. The BRT buses will have GPS systems (Global Positioning System). Mr. McCusker added \$500,000.00 (separate from the showcase funding) was received from Federal funding to install the GPS systems.

Councillor Johns advised he had previously requested (when the presentation on BRT came to Regional Council) that the terminal near Wheaton's not be called the Beaver Bank terminal as it may cause confusion. Mr. Mitchell commented that technically the terminal will be off the Walker Service Road/Sackville Cross Road and not the Beaver Bank Road.

Any further comments are to be forwarded to Mr. Lawrie or the Legislative Assistant.

#### 7.1.2 Graffiti/Vandalism of Bus Shelters

Councillor Johns inquired if bus drivers report vandalism of bus shelters. Mr. Robar responded drivers do call incidents into control and control contacts the contractor/sub-contractor to do the repairs. He further advised Metro Transit has a contract with a company to clean the shelters every two weeks. He added this service is currently being monitored. **Councillor Johns requested the shelter on Fenerty Road be monitored as it was damaged approximately two months ago and still not repaired.** He further advised he receives calls from residents concerning broken glass at the shelters that has not been cleared/repared for days. Councillor Johns asked if there are forms the drivers could fill out at the end of their shifts to ensure the incidents are recorded and action taken. Mr. Robar advised control does log the information and follow-up calls are made.

#### 7.1.3 Delivery of Agenda Packages

The Committee stated they would prefer to receive their agenda packages/information by e-mail as it is a more efficient process (cheaper, more reliable and faster) than using a courier service. The Legislative Assistant advised the current policy of the Municipal Clerk's office is to provide all Board and Committee members with the same information at the same time and in the same format (hard copies). The issue with e-mail is that not everyone has access to a computer. Also, there are various software programs in use which could cause problems when the recipient of the e-mail attempts to open attachments. She advised HRM uses COREL WORDPERFECT and it seems that a majority of home computer users and other offices use WORD. Typically, the agenda packages are to be mailed (Canada Post) at least

one week prior to the meeting. Due to a vacancy in the Municipal Clerk's office (to be filled by the end of January), there has not always been sufficient time to compile the information and have it ready for the regular mail and it has become necessary on occasion to use a courier service to ensure packages arrive as quickly as possible. The Legislative Assistant advised she will discuss the issue of electronic distribution of material with the Municipal Clerk. She added the Municipal Clerk's office is currently reviewing the possibility of electronic distribution of documents.

Councillor Johns inquired once the staffing issue is addressed will the packages be back on track. The Legislative Assistant advised once the staffing issue is addressed the packages will revert back to being mailed one week in advance of the meeting.

## 7.2 New Business

### 7.2.1 Transit Shelter on Glendale Drive near MaGee Drive, Lr. Sackville

Mr. Cox advised the pad is in and the shelter was expected two months ago but is still not in place. Mr. Robar responded the shelters were supposed to have arrived two months ago but the shipment has been delayed. Metro Transit is looking into the situation. Mr. Robar explained the process of determining when and where a shelter will be placed is by review of ridership counts or by request of the area Councillor.

Mr. Mitchell commented it would be beneficial if HRM could install a sidewalk on the Petro Canada side of the Old Beaver Bank Road to Glendale Drive.

Councillor Johns inquired if it would be possible to obtain shelters with metal wires in the glass to address the vandalism issue. Mr. Robar advised the wire glass is not safe. If you break the glass and break the wire, the wire is very sharp. Mr. Cox advised wire glass is no longer used in schools either due to the safety issue.

### 7.2.2 Route 84

- An e-mail from an area resident dated January 7, 2005 was before the Committee.

Mr. Robar advised Metro Transit is reviewing the situation and looking at opportunities to make adjustments. An additional run will be added at pre morning peak and post afternoon peak. There will be a double header at 5:10 leaving Summer Street. **Mr. Robar advised he will contact the resident.** Mr. Robar further advised this is another area that has to be addressed before requests for expanded frequency can be considered. There are a few routes where passengers have been left behind as the bus has been full - almost 200 people in total were left behind in

one day on various routes. He added there has been an increase in ridership this year

perhaps due to gas price increases, vehicle insurance increases and the U-Pass.

### 7.2.3 New Route along Bedford Highway

Mr. Robar, in response to Mr. Chaffey, indicated there would not be sufficient scheduling time to include service to the Bedford area on the proposed Bedford Highway route which will service the Larry Uteck Boulevard area. He added the new Bedford Highway route is to address problems on the Route 83. Mr. Robar agreed with comments of the Committee that Bedford does not have good off peak service at present. Mr. Robar added that Sackville has a high population of university students, second only to Cole Harbour.

Mr. Dave McCusker added the proposed ferry is targeting a high potential market with the goal of addressing more persons to transit service. The terminal would create a hub for transit service in Bedford.

Mr. Cox requested the issue be left on the agenda for further discussion at the next meeting including discussion/information on better service to Bayers Lake.

### 7.2.4 Crosswalks at Signalised Intersections

Mr. Chaffey commented when you exit the bus at Sunnyside (Mall) you cannot get across the street as the push button is behind you and you cannot access it as it is blocked by snow. Mr. McCusker explained until a few months ago there were no intersections with pedestrian push buttons and there will be more in future. He further explained that at signalized intersections, each time the walk light goes up it has to be left up long enough for the slowest pedestrian to cross. Volume of traffic also costs green (light) time on main streets. The Sunnyside Mall area has five street lanes and to leave the pedestrian crossing light up for all pedestrians to safely cross would be a long time.

Mr. Merrick commented there should be a more intensive education process for the public regarding use of signalized pedestrian crossings. Mr. Chaffey added if signalized pedestrian crossings are used they should be in a convenient location and not positioned behind you or blocked by snow. Mr. McCusker added the buttons are placed in the most convenient locations, the nearest post or sometimes a post is installed just to accommodate the push button. **Mr. Cox requested a message be sent to the Traffic Authority regarding snow clearing issue.**

### 7.2.5 Metro Transit Fare Increase

Mr. Robar circulated information on the Metro Transit service increase. He added there has been no substantial fare increase since 1999 except for the \$0.10 increase to cash fares. He responded to questions from the Committee regarding bio-diesel and advised there are no monetary savings in using bio-diesel. He commented that bio-diesel is more environmentally friendly. Mr. Cox advised he is hearing comments that riders do not mind the fare increase but they do mind having to stand up on their trip from Sackville to Halifax.

**8. NEXT MEETING DATE** - Wednesday, February 16, 2005

Councillor Johns gave his regrets for the February meeting.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant