

**NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

PRESENT: Mr. Phil Cox, Chair  
Mr. Bill Chaffey  
Mr. Ron McKinnon  
Mr. John Merrick  
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth

ABSENT: Mr. Alastair Lawrie  
Mr. Troy Mitchell  
Councillor Brad Johns

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.

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

Addition: 7.2 New Business  
7.2.1 Regional Planning Update - Mr. Dave McCusker - This item to be dealt with immediately following the approval of the minutes.

The Committee agreed to the agenda as amended.

## 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - January 19, 2005

**Correction:** BRT buses will be wheelchair accessible at the front access only *not* rear access.  
page 4, **Tex** Park should be **Metro** Park  
page 10, reference to new Bedford Highway route to address the problems of the Route **83**, should be Route **80**.  
last page, request for snow clearing to go to Traffic Authority should be to **operations, not Traffic Authority**.

**MOVED BY Mr. Bill Chaffey, seconded by Mr. John Merrick that the minutes be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## 7. 7.2 NEW BUSINESS

### 7.2.1 Regional Planning Update

A copy of the "Guide to HRM's Proposed Regional Plan" was before the Committee.

Mr. Dave McCusker, Manager, Transportation Regional Plan, presented an update on the Regional Plan as outlined in the "Guide to HRM's Proposed Regional Plan". Mr. McCusker encouraged the Committee members to complete and return the enclosed survey by mid-March 2005.

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

What is planned to entice people to start planning to use transit in the future?

Mr. McCusker advised one clear incentive will be provision of transit service. For example, a Consultant is working on a main street plan for the Spryfield area and has had discussions with the owners of the South Centre Mall in regards to transit service. The owners are anxious to do a major re-development around the transit hub with high density residential. The residents of the area are willing to accept higher density around this commercial core. The mall owners will not do the re-development unless there is a transit hub and high level transit service. Mr. McCusker explained that normally transit service is not provided until the riders are there, but with the Regional Plan, HRM realizes that it has to take the risk and assume that if good transit service is provided, the mall owners will re-develop around that and create higher density and more population within walking distance to that centre. This plan would still require approval of Regional Council as well as the budget to do it.

Mr. McCusker explained the Sunnyside Mall area in Bedford is already considered a commercial centre and the intent is to have BRT service at this location. He added there will be local connector routes to Fall River/Waverley with Sunnyside Mall as its terminus.

The Committee suggested a public washroom be included on the High Speed Ferry proposed for Mill Cove - Bedford to downtown Halifax.

The Committee was pleased to hear of the early start to transit routes as transit service has to be provided before the families move in and buy cars and are lost as riders for five - ten years.

Hope there will be some promotion of the transit service as well. Advertise when selling houses, provide a brochure with the routes and times.

Hope that a Beaver Bank Hub will be considered if the Beaver Bank by-pass goes through. Park and Ride/transit node should be planned for possible Beaver Bank by-pass area (Beaver Bank Hub and at Highway 101).

Has staff considered taking a percentage of capital expenditures for transit services that would normally go to road services. Mr. McCusker explained it is hoped that the Capital Transportation Authority will assist in strategic decisions on how the money is best spent in regards to roads and transit service.

The Committee requested an update on the Sackville Streetscape design.

The Committee advised better service to and from the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences centre is required. Mr. Robar advised there are ongoing discussions regarding BRT service being extended to hospitals and universities which would be all day service to and from. This would be in the Stage II/Stage III approach.

Mr. McCusker advised the Regional Transit Plan is to: 1. To make transit service attract more trips from people who are currently using their vehicles which would reduce loading on the road network. 2. Provide some level of transit service to more people. The first priority is capturing more trips by transit which means providing very good transit service to origin/destination market. The High Speed Ferry is a priority project to address this market.

The Committee inquired if there is a strong emphasis in the Regional Plan to educate/promote/linking issues such as diverting parking meter fees for transit so that people will know that part of the money they pay will be going toward transit? Mr. McCusker responded this is a good suggestion but there is no plan at present.

The Committee thanked Mr. McCusker for his report.

#### **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. McCusker advised delays in the left turning movement are related to back up on Barrington Street and not a conflict with the pedestrians. It was considered, at the expense of car traffic, to put in place things that would better facilitate bus traffic (loading and unloading passengers) on Barrington Street. The intent is to do positive things for car traffic as well which could result in a migration of car traffic away from Barrington Street.

Further, staff are considering converting Lower Water Street to one way traffic and that proposal will be part of a larger package of proposals.

##### 4.1.2 Ridership Count for Route 83/Future Development and Park & Rides

Mr. Robar advised the ridership count for the Route 83 in 2003 was 10.3 passengers per trip and 7.75 passengers per trip for the Beaver Bank Community Transit Route. In 2004, the Route 83 increased to 11.5 and the Beaver Bank Community Transit increased to 8.25. The Beaver Bank Community Transit route does not qualify for Metro Transit service. Mr. Robar advised the cost per hour to provide Metro Transit service would be \$70 which would have to be recouped at the fare box. To recoup that amount would require 35 passengers per hour at a \$2 per person fare.

##### 4.1.3 Graffiti/Vandalism of Bus Shelters (Fenerty Road)

Mr. Robar advised a report is being drafted for Regional Council on this issue. To date the graffiti has not been cleaned from the Fenerty Road Bus Shelter. The Legislative Assistant will provide a copy of the report to the Committee when it becomes available.

**Mr. Seyffarth requested a bench for the Fenerty Road Bus Shelter.**

##### 4.1.4 Snow Removal at Signalized Crosswalk Intersections

**Mr. Bill Chaffey will forward the photograph to the Legislative Assistant to be forwarded to the appropriate staff person.**

## **5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS**

### 5.1 Route 84 - Addition of Evening and Morning Bus.

Mr. Robar advised the 5:10 pm evening bus has already been added and the morning bus will be added in May 2005. Mr. Robar added there is ongoing discussion regarding installing hand straps on the buses as some riders are not tall enough to reach the overhead bars.

## **6. REPORTS**

### 6.1 Updated Membership List

Mr. Chaffey had requested an updated membership list. A list of members and the district they represent was provided. In order for the contact information to be circulated (phone numbers/e-mail addresses and postal addresses) the Legislative Assistant must have permission from all Committee members. **Once permission has been received from all members, a copy will be distributed.**

## **7. ADDED ITEMS / NEW BUSINESS**

### 7.1 Added Items

#### 7.1.1 Newspaper Article - Students Waiting for Buses

Mr. Ron McKinnon referred to Mr. Breton Loney's article in a recent Daily News newspaper regarding Metro Transit's inability to extend the U-Pass. Mr. McKinnon advised he sent a letter of response to Mr. Loney explaining the inability to extend this service is due to lack of government subsidy for transit service. He requested the newspaper research the issue of why all three levels of government are not offering at least the North American standard of subsidy and publish the facts. The paper indicated it plans to research the issue.

Mr. McKinnon encouraged all members to write and speak on behalf of themselves as a transit user and not as a member of a Transit Advisory Committee. He added the average Nova Scotia does not realize there is no government transit subsidy.

Mr. Robar added HRM was 20% above other cities in average increase in transit ridership which is significant. He added Dalhousie may have U-Pass by January 2006.

The Legislative Assistant responded to requests from the Committee regarding what action they could take on the issue of lack of government subsidy for transit service in Nova Scotia. She advised that since the North West Transit Advisory Committee (NWTAC) is an advisory committee to the North West Community Council (NWCC), the NWTAC could forward a report to the North West Community Council requesting they forward a report to Regional Council requesting transit service subsidies from the provincial and federal levels of government.

Mr. Bill Chaffey and Mr. Eddie Robar will research the statistics and forward the information to the Legislative Assistant for compilation in report format for review by the NWTAC prior to going forward to the NWCC.

The Committee agreed the following information should be included in the report:

- | Suggested the approach be that there are not sufficient buses to provide adequate service now and there are increases expected with the additional U-Passes.
- | Statistics as to ridership increases could be included as ridership has increased phenomenally over the last twelve years. In 1992 there were only 148 buses and in 2005 we have only 149 buses but more riders.
- | HRM is a leader in the recycling program but is lacking when it comes to its transit service.
- | Another interesting statistic would be the cost per ride in 1992 dollars: then and now.
- | Interesting to add that the fleet has not increased over the last twelve years as the buses have simply been replaced.
- | Suggested information on the loss of seating due to the seating configuration on the new buses should be included. Mr. Robar has information on the amount seats are used per bus.
- | Statistics regarding "overloading: when the buses do not pick-up anymore because it is already full be added as well.

**Mr. Robar will forward statistics to Mr. Chaffey/Legislative Assistant.**

7.1.2 Order of Business - Priority of Agenda Items

Mr. Chaffey commented that he had agenda items added to last month's agenda (New Business) but they were not dealt with until the very end of the meeting. He was not pleased that the Added Items came before the items he had added to the agenda. Further, when the Committee reviews the Status Sheet items it seems that time is wasted in talking about the same issues with no new information to add. He suggested that if there is nothing new to add that the Committee say, "Nothing new to report" and move on.

The Legislative Assistant advised that if a member of the Committee has an item they want addressed immediately, or in priority over the status sheet items, they can request the item

be moved forward on the agenda during the approval of the agenda.

Mr. McKinnon commented that sometimes members speak out of order and that could be taking time away from addressing all agenda items. The Committee agreed to move forward with the agenda in a more timely manner.

The Chair confirmed with the Legislative Assistant that the only status sheet items on the active meeting agenda are those that were requested to be there by a Committee member or that have new information coming forward.

#### 7.1.3 Dockyard Change in Hours

Mr. Robar advised there are currently no transit changes as a result of the dockyard change in work hours. It could possibly affect Route 52. He added Metro Transit is reviewing the situation at the present time.

Mr. Cox advised that dump trucks are queuing in the bus lanes near the sewage treatment plant construction on Upper Water Street during peak hours which is causing delays. Further delays are caused at the stop just before the ramp up to the MacDonald Bridge. He suggested the Route 84 be taken off that stop as there is rarely anyone picked up there. Mr. Robar advised ridership statistics have been done for the stop near the MacDonald Bridge ramp and it could not be removed as there are riders picked up at that stop.

**Mr. Robar will provide ridership count for that stop for the March meeting.**

#### 7.1.4 Interim Joint Transportation Committee/Capital Transportation Authority

Mr. Cox advised the first meeting, to be held in February, had been cancelled. The Legislative Assistant advised a new date has not been set.

#### 7.1.5 Direct Service to Bayers Lake from Bedford/Sackville

Mr. Robar advised there is no change as yet but Metro Transit is very aware of the situation.

### 7.2 New Business

#### 7.2.1 Regional Planning Update

This item was previously dealt with. See page 3.

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

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant