

NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2006

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

ABSENT
WITH REGRETS: Mr. Alain Bourgeois
Councillor Brad Johns

STAFF AND
OTHERS: Mr. Edward Robar, Metro Transit
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Boardroom, Sackville Planning Office, 1st Floor, 636 Sackville Drive.

2. APPROVAL OF ORDER OF BUSINESS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Additions: 7.2.1 Provincial / Federal Budget - Mr. Ron McKinnon

The Committee approved the agenda as amended.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - March 8, 2006 and April 19, 2006

Deferred to the June meeting.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Status Sheet Item

4.1.1 Transit Study Update

- A copy of Mr. Chaffey's data was circulated to the Committee at this time.

Mr. Chaffey presented the data aided by a PowerPoint presentation. The information is being compiled for presentation to the North West Community Council in regard to the serious transit service deficiencies in HRM. The recommendation to Community Council will be to request transit subsidies from the provincial and federal government to assist HRM in addressing these concerns.

During the ensuing discussion on the data presented, the following comments were raised by the Committee:

- The graphs will provide a visual impact when presenting the information to Council.
- Include a recommendation for a new service standard for Metro Transit which would be that no standing be permitted on any transit route where speed reaches over 50 km per hour. The graphs will show the speed of travel and the length of time the commuter is standing at a particular speed.
- The Sackville Metro Link service is already full to capacity every day.

Mr. Robar advised that Metro Link service will have to increase to ten minutes at peak hours for both Sackville and Portland Hills due to the popularity of the service.

Mr. McKinnon suggested that a shopping pass be introduced to encourage riders to use the Link on Saturdays. Mr. Robar commented that, at this time, the Link is a commuter service.

Mr. Lawrie suggested the use of overlays to show the geography, planning and capacity in comparison with Metro Transit's service standards. The regular routes could then be laid over that information, then the data regarding low floor buses.

- It is important to show what it would cost to address the capacity issues. The graph should indicate the increased frequency required to address the demand and the results of that increase.

Mr. Robar, responding to Mr. McKinnon, advised that Metro Transit has been consulting with Regional Planning staff offering comment on what services would be required for various planning scenarios.

- Due to the increasing cost of gas and vehicle insurance, commuters are looking for a place to park their cars.

Mr. Lawrie and Mr. Robar offered to prepare the overlay information.

- The Committee agreed that geographical information will have more of a direct impact on the Councillors as they will be able to visualize the impact on their districts, specifically in the overcapacity areas.
- The health and safety aspect is a good area for focus; show the concerns with the number of people standing.
- Indicate where and when the transit system is over maximum capacity and then decide if speed is a factor. People standing at a certain rate of speed and capacity are not comparable.
- Show the current service/deficiencies (in red) and then what it will be like when all buses are low floors then add in those routes with speeds of over 70 km per hour. The message for Council would be that the service level is not acceptable anywhere the graph indicates red. (This will show the Bedford Highway and the Magazine Hill areas).

Mr. Seyffarth suggested that Metro Transit replace the seating capacity that has already been lost with the introduction of the low floor buses; approximately 300 seats.

- Surprising information is the reverse flow during the weekdays from downtown.
- Another safety concern is the sideways seats on the low floor buses as there is nothing to hold onto; a concern when travelling at higher speeds.
- Mr. Lawrie and Mr. Chaffey will draft a motion for consideration.
- Bottom line is that more service, more capacity and more money is required.

Mr. Seyffarth thanked Mr. Chaffey for the numerous hours of work he has put into compiling the data. Mr. Robar thanked the Committee for all their efforts. He advised that their work has been invaluable to Metro Transit.

At this time, Mr. Robar announced, on behalf of Councillor Brad Johns, that in recognition for the Committee's contribution each member is being awarded a METRO LINK PASS for the month of June. The passes will be circulated through the Legislative Assistant.

4.1.2 Pedestrian Walkway Sackville area near Highway 101

- A copy of the letter dated May 5, 2006 from the North West Community Council to Mr. Bob Bieren, District Manager, Nova Scotia Department of Transportation, was before the Committee.

Mr. Cox commented that a fence may be placed on the jersey barrier at this location.

Mr. Lawrie suggested that the area be monitored to determine how often pedestrians are crossing the highway.

4.1.3 Amendment to the NWTAC Terms of Reference

The Legislative Assistant advised that the North West Community Council approved the suggested amendments to the NWTAC Terms of Reference as outlined in the report dated February 15, 2006.

4.1.4 NSCC Transit Service

Mr. Robar advised that increased service for the Route 60 is being considered. Unfortunately, a strike has delayed delivery of the buses and the change may not be implemented until February 2007.

Travel from Sackville to the new NSCC campus would be via the Route 80 or the Metro Link with a transfer to the Route 60 or 65 (approximate travel time would be less than one hour).

Travel from Bedford to the new NSCC campus would be via the Route 82 with a transfer to the Woodside Ferry (approximate travel time would be sixty-five minutes). There will be sidewalk access from the ferry to the NSCC Campus.

Mr. Robar responded to Mr. Cox that an additional seven minutes would be added to the Route 87 if it travelled through to Bedford.

Mr. Cox inquired as to whether the NSCC had any promotional information indicating how to travel to the Dartmouth campus.

4.1.5 New Metro Link Terminal - Sackville

Mr. Patrick Doyle, Traffic Analyst, Central Region, advised that data collection students are collecting the data in reference to concerns raised by this Committee at the March meeting. The results will be available at the end of the summer.

Mr. Geoff Wright, Metro Transit, confirmed in an e-mail that landscaping will be done at the Sackville terminal and benches will be installed.

Mr. Robar added that a suggestion was offered to staff that the intersection be cross hatched.

In response to Mr. Seyffarth's concern that there are only two handicap parking spaces and three people using them, Mr. Robar advised that he will confer with Mr. Wright as to the standards for handicap parking.

4.1.6 New Rink in Bedford

- A draft report dated April 19, 2006 to the North West Community Council was before the Committee.

Mr. Robar advised that he has seen preliminary plans for the development. He expressed concern that a road is proposed off Duke Street that would loop through the development and exit on Rocky Lake Drive. A portion of that road will not be built right away as it is only required for future development. Therefore, there will be no place for a bus to stop and Metro Transit cannot turn around in a parking lot. He advised that Metro

Transit will forward a recommendation encouraging a suitable exit and turn around. He confirmed for the Committee that the development is a by-right development. The plans are not yet available to the public.

Mr. Cox suggested the Committee request the North West Community Council send a letter to Wal-Mart asking that transit services be considered in the planning/construction of their facilities.

Mr. Robar suggested the Committee view the traffic impact study and then provide comment.

MOVED BY Mr. John Merrick, seconded by Mr. Gunther Seyffarth that the motion in the draft report to North West Community Council be amended to include a request for transit issues to be included in the traffic impact study for the Northgate Development area. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

4.1.7 Parking at Cobequid Terminal / New METRO LINK Service

Mr. Robar advised that the infrastructure (lack of parking space) is not adequate for a Metro Link service at the Cobequid Terminal. He added that if the new Metro Link buses are obtained, an interim measure would be to increase service to five minutes for Sackville.

MOVED BY Mr. Ron McKinnon, seconded by Mr. Alastair Lawrie that the North West Transit Advisory Committee recommend that the North West Community Council request Metro Transit staff upgrade infrastructure at the existing Cobequid terminal to meet the needs of the new Metro Link service. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4.1.8 Articulated Buses

- Technical information on articulated buses copied from the Internet was before the Committee.

The matter of articulated buses (reduced seating capacity and sideways facing seats) was discussed under Item 4.1.1 Transit Study Update, see page 3.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - None

6. REPORTS - None

7. NEW BUSINESS / ADDED ITEMS

7.1 NEW BUSINESS - None

7.2 ADDED ITEMS

7.2.1 Provincial / Federal Budget

Mr. McKinnon advised that he had heard the province mention ferries but there was no mention of funding. He asked the local MLA, in a recent conversation, why his party was not bringing forward something on the importance of transit in relation to the Kyoto accord etc. The MLA responded that he was not aware there was no funding.

The Committee agreed that the tax break on transit passes, although a small percentage, is a step in the right direction.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE - June 21, 2006

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 pm.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant