

NORTH WEST TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
September 20, 2006

PRESENT: Mr. Phil Cox, Chair,  
Mr. Alastair Lawrie  
Mr. Ron McKinnon  
Mr. John Merrick  
Mr. Gunther Seyffarth  
Councillor Brad Johns

ABSENT

WITH REGRETS: Mr. Edward Robar, Metro Transit  
Mr. William Chaffey, Vice-Chair

STAFF: Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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**North West Transit Advisory Committee**

**Minutes**

**3**

**September 20, 2006**

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- 9. Next Meeting Date - Wednesday, October 18, 2006 ..... 10
- 10. Adjournment ..... 10
- 1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in Boardroom #1, Sackville Planning Office, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 636 Sackville Drive, Lower Sackville.

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

- Addition:**
- 8.1 Route 83 - Mr. Gunther Seyffarth
  - 8.2 Tax Rebate for Transit Users (Advertising) - Mr. Ron McKinnon
  - 8.3 Possible Metro Link Parking Lot in Burnside - Mr. Alastair Lawrie

**MOVED by Mr. John Merrick, seconded by Mr. Gunther Seyffarth that the agenda be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - June 21, 2006**

**Correction:** Councillor Johns advised that he had sent regrets for the June meeting which should be noted in the minutes.

**MOVED by Mr. John Merrick, seconded by Mr. Gunther Seyffarth, that the minutes of June 21, 2006 be approved as amended. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

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

**4.1 Status Sheet Item**

**4.1.1 Transit Study Update / Presentation to North West Community Council**

The Committee agreed that Mr. Alastair Lawrie would present the Transit Study results to the North West Community Council at the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting pending confirmation of his availability.

The following is the recommendation to accompany the presentation: **MOVED BY Mr. Alastair Lawrie, seconded by Mr. Gunther Seyffarth that the North West Transit Advisory Committee request that the North West Community Council recommend that Regional Council take immediate action to obtain transit subsidies from both the Provincial and Federal Government levels in order to address the serious existing**

**service deficiencies within Metro Transit.**

During the ensuing discussion on the slide presentation, the Committee raised the following comments:

- The district boundaries should be placed over the slides as most of the critical areas are not in the North West Community Council territory.
- The link between crush loads, speed, safety and lack of seating has to come forward.
- It is important to note that both the Sackville and Portland Hills Metro Link services already have a number of riders standing.
- Low floor buses (ALF) do not function well in snow conditions (doors open into snow banks and become stuck). Transit service was never closed down in the winter until ALF buses were introduced.
- There is already a seating capacity problem and adding more ALF buses will make matters worse. (Each ALF bus placed on the road equals six fewer seats, six ALF buses on the road equals the loss of one bus, resulting in a demand for even more buses to address core service deficiencies.)
- Information contained in the slide presentation is being used internally by HRM's Transportation and Public Works Business Unit (Fleet Services).
- The fast ferry will not help the deficiencies/issues being raised in the presentation.
- A constant, fixed funding source for core transit service is needed.
- Show how much the municipality is investing in transit service: 70% recovery rate from the fare box and municipal funds.
- Graphs showing the amount of provincial/federal funding since amalgamation for transit service to be part of the presentation.
- A joint Municipal/Provincial/Federal Transportation Committee was struck but has never met.
- Focus the case for subsidies on service standards; HRM is not able to meet its service standards in regard to Metro Transit core service without additional funding from the Provincial/Federal levels.

The Committee requested that, if possible, the presentation be moved closer to the beginning of the North West Community Council agenda.

**4.1.2 Metro Link - Sackville Terminal**

(i) **Parking**

Councillor Johns advised that the tender has been called and expansion to the parking area (approximately 100 spaces) is underway. It is expected to be paved by November.

(ii) **Scheduling**

During the ensuing discussion on the discontinued Metro Link weekend service, the Committee requested that Metro Transit staff provide information on the following:

- Why was the Saturday Metro Link service discontinued: The Metro Link fleet, and the terminals, were built specifically to provide transit service. It is a waste of taxpayers money to have the buses sitting idle.
- If the reduction in service was due to reduced ridership, what were the numbers.
- Why was a reduced service schedule not introduced before completely discontinuing the weekend service.
- To use the service, riders have to know what the service will be.
- Why was the North West Transit Advisory Committee not informed that weekend service would be discontinued. Although Metro Transit is not obligated to consult with this Committee, there is an expectation from the Committee that they would be informed of decisions affecting transit service to the North West Community Council area.
- If the Metro Link buses are sitting idle on weekends, could they be used to provide a pass service such as a "Shopping Pass" service to shopping centres.

**MOVED BY Mr. Alastair Lawrie, seconded by Mr. Gunther Seyffarth that Metro Transit provide the North West Transit Advisory Committee with the reason and rationale for discontinuing Metro Link weekend service. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

The Committee further suggested that there be a better alignment of the Routes as the Link passengers are not able to connect to buses running to the Cobequid Terminal. The Metro Link schedule just misses the Route 83 and 87 leaving the passenger, at times, with a fifty minute wait for their connection. The Committee referenced a correspondence received from Ms. Miller (see Item 7.1.1, page 8) in which she suggests that if the bus schedules were better aligned, people would be discouraged from using their cars which would assist with the parking problem.

(iii) **License Plate Survey**

Mr. Robar had previously advised that it would be possible to obtain information as to the origin of the vehicles using the Sackville Metro Link terminal parking.

The Committee raised the following comments during the ensuing discussion:

- All Link buses are now running at capacity. Passengers are standing on the 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm buses. Five minute service is the ultimate goal. The Committee inquired when the other buses would be coming.
- If the survey shows that there are a large number of users coming from the East Hants area, there may be some justification for extending the Metro Link service to the next turn off by the Irving station. It may be possible to enter into a service agreement with East Hants.
- Extending the service would also benefit the mobile home park in Mount Uniacke.
- Has there been money budgeted for the growth of the Link service?

The Committee, in response to Councillor Johns, advised that locating the Visitor Information Centre at the Sackville Metro Link Terminal was a good idea but, if there is no weekend service, people are being drawn to a location that provides no service. Also, there is no parking available around the terminal during the week as the parking lot is full. The location is not easy for the travelling public to locate.

#### **4.1.3 Cobequid Terminal - Alternate Site**

During the ensuing discussion on the matter, the Committee agreed to obtain an update from Metro Transit regarding plans for the Cobequid Terminal prior to forwarding an official recommendation for a new location or upgrades/expansion at the existing site.

The Committee requested Metro Transit provide information on the long range plans for the Cobequid Terminal including a time line for when the second set of buses would be arriving. The Committee commented that with the new Regional Plan, it is hoped that Metro Transit is being proactive in land acquisition for future terminals/parking/park 'n rides.

#### **4.1.4 Raising the Profile of the North West Transit Advisory Committee**

In response to the Committee's query in regard to how they could raise their profile, the Legislative Assistant advised that the North West Transit Advisory Committee is an advisory Committee to the North West Community Council, therefore, is only able to

advise the North West Community Council. Forwarding reports from the Committee to the Community Council with recommendations that could be forwarded to Regional Council or Metro Transit staff has, and will continue to, raise the visibility of the Committee.

The Committee expressed frustration with the fact that they have been indicating for years that the seven day per week core service has serious deficiencies that have to be addressed prior to adding more premium weekday (Metro Link) and Fast Ferry service. They commented that service to the universities, with the introduction of the U-Pass, took buses that could have been used to address existing service deficiencies. Many riders use the seven day per week core service as their means of transportation. The opportunity has arisen for special "bells and whistle" funding for new programs or services such as the Metro Link and Fast Ferry but there has been no long term committed funding from the provincial or federal government for continued subsidies for transit service.

#### **4.1.5 Turning Bulb - Damascus Drive, Northgate Development**

This item to be removed from the agenda as Metro Transit has advised that the new Route 88 - Northgate will service this development commencing in January or as soon as the first business (Wal-mart) is open. Service will increase as more businesses open in the area.

Item to be added to the next agenda: Direct service to the Cobequid Medical Health Centre. The Committee suggested that perhaps the new Route 88 could also service the Cobequid Medical Health Centre as the two previous issues for not providing service were: design of entrance/turning area and the time it would take out of the existing bus routes.

#### **4.1.6 Traffic Impact Studies**

- A draft report to the North West Community Council was before the Committee.

The Committee agreed to forward the report to the North West Community Council with the following amendments:

- That all traffic impact studies for new developments consider active transportation

issues (pedestrian, cycling and transit) in addition to vehicular traffic.

- A copy of the report be forwarded to the Bikeways Advisory Committee.
- Recommendation to be forwarded to Mr. Paul Dunphy, Director, Community Development.

#### **4.1.7 Pedestrian Countdown Lights**

Mr John Merrick will forward a copy of his information on pedestrian countdown lights to Councillor Linda Mosher.

#### **4.1.8 MSVU Bus Shelter - Bedford Highway**

##### **(i) Construction**

The Committee questioned why the installation of the shelter was taking so long as it was supposed to be installed prior to the commencement of the school year.

##### **(ii) Pedestrian Activated Signal**

The Committee suggested a pedestrian activated signal be placed at Barrington Street by the dockyards due to a concern for students travelling on this route who have to cross a street with vehicle speeds reaching up to 70 km. It was noted that there is a non-activated pedestrian signal by the North Gate shipyard entrance.

Following further discussion on pedestrian activated signals, it was **MOVED BY Mr. Alastair Lawrie, seconded by Councillor Brad Johns that staff provide information regarding the risk of locating a pedestrian activated signal light, for pedestrian and transit users accessing Mount Saint Vincent University, on the Bedford Highway. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

#### **5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS - None**

#### **6. REPORTS**

##### **6.1 Membership**

The Legislative Assistant advised that the advertisement for volunteers to serve on HRM

Boards and Committees was placed in the newspapers on Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup>. Any applications received for service on the North West Transit Advisory Committee will be forwarded to the North West Community Council for consideration/appointment.

## **7. CORRESPONDENCE**

### **7.1 Metro Link Route 185**

- A copy of an e-mail dated August 29, 2006 from Ms. Angela Miller was before the Committee.

During the ensuing discussion, the Committee suggested that the information be forwarded to Mr. Edward Robar and that he be requested to respond directly to Ms. Miller. Further, the Committee requested that Mr. Robar respond to the Committee with any reasons why a driver, who is sitting in the bus, could not open the door and permit riders to be seated and wait inside.

### **7.2 Metro Link Stop at CFB Halifax**

- A copy of an e-mail dated September 12, 2006 from Mr. David Puddington was before the Committee.

During the ensuing discussion on the matter, the Committee agreed that it would be worthwhile to have Metro Transit staff consider the request for a Metro Link stop at CFB Halifax as it would only add approximately twenty seconds to the route. Concern was expressed however that this would set a precedent and additional requests for more stops would ensue.

## **8. ADDED ITEMS**

### **8.1 Route 83**

Mr. Gunther Seyffarth commented that half hour service for the Route 83 had been promised three years ago and inquired when that service will begin. Mr. Seyffarth also suggested that it is a good time to plan for a park 'n ride as there is a thirty-nine lot subdivision being built in the area off Rosemary Drive.

## 8.2 Tax Rebate for Transit Users (Advertising)

- A copy of the Toronto advertisement for Tax Rebate for Transit Users was circulated to the Committee at this time.

Mr. McKinnon circulated the pamphlet questioning why Metro Transit was not doing a similar public relations campaign. It was suggested that a copy of the pamphlet be sent to Ms. Lori Patterson in Metro Transit.

**MOVED BY Mr. Ron McKinnon, seconded by Mr. Alastair Lawrie that Metro Transit create information flyers and posters in regard to the tax credit for transit users introduced by the Federal Government effective July 1, 2006.**

The Committee also suggested that Metro Transit:

- Place an information poster in the Metro Transit shelter on Barrington Street as an extra transit user incentive,
- Attach a notice/advisory sheet with each new pass sold for the next few months,
- Flyers and posters be circulated to a mass audience of non-transit pass users in regard to the tax benefit.

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## 8.3 Possible Metro Link Parking Lot in Burnside

The Committee inquired as to whether a new metro link terminal would be going in at the location on Burnside Drive as it appears that a parking lot is being constructed. It was suggested that this would be a good location for a Metro Link parking lot. Further discussion will be deferred until Mr. Robar is in attendance. Item to be added to the October agenda.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE - October 18, 2006

10. ADJOURNMENT - The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 pm.

Chris Newson  
Legislative Assistant