

REGIONAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

September 15, 2010

- PRESENT: Mr. Fred Morley, Chair
Councillor David Hendsbee, Vice-Chair
Ms. Talia D'Alessio
Mr. William Book
Ms. Margo Grant
Councillor Peter Lund
Mr. Paul Pettipas
- REGRETS: Mr. Floyd Dykeman
Ms. Christina MacLeod
Councillor Gloria McCluskey
Mr. Sam Metlej
Ms. Cheryl Newcombe
Ms. Carole Pelletier
- STAFF: Mr. Roger Wells, Supervisor, Regional and Community Planning
Ms. Chris Newson, Legislative Assistant

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Fred Morley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. in the Helen Creighton Room, 2nd Floor, Alderney Library, Dartmouth.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 23rd and August 11th, 2010

MOVED BY Councillor Lund, seconded by Mr. Paul Pettipas that the minutes of June 23, 2010, as presented, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Committee requested that the minutes of August 11, 2010 be amended to include more clarity for Recommendation #2, page 8, by adding wording that the negotiation of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Regional Park boundaries would be done through a facilitated process with an independent Facilitator.

MOVED by Councillor Lund, seconded by Mr. Paul Pettipas that the minutes of August 11, 2010, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Addition: 8.1 Information Item 1 - Membership Update – *Mr. Paul Pettipas*

The agenda, as amended, was approved.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

Mr. Roger Wells, Supervisor, Regional and Community Planning, advised that the Cost of Servicing Study report, tentatively scheduled for the September 28th Committee of the Whole session, would be delayed going to Council due to staff vacations. The tentative date is now mid-October for the report to be presented at the Committee of the Whole.

5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS – NONE

7. REPORTS

7.1 Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan

A copy of the staff report dated July 11, 2010 was before the Committee.

A copy of the Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan, dated June 17, 2010, was circulated at this time.

The Committee agreed to deal with Item 7.1 together with Item 7.2 at this time. See below.

7.2 Road Network Functional Plan

A copy of the staff report dated July 12, 2010 was before the Committee.

A copy of the Final Road Network Functional Plan Study dated September 2010 was circulated at this time.

Mr. David McCusker, Manager, Regional Transportation, presented both the Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan and the Road Network Functional Plan reports together at this time.

Mr. McCusker advised that this was a follow-up presentation as a verbal presentation had been provided at the Committee's May meeting. A number of the projects under the Road Network and Transportation Demand Management Functional Plans have already commenced or have been completed. The goal is to:

- improve efficiency of the transportation network
- encourage alternatives to single occupant vehicle (SOV) trips and encourage behavioural change
- strategies recommended are outlined in Sections 5.1.1 to 8.0 on pages 111 to VI of the TDM Functional Plan's Executive Summary and include: the development of policies, programs and services such as: car pooling; SMART TRIP program; single occupant vehicle (SOV) disincentives; e-pass and employee pass programs through Metro Transit in order to reduce single occupant vehicle use
- the focus is on increasing the use of sustainable transportation modes rather than increasing roadway capacity
- information marketing/outreach – there will be a major provincial marketing campaign soon promoting awareness and the need to make choices

Mr. McCusker explained that the recommendations included in the report are from the Regional Plan. Although overall congestion and delays on the HRM road network would not be improved, the objective is to maintain the congestion on the roads so that it does not worsen with the hope that congestion may improve.

In response to a question by Mr. Morley, Mr. McCusker confirmed that data from the Long Form Census was utilized in the formation of the two Functional Plans.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, Mr. McCusker provided the following information:

- the extension to Baker Drive from the Mount Hope Avenue interchange has been built

- the Whebby lands were not included in proposed projects for the Road Network Functional Plan
- the preliminary modeling for Highway 102 (Bi-centennial Highway), outlined in the Regional Plan, has been confirmed and is now at its peak due to growth centres in Bedford South and Bedford West. Consideration is being given to widening Highway 102 to six (6) lanes.
- A timeline for whether or not Bayers Road needs to be widened has not gone beyond categorizing a more detailed functional analysis.
- Timelines were not included in the Regional Plan as more detailed functional analysis will be done as part of the corridor study. Some of the timelines are completely out of HRM's control, such as the extension of Mount Hope Avenue to Caldwell Road as it is dependent on the Department of National Defense plans for the Shearwater lands, and; the extension to Woodside Industrial Park is in the hands of the Province. The capital projects listed in the right hand column of Table 5, page 21 of the Roadway Network Functional Plan report, dated September 2010, do contain timelines.

Councillor Hendsbee noted that the proposed Cherry Brook By-pass between Route 207 to Highway 107 at Exit 17 should be a consideration. The road network for this area needs to be more efficient as traffic continues to grow from the Lawrencetown area.

In response to further questions by Members of the Committee, Mr. McCusker provided the following information:

- the Halifax Harbour Bridges matter has been added to the Transportation Management Association's TDM Action Committee's (page 55 of the Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan) list, however; not as a priority item; consideration will be given to building on existing agency frameworks.
- in regard to Item 5.1.4, Table 3 of the TDM report, possible incentives for developers to create fewer parking spots, such as Car Share programs for condominiums, will be brought forward to Council.
- this would be year two of the Nova Scotia Green Mobility Grant, however; HRM was not offered funding this year. Conserve Nova Scotia is the agency that provides that funding and they are in the process of dissolving into another entity.

Councillor Lund suggested that the Bike Parking By-Law also include an education piece to ensure the public understand the rules of the road for bicyclists as many motorists do not understand the rules of the road when it comes to bicycles.

Mr. McCusker explained that the Bike Parking By-Law is similar to the parking By-Law and requires Developers to provide bicycle parking spots and bike stands at new

commercial development locations. The Parking Functional Plan is now with HRM's Community Development business unit.

Mr. Roger Wells, Supervisor, Regional and Community Development, advised that Mr. David Lane, Planner, was in the process of preparing a report for Regional Council on the Parking Functional Plan.

- the concept of Car Share is being introduced as part of the Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan. A "Car Share" program could be offered by the private sector or a large business by offering the use of their fleet vehicles to employees as an option to no longer bring their personal vehicle to work. Those businesses that do not have a fleet could make use of a Car Share program or a Smart Trip program. Making a Car Share program part of the development approval process is a good suggestion.

Ms. Margo Grant noted her support for a Car Share program as an employer could supplement their fleet without the worry of maintenance if they partnered with a Car Share business and those businesses without a fleet could utilize a Car Share program. The employer would be leading by example.

- a report is anticipated to be before Regional Council in November that would include costing information for the vehicles HRM purchased for their Car Share program versus the cost of utilizing the services of the local Car Share company.
- through HRM's SMART TRIP program, a Tool Kit for Employers will be provided to encourage them to make smarter commuting choices such as a Car Share option or offering a "Guaranteed Ride Home" incentive. HRM will work in partnership with Employers.

Mr. Pettipas suggested that the Tool Kit also include costing information as a CEO or General Manager would find information such as the cost to operate a vehicle and how they could save money both corporately and personally via other options.

Mr. William Book commented that having the costing material would be a benefit as each company's expense structure is a little different but if they have a model to work from would be helpful.

Mr. David Lane, Planner, noted that one recommendation in the Regional Parking Strategy, section 5.2.3 is to encourage ride sharing and Car Sharing.

Mr. Wells advised that the Regional Parking Strategy has been reviewed by the Committee and was also approved in principle by Regional Council. A lot of the strategies are knitted together therefore they have to work together to make the end result implementable and successful. All the initiatives would have to advance as the

transit system would be dependent on the Transportation Demand Management system. Huge parking fares could not be introduced for the downtown unless there was assurance that a top notch transit system or other option were in place.

Mr. Wells confirmed for Councillor Lund that although the various Functional Plans have been developed, amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategies were still required in order to implement the plans. The report being prepared by Mr. Lane will speak to the implementation program.

In response to a question by Councillor Lund, Mr. McCusker explained that the TDM Migration Fund is one component under the EcoMobility Funding that HRM received from Transport Canada. Staff will be preparing a report for Regional Council in regard to options for roadway infrastructure cost recovery, such as disincentives for the single occupancy vehicle option as there is no added cost for driving your own vehicle to the downtown beyond what is paid through property taxes, therefore; roadway infrastructure costs are not tied into how a person travels each day. The pricing signals are supposed to be targeted directly at those who choose to make a vehicle a commuting choice and the revenue generated from that would support the alternatives to driving such as transit (mass transportation). Recently an initiative was brought before Regional Council to charge for parking in areas where parking is currently free, such as around the Halifax Commons, and using that revenue to support the transit industry. The goal was not to generate a lot of revenue, it was to send a message that the choice of driving may start to cost in the form of costs for parking/road tolls or London (England) type congestion charges. The result of a broad resident survey showed that a majority of residents would support an increase to parking charges if the money were used to support transit. The funding from Transport Canada was used to assist with the study including the survey.

Mr. McCusker provided the following additional information in response to questions from the Committee:

- staff have been in contact with the Halifax Harbour Bridges in regard to different tolls i.e: for carpooling lanes/incentives. The Nova Scotia Community College's Waterfront Campus has on site parking for registered carpool users and have Commissionaires ensuring that there are at least three occupants in the vehicle. If a vehicle arrives and is not a registered car pool user they must park elsewhere.

Mr. Morley expressed concern with the challenges involved with maintaining vibrancy in the downtown while addressing other transportation challenges and pressures to build roads. He noted that public comment has been suggestive of a downtown shuttle service with a hub and spoke system extending to the periphery.

- alternatives to non rubber tires traveling on the streets include active transportation such as biking, walking, transit or by encouraging the

prevention of trips through initiatives such as teleconferencing. A priority for transit would be dedicated lanes and queue jumping as well as the Metro Link and Metro X services.

Mr. Morley commented that light rail would be an asset to a community and a tremendous growth asset as housing values increase drastically when light rail is nearby.

- there is less opportunity for light rail in the HRM due to the lack of easy corridors, as the CN rail cuts are for heavy rail only and cannot be used for light rail, and the fact that HRM does not have wide streets or space to spare.
- the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) Social Based Marketing section have been spreading the word that choosing to drive to work is not a good decision as it is harmful both socially and environmentally. The best approach is to start changing the mindset on how people commute in the urban area.
- when prices of fuel/insurance go up people think of it as a temporary blip and that the prices will reduce again so there is no long term increase in transit use

Councillor Lund suggested that to change people's behavior there would have to be a marketing and education campaign similar to the "Buy Local" campaign.

- the definition of active transportation was amended to accommodate electric scooters and now includes the term "human power".
- current transit service issues are outside the role of the Regional Transportation group as it is under the Transit Functional Plan.
- ferries are also part of the Transit Functional Plan; consideration is being given to expanding the Woodside Ferry service.

Ms. Grant noted that it would be better to consider water travel on both sides of the peninsula rather than building another bridge.

- HRM is sensitive to the conflict between increasing parking charges for the downtown and the risk of losing business/vibrant downtown area as continued growth in the downtown is relied upon for future employment and targeting this area for charges would be counterproductive. Part of the TDM plan is to target what is now free parking so that everyone would be paying for parking.
- there are concerns with options such as Cordon Tolling or Stall Taxes for commercial parking spaces as any increase charge to commercial areas could ultimately increase costs to consumers.

- an option could be to charge residents a fee based on how much driving they do over a one month period in congested road areas or during peak hours through a GPS system installed in vehicles.
- the issue of a third harbor crossing has been left out of the current discussions as it would be outside the twenty-five (25) year Regional Plan. TDM has to manage traffic demands over the next twenty-five years or a third harbor crossing may be necessitated.

Mr. Wells commented that the goal is to get more people downtown not necessarily cars and HRM has to focus on maximizing the number of people crossing the harbor rather than vehicles. A very efficient ferry system with Park 'n Ride for the Woodside area would be best. Every alternative to a bridge/tunnel would be exhausted prior to building a third harbor crossing.

In response to a question by Mr. Wood on whether a comparison has been made between HRM and other cities that face similar transportation challenges in regard to the smaller road size and lack of space for expansion, Mr. Wells noted that staff have reviewed areas of Europe.

Mr. Pettipas noted that HRM should focus on its strong point such as the harbor and water transport options. HRM may never have light rail, however; HRM could have fast ferries.

Councillor Hendsbee requested that when the report is presented to Regional Council it contain more information on Active Transportation Corridors and bike lanes.

Mr. Wells explained that there were four or five Functional Plans in the Regional Plan related to the whole Transportation Functional Plan that include areas of concentration such as Active Transportation, Bike Lanes, Trails, Parking Strategy and Transit (which includes Ferries) that are all inter-related. He advised that light rail and ferries were best addressed under the Transit Functional Plan rather than the Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan.

Mr. Pettipas commented that "water" permeates all the plans and cannot be separated out when considering roads and buses as more ferries could be built/utilized rather than building bridges.

MOVED by Councillor Peter Lund, seconded by Mr. William Book that the Regional Plan Advisory Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council adopt, in principle, the Transportation Demand Management Functional Plan to guide the promotion and implementation of sustainable transportation projects and programs within HRM. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Peter Lund, seconded by Mr. William Book that the Regional Plan Advisory Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council adopt, in principle, the Road Network Functional Plan to guide the strategic expansion of the road network in tandem with the set of other transportation functional plans resulting from the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

The Committee suggested the following items for Council's consideration:

1. Create incentives for developers to create fewer parking spots such as encouraging the use of a car share program.
2. Incorporate more aggressive approach to Active Transportation Corridors and bike lanes along network roads. Encourage alternatives to "rubber tire" modes of transport such as active transportation, light commuter rail, fast ferries, metro transit, use of electric vehicles such as mopeds.
3. Integrate use of the natural water facility – upgrade ferries, park 'n rides and use of fast ferry.
4. Encourage equity in parking fares as it should not be cheaper to park at a business park than to park in the downtown; charging the same for parking regardless of location could help to encourage use of transit and/or other modes of transportation.

Mr. Pettipas noted that contrary to the idea that Business Parks do not pay for parking, they do pay property tax on the land mass therefore they are paying for the parking lots. In response to concerns raised by the Committee that charging too much for parking downtown may be considered a "penalty" resulting in a loss of business downtown, staff noted that there has to be a balance between encouraging commuters to use transit and making good commuter choices by considering alternatives.

5. Have a marketing campaign to educate the public on other modes of travel rather than single occupancy commutes, similar to the "buy local" campaign.
6. Prepare a "Toolkit" for Employers explaining options they could offer to their employees in regard to car share programs or to supplement their fleet vehicles. Show the cost of operating/maintaining a vehicle and then alternatives on how they could save money both corporately and personally.
7. Promote free or reduced transit fares for special events such as Concerts/conferences/Moosehead Hockey games in the downtown. This incentive could encourage more people to attend events/functions downtown if they did not have the worry of parking and getting in and out of the downtown.

The promoter could include the cost of transit in their tickets and the public would just show their ticket to the transit operator.

The Regional Plan Advisory Committee report is expected to be before Council by mid-October.

8. ADDED ITEMS

8.1 Membership Update

In response to a question by Mr. Pettipas, the Legislative Assistant advised that Membership on all HRM Boards and Committees will remain status quo pending completion of the Committee of Council review, or; until further direction is received from Council.

Members interested in continuing to serve on a Board / Committee should ensure they submit a volunteer application form to the Municipal Clerk's Office for the record. The applications may be completed online at:

http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/volunteer_application.html .

9. NEXT MEETING DATE – October 20, 2010

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

Chris Newson
Legislative Assistant