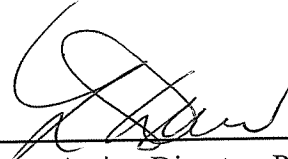




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**Halifax Regional Council**  
**August 31, 2004**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Larry Drew, Acting Director, Public Works & Transportation

**DATE:** August 23, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Access-A-Bus Policy Re: Availability

**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

Halifax Regional Council meeting of June 29, 2004, item 12.2 and a letter received by Councillor Mosher regarding Access-A-Bus registration and availability.

**BACKGROUND**

At the Halifax Regional Council meeting of June 29, 2004 Councillor Blumenthal asked staff to bring forward a report addressing the fairness of Access-A-Bus users having to provide the required 24 to 48 hours notice to cancel a trip when they are sick. Staff were also asked to comment on a letter received by Councillor Mosher regarding registration of Access-A-Bus service.

Metro Transit regularly reviews Access-A-Bus eligibility and booking criteria with the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC), who are elected by Access-A-Bus users. In addition to the input from the advisory committee, Metro Transit monitors the eligibility criteria used by other Canadian Transit properties. Metro Transit has tried to develop these criteria to provide cost effective mobility to Access-A-Bus users.

Individuals wishing to use the Access-A-Bus system have a registration process that includes a medical assessment to confirm that the persons mobility does not permit them to use the fixed route transit service. Once registered, individuals may either become a subscription user or book occasional trips on the Access-A-Bus system by phoning with their desired trip times at least 24 hours in advance.

## DISCUSSION

Access-A-Bus is intended to provide residents whose mobility issues keep them from using the conventional transit system a travel alternative. Access-A-Bus service is intended as a support system to fixed route transit service and strict enforcement of eligibility policies are necessary to ensure maximum resources are available to those who are unable to use the fixed route system.

The registration process requires prospective users to provide medical information from their doctor confirming that their mobility issue restricts them from using the fixed route transit system. If a person's registration is rejected, they may appeal this decision through an Access-A-Bus appeal committee comprised of members of the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee.

If an Access-A-Bus client needs to cancel a trip, they are asked to provide as much notice as possible in order that another client request can fill the vacancy. Cancellations without sufficient notice do not allow Metro Transit or other clients enough time to fill the vacancy.

Staff has researched the criteria used by other transit properties and note that requiring advanced notification to cancel a trip is a common requirement necessary to ensure a cost-effective service that accommodates a maximum number of trip requests.

Metro Transit has a policy of progressive action to respond to users who miss trips without cancelling them. For users who miss less than three trips per month no action is taken. Clients that miss more than three trips in a month are sent a letter explaining the importance of cancelling and the affect it has on accommodating other potential users. The second time a client misses three trips in a month within a twelve month period, their right to use the system is suspended for a week. For a third time within a twelve month period the user is suspended for a month.

Clients wishing to appeal any letters or suspensions may appeal to a sub-committee of the elected Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee . This approach is consistent with how other transit properties handle missed trips and allows the people elected by the Access-A-Bus clients to participate in the final determination on any action taken.

Access-A-Bus registration and trip cancellation policies have been developed in consultation with the registered clients and the elected Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee. Progressive action for failing to cancel booked trips in advance and the peer appeal process, provides a reasonable balance between the need to develop efficient schedules in advance and client flexibility in using the service.

In order to provide greater travel options and mobility to Access-A-Bus clients and the general public, Metro Transit has an on-going program of implementing fully accessible transit service on conventional transit routes. This includes accessible low floor buses equipped with no-step entry and lifts, wheelchair positions, and accessible bus stops and shelters. Metro Transit now has six fully accessible transit routes with two new routes being added in August, 2004. Metro Transit Ferry Service is also fully accessible.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications.

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLANS**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

### **ALTERNATIVES**


There are no recommended alternatives.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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