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## Item No. 2

Halifax Regional Council  
December 11, 2007

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cathie O'Toole".

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Cathie O'Toole, Director, Infrastructure & Asset Management

**DATE:** December 11, 2007

**SUBJECT:** HarbourLink Project Update

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### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

At the August 8, 2006 meeting, Regional Council approved the HarbourLink project in principle subject to securing funding assistance from other levels of government.

At the June 12, 2007 meeting, Regional Council reaffirmed approval for the HarbourLink project in principle subject to securing funding assistance from other levels of government.

#### BACKGROUND

At the April 5, 2005 Halifax Regional Council meeting, Council awarded a contract for consulting services for the Bedford/Halifax Fast Ferry Cultivation Study to TDV Global Inc. The Consultants presented their findings at the August 8, 2006 Regional Council meeting. Following the presentation, Council approved the project in principle subject to funding.

At the June 12, 2007 meeting, Regional Council reaffirmed the project in principle subject to funding and requested a staff report outlining the next steps for the project.

## **DISCUSSION**

The HRM Regional Plan relies on higher order transit systems to attract more of the region's trip-making to transit. The needed systems include bus rapid transit (MetroLink) and high speed ferry (HarbourLink). With the additional trips that these systems attract to transit, several major roadway network expansion projects can be deleted or rendered unnecessary.

The Bedford/Halifax Fast Ferry Cultivation Study was designed to assess the viability of operating a high speed ferry service between Mill Cove in Bedford and downtown Halifax. The study included a market study, vehicle trip reduction assessment, passenger connectivity, economic analysis, wake-wash measurements and stakeholder consultations. The study concluded there is very high public support for this service, that the service would be financially viable and technically feasible and recommended that the project move forward. At the Halifax Regional Municipality Council meeting held August 8, 2006, Council approved the HarbourLink project in principle subject to funding and directed staff to continue with the project.

This approval supported a decision by Regional Council during the 2006/07 budget discussions and review of the Council Focus Areas at which time Council moved the high speed ferry project to a "Must Plan For" category when given an array of transportation options to consider to address transportation issues facing HRM.

Since the approval of the project in principle, staff has:

- held preliminary discussions with the Waterfront Development Corporation to discuss access for ferry terminal;
- met with the Bedford South visioning committee and have had the ferry included in the draft visioning plan;
- initiated discussions with other levels of government on funding opportunities for the project;
- held meetings with other harbour users including DND and the various local yacht clubs on route design, operational and safety issues;
- held meetings with local harbour tour operators;
- held meetings with DND on wake/wash issues, security and the use of the DND simulator to test harbour traffic issues and training of high speed ferry crews;
- met with various vessel designers, builders and operators;
- commenced preliminary negotiations for a Purcell's Cove ferry terminal and parking site;
- attended meeting with Transport Canada on regulatory issues and security.

While the feasibility of the Bedford/Halifax route was studied and supported by the findings in the Bedford/Halifax Fast Ferry Cultivation Study, Council requested staff to explore a number of other possible routes including Purcell's Cove, Birch Cove, Fisherman's Cove, and DND. Each of these destinations require a market analysis and technical evaluation including wake-wash assessment,

opportunities for park & ride facilities, siting for terminal and docking facilities and traffic impacts.

The next steps to be taken to continue the project include further market analysis and assessment of possible future terminal locations identified in the Consultant's study; the development of a funding proposal; the development of preliminary performance specifications for a vessel design, development of a solid business case, and preliminary terminal design and costing.

It is important to note that to date no future funds have been approved or committed to the project by HRM at this time.

The total Capital Cost of the HarbourLink Project is estimated at \$20 million as follows:

2 X 250 Passenger vessels @ \$5,500,000 ea.	\$ 11,000,000
Mill Cove & Halifax Ferry Terminal & Docking Facilities	\$ 8,000,000
Other Expenses	\$ 1,000,000
Total Project Cost	\$ 20,000,000

Funding of the total cost of the project assumes cost sharing of the project by other levels of government or a P3 alternative. It is proposed that Halifax Regional Municipality's funding commitment would be \$6.7 million, representing one third of the estimated capital cost of the project with the remainder to be cost shared by other levels of government.

In terms of specific funding opportunities, staff is focusing efforts on possible Federal infrastructure funding support for the project. It is staff's belief that the HarbourLink project constitutes a national marquee project; one which should be supported as a national showcase. It is from this perspective that the approach to date has been to source out potential funds that might not otherwise be expended in our community.. For example, staff is assuming funds such as MRIF, which are allocated to regions should not be considered as a possible source. This approach ensures that any funds regionally allocated will continue to remain available for priority capacity and recapitalization projects. As well, generally speaking, such programs might not have the capacity to support a project like this at the local level.

The scope and magnitude of a project like the HarbourLink places it in a category of high profile public interest. During the early days of project scoping and researching, the support of Council and the public has a significant impact on future (formal) funding requests. Council endorsement of the project in principle has been and will continue to be a key factor in ensuring positive discussions with potential funding partners.

Staff recently presented the HarbourLink concept to representatives from Nova Scotia Transportation and Public Works and is currently seeking support for the project at the highest levels of the provincial government to strengthen the case for federal funding. There have been preliminary discussions at the federal level specifically with Transport Canada, regarding the project.

As this project proceeds, should Council formally endorse it for implementation, Council and public support will continue to be of utmost importance.

Staff will continue to bring information back to Council to ensure dialogue is on-going regarding strategic and operational infrastructure needs. As priorities are considered and established, a common, clear and concise voice regarding HRM's infrastructure and funding priorities will be key to HRM's ability to maximize access to potential sources of funds.

Once tentative external funding has been identified, Council will have the opportunity to consider the priority of the high speed ferry project relative to other needs through the Business Planning/Budget processes. At the point where funding partnerships have been identified, staff will request Council to approve the project for implementation. Staff will then commence implementation of the project including tenders for vessel design and construction; facility design, expansion and construction and other project requirements.

There will be a number of key decision points that will be referred to Regional Council as the project progresses. These include prioritizing the HarbourLink Project with other transportation needs, setting the funding level for HRM's portion of the project costs, approval of the service delivery method ie. vessels owned and operated by HRM, contracted service to private operator or private/public partnership; partnerships with the Waterfront Development Corporation and other possible partners; and operational requirements such as service levels and fare strategies. The summary of the project time line is shown in attachment one.

In the meantime, efforts continue on developing a shared vision with the Waterfront Development Corporation for the service and development of Phase II of the Mill Cove lands. Following the process identified in the approved Regional Plan, HRM Council was requested and approved a visioning exercise throughout the spring and summer to determine the public vision for the Mill Cove lands. This included consideration for a ferry terminal, parking and docking facilities for the proposed high speed ferry service. The initial results support and build on the concept of the high speed ferry service

Staff will continue seeking funding opportunities and work with the Waterfront Development Corporation on identifying a terminal and docking site, parking areas and access to the Mill Cove location.

While resources are directed toward the study and possible implementation of high speed ferry service between Bedford and downtown Halifax, a number of other transit improvements and service increases are also planned to address public transit needs throughout Halifax Regional Municipality. These include the introduction of Express and Rural Transit services identified in the Regional Transportation Plan, a downtown shuttle service using diesel/electric hybrid buses, a third MetroLink route serving the Clayton Park/Spryfield area, increased service levels on Metro Transit's core service area and continued investment in Metro Transit's core service through the purchase of replacement and expansion buses.

In addition, there is planned expansion of low-floor accessible transit routes and Access-A-Bus service, redesign and expansion of the Dartmouth Sportsplex Transit Terminal, and replacement of the GoTime passenger and public information system.

In summary, there are several reasons why the HarbourLink project should be viewed as a project that complements investment in other transit:

1. Bolstering of the existing transit service and investment in new services like rural transit and more MetroLink routes is already part of the 5 year capital plan.
2. Success of the Regional Plan relies on high volumes of transit ridership that can result only from higher order services in large ridership markets. Our data shows that high speed ferry service has the potential to attract four to six times the ridership that conventional bus service can.
3. New money from other levels of government can be generated only from unique, high profile projects such as HarbourLink. A strong business case and continued support for the project will be key to its success.

Introduction of high speed ferry service includes using conventional and shuttle bus service to provide convenient connections with the ferry service both at the Mill Cove site and the downtown terminal. This will have the effect of encouraging increased use of the public transit system as a whole as new users become more familiar with the integrated transit system.

There are three significant events that will determine a timeline for the HarbourLink Project to begin:

1. Securing adequate appropriate funding for the project.

2. Significant completion of the Mill Cove Phase II in-fill to allow for the construction of the Mill Cove Terminal and parking facilities.
3. The completion of an access to the site for bus, vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Assuming the project secures the necessary funding and Phase II of the Mill Cove lands can be developed to the point where construction of a Mill Cove terminal can begin and access to the site is completed, the project could be expected to take approximately 30 months to complete as indicated in the following preliminary project implementation plan. Please refer to HarbourLink Project preliminary timelines chart, attached.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications at this time.

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN**

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**

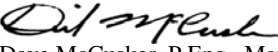
There are no recommended alternatives.

### **ATTACHMENT**

HarbourLink Project Preliminary Timelines Chart

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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# HarbourLink Project Update

## PROPOSED PROJECT TIMELINES

