

# Halifax Student Alliance

## *Late Night Transit Pilot*

Pre-Budget Submission to HRM Council

# 2009-2010



**Acknowledgements:**

Mark Coffin, BSC (2009)  
Todd Douglas, BDes, MPLAN (2010)  
Lauralee Sim BSC, MPLAN (2010)

**Membership:**

**Dalhousie Student Union**

Mark Coffin, Chair  
Courtney Larkin, Director  
Eric Snow, Director

**Saint Mary's University Student Association**

Brittany Hilton, Vice Chair  
Chris MacDougall, Director  
Matt Risser, Director

**Nova Scotia Community College Student Association**

(Dartmouth - Waterfront Campus)  
Megan Roberge, Treasurer

**Executive Director:**

Zachary P. Dayler



DALHOUSIE  
STUDENT  
UNION



Saint Mary's University Students' Association



Dear Councilors,

Please find attached a request from the Halifax Student Alliance (HSA) regarding late-night transit service in downtown Halifax. The HSA is an advocacy group representing the interests of over 25,000 university and community college students in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

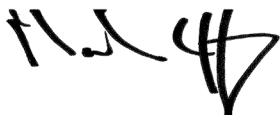
Our attached request asks HRM Council and Metro Transit to make the appropriate budgetary adjustments to ensure that our municipality is able to provide a late-night transit pilot program that services the downtown and student residential areas during busy times. We feel that this request is directly in line with two of council's five focus areas for the 2009/2010 Budget: Public Safety and Transportation.

Last year, the HSA made community safety one of its advocacy priorities to coincide with the HRM Roundtable Report on Violence. After surveying 1,542 students as part of Professor Donald Clairmont's report on violence, we learned that 45 percent of respondents had been victims of crime while studying in HRM. Alarming, 12 percent of respondents disclosed that they had been victims of sexual assault downtown. We have been happy to see some of the recommendations of the report implemented over the past year, and we wholeheartedly agree with Professor Clairmont's recommendation to implement a late-night transit service.

Students in Halifax contribute at least \$6.7 million annually to the Metro Transit operating budget through our U-Pass fees; more than 10 percent of all Metro Transit revenue. In addition to this, students pay fees for summer passes and MetroLink fares. Needless to say, the student contribution to Metro Transit's operating budget is considerable. The HSA will continue to encourage Metro Transit to provide better service to the universities and colleges, which are cornerstones of the local economy. Estimates indicate that students in Halifax contribute over \$300 million every year to HRM's overall economy.

We appreciate HRM Council's serious consideration of our request. The night time economy in HRM depends on late-night activity, and it is the responsibility of establishment owners, student associations, universities, and most importantly, our local government to make this atmosphere as safe as possible. The HSA hopes that this service can be implemented before the arrival of thousands of new and returning students in September 2009. We are happy to discuss our requests with any member of Council or HRM staff at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Coffin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Coffin  
Chair, Halifax Student Alliance

## **Table of Contents:**

<b>Halifax Student Alliance Approach to Municipal Government</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Summary Recommendation</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Political Climate</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Federal Context</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Provincial Context</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Municipal Context</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Service Expansion and Service Gaps</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Maintaining Public Support</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Background Sources</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>13</b>

## **Halifax Student Alliance Approach to Municipal Government**

Our membership has identified three key areas of concern for the student community in Halifax: 1) transportation and mobility, 2) safety, and 3) affordable housing. These local issues impact the quality of student life, so HSA works with government and stakeholders on these matters, among others, to build a stronger and more livable Halifax.

Central to our approach, is the knowledge that municipal decision-making extends beyond the scope of the municipality and will often transcend into the provincial and federal realms of power. HSA pursues issues related to the quality of life for student community members in the Halifax Regional Municipality at all levels of government; municipal, provincial and federal.

HSA works first and foremost to build partnerships with the HRM Council and to move collectively and collaboratively on matters that concern students. HSA believes that communication and partnerships not only improve the quality of life for students, but lead to a higher quality of life for all residents.



## **Summary Recommendation:**

**Halifax Regional Council should fund a late-night bus service pilot project on all major institutional routes. This pilot project should consider including the following routes:**

**Route 9: Barrington (Appendix 1)**

**Route 17: Saint Mary's (Appendix 2)**

**Route 41: Dalhousie (Appendix 3)**

**Route 1: Dartmouth - Spring Garden – Mumford. (Appendix 4)**

### **Brief:**

#### **Primary Aim:**

- To improve safety
- Student buildings are open past midnight, leaving many students with long distances to travel at night, potentially alone.
- Late-night transit will help to improve the safety of students travelling to and from Halifax's social districts by providing a safe mode of late-night transportation.
- Young adults (ages 21-25) are typically at a higher risk of becoming victims of crime.

#### **Secondary Aims:**

- Provide more transportation options for entire community
- Mitigate gaps between service demand and infrastructure improvements
- Maintain public support for Council and Metro Transit decision making
- HRM will have an opportunity to evaluate the efficiency of the extended service before a full investment

## **Background:**

The HSA believes that high quality public transportation is a necessity for student community members across the HRM. Students attending Halifax's post-secondary institutions live all over the city and have limited amounts of money to spend on their travel. As a result, they often depend on public transit; this makes adequate access to transit crucial to meeting the demands of pursuing post-secondary studies in the city.

## **Safety:**

The extension of transit into the early hours of the morning will help alleviate student concerns raised in the Clairmont Report on Violence. Through a survey conducted by the HSA as part of the report, we discovered that most students, particularly females, experience a significant fear of crime and violence. They were especially concerned with muggings, robberies, and molestations.<sup>1</sup> Most disturbing about the survey was the finding that 45% of the respondents had already been victims of crime.<sup>2</sup> To add to this, participants felt that very little concern was given to their general safety, despite research indicating that young adults ages 21-25 are at a disproportionately high risk of becoming victims of crime and violence.<sup>3</sup> This is unacceptable, and the HSA believes that an investment in late-night transit will reduce the frequency of such incidents. Similarly, the Clairmont Report recommended that the municipality consider, "re-adjusting night-time schedules for Metro Transit, at least within the peninsula".<sup>4</sup> Safety and security is essential to ensuring continued student stimulation of the Halifax economy. Investing in late-night transit service will not only aid students, but it will promote business in the downtown as well.

## **Political Climate:**

Current levels of government investment remain insufficient to address increasing transit demands. Recently, the Canadian Urban Transit Association estimated the infrastructure requirements for transit systems across the country to be \$40.1 billion for the period of 2008-2012.<sup>5</sup> Further, the survey highlighted the greater funding demand for expansion and ridership growth compared with infrastructure replacement and rehabilitation funding. This demonstrates that increasing demand for transit is driving the need for further funding.

## **Federal:**

Federal government transit funding is unpredictable and has traditionally not met municipal needs, making long-term plans difficult to implement. In addition, as Metro Transit expands, so do maintenance requirements. Reliable funding is essential for capital expenditures and proper maintenance. The recent Federal Budget (2009) proposes a cost-sharing program for infrastructure projects between all levels of government and we encourage HRM to explore further federal grants for transit improvements in conjunction with the province.

## **Provincially:**

At the provincial level, funding for Metro Transit is dismal. According to a recent article published by The Coast, provincial governments across Canada commit an average of \$19.87 per person annually to transit services. The Nova Scotia government's contribution pales in comparison, offering only \$3.97 per person to transit services, none of which goes directly to Metro Transit.<sup>6</sup> This lack of provincial funding shows little support for affordable, environmentally-friendly growth and practices. HRM Council, along with other members of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM), should work toward increasing transit support from the province of Nova Scotia.

## **Municipally:**

Due to financial restraints at both the federal and provincial levels, HRM is left with a challenging situation. To address transit concerns, HRM has embarked on a 5 Year Transit Plan made possible through funding from Infrastructure Canada's Transit Trust. To use this money responsibly, HRM staff has identified some strategic priorities requiring the following 11 investments:<sup>7</sup>

### **Investments:**

Transit Garage

Rural Express

Transit Corridor

MetroLink

Downtown Shuttle

Local Rural Transportation

Harbor Link

### **Service Expansion**

Security Improvements

Improved Fare Collection

New/Upgraded Terminals

The consequences of inadequate transit funding are illustrated by Metro Transit's current inability to meet rising public transportation service demands. The lack of transit investment from various levels of government has compromised service, and student-specific concerns have been largely ignored. Actions such as federal contributions over the last two years, and Metro Transit's 5 Year Plan have begun to address these problems, but they still have not addressed specific transit inadequacies experienced by student community members on a daily basis.

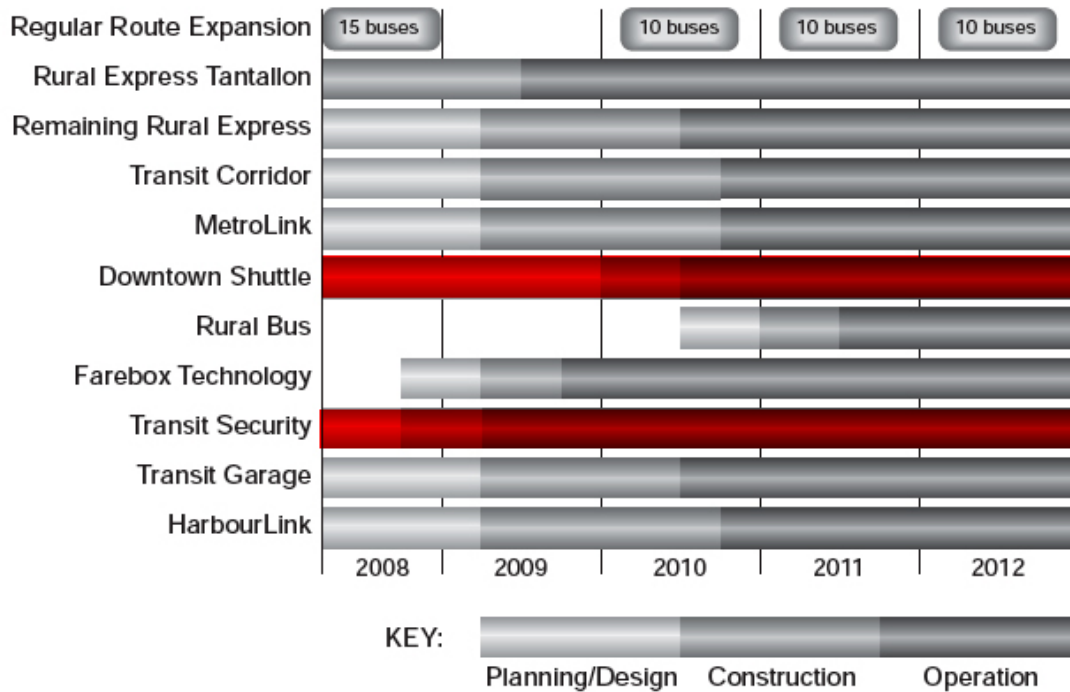


## Service Expansion and the Service Gap:

The 5 Year Transit Plan suggests that positive changes are coming soon to Metro Transit in terms of overall service expansion and infrastructure support, which will better equip the transit agency to deal with local mobility issues. Unfortunately, there will still be a delay in delivering higher quality service to all HRM community members. Recognizing this challenge, Lisette Cormier, Metro Transit’s spokeswoman, acknowledged that, “unfortunately, it can’t be fixed tomorrow”. Mayor Kelly suggested that a, “good night shuttle, to take university students home from downtown, could be addressed if Council wishes”.<sup>8</sup> If the current plan moves forward along the most recent predicted timeline (from November 18, 2008), transit riders will not see an extension of service hours until the end of 2010.

## Current Metro Transit Improvements Timeline:

### Timeline for 5 Year Transit Plan: Retrieved November 18, 2008<sup>9</sup>



*\*HSA assumes that both security and an express downtown shuttle are important features to providing late night service.*

Halifax Regional Municipality's 5 Year Transit Plan includes such measures as increased transit security and accessibility, and replacement of bus shelters. The student community and the HSA welcome the planned improvements because they will help the overall quality of service and make daily transit use more efficient and enjoyable. The timely and expensive plan has a projected completion date of 2013 and a price tag of approximately \$155 million dollars.<sup>10</sup>

While transit improvements are occurring, gaps between demand for transit and actual service levels will persist. To mitigate the effects of these gaps, the HSA encourages Council to approve funding for a late-night bus service pilot project on major post-secondary routes, aiming for eventual permanent implementation after demonstrated success. The implementation of the pilot project will give the municipality an opportunity to evaluate the viability and efficiency of such a service. It will also allow HRM to identify the actual costs of late-night service, allowing for better transit financial planning past 2013.

The goals of service expansion as stated by Danny English, CAO for HRM:

**5 Year Transit Approach:**

Retrieved from: **5 Year Approach to Transit Enhancements (April 2008)**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Cost (\$M)</b>	<b>Benefits/Impacts</b>	<b>Dependencies and Risks</b>
Service Expansion	\$27.0	Meeting the service demands, standards, and ridership growth. Reduction of GHG. Introduction of neighbourhood bus and expansion of UPass.	Dependant on a new garage facility.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Estimated Budget</b>	<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>
Expansion of Conventional Service	<p>With the growth experienced in transit ridership, especially with the introduction of a U-Pass program for university students and demand for additional transit services, HRM has identified a number of service gaps between demand and service levels across the service area.</p> <p>This requires investment in conventional transit service to ensure service standards are met and demand is addressed. This is particularly important as new and expanded higher-order transit services such as high speed ferry service and bus rapid transit bring more new transit users onto the system. Expansion also allows service to be extended to new centres within or adjacent to the existing service area.</p>	\$27,000,000	Ongoing

## **Maintaining Public Support:**

The project descriptions provided above present a further challenge to the expansion of service. With a \$27 million price tag, the high cost of service expansion, coupled with the need for improved infrastructure support, could postpone the already to distant deadline of 2010, and further delay “service gap” solutions. By not improving service delivery, particularly the expansion of service hours, Metro Transit may lose public approval and ultimately make public support for further transit developments difficult to achieve.

Though the extension of service past the current stoppage of 12:55 am is not explicitly stated as a priority in the 5 Year Plan, HRM should consider extending service hours as they expand overall service to maintain public support. The HSA believes that by seeing direct results of government investments, community members will continue to support Council and Metro Transit.

## **Background Sources:**

1. Clairmont, Don. 2008. *Violence and Public Safety in the Halifax Regional Municipality*. Pg. 51. Atlantic Institute of Criminology, Halifax.
2. Clairmont, Don. 2008. *Violence and Public Safety in the Halifax Regional Municipality*. Pg. 52. Atlantic Institute of Criminology, Halifax.
3. Halifax Student Alliance. 2008. *Student Safety Survey*.
4. Clairmont, Don. 2008. *Violence and Public Safety in the Halifax Regional Municipality*. Pg. 55. Atlantic Institute of Criminology, Halifax.
5. Canadian Urban Transit Association. February 2008. Transit Infrastructure Needs for the period 2008-2010. P.3.<http://www.cutaactu.ca/sites/cutaactu.ca/files/infrareport2008.pdf>.11
6. Bousquet, Tim. 2008. A City in Transit. Accessed The Coast, 2009: <http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/a-city-in-transit/Content?oid=995603>
7. O’Toole, Cathie. 2008. 5 Year Transit Plan Update. Pg. 1. <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/081118cai05.pdf>.
8. Staff. Chronicle Herald. 2009. New Public Safety Office Takes Aim at Crime. Accessed The Chronicle Herald, 2009: <http://thechronicleherald.ca/Search/1106989.html>.
9. O’Toole, Cathie. 2008. 5 Year Transit Plan Update. Pg.6.. <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/081118cai05.pdf>.
10. Metro Transit. 2008. Metro Transit 5 Year Budget Summary. Attachment C pg. 14.
11. Jones, Lindsay. 2008. Users say Halifax Needs More Convenient Transit System. Accessed 2009 Metro News: <http://www.metronews.ca/halifax/local/article/119268>.

## **Recommendation**

### **Whereas:**

Currently, Metro Transit buses do not run later than 12:55am but some student buildings are open past this time. This leaves many students without a safe mode of transportation to get home, potentially exposing them to a higher risk of crime and violence when studying or playing downtown at night. While other transit systems have taken a proactive approach and adopted several initiatives to promote passenger safety, Metro Transit has not followed suit. Students make significant contributions directly to Metro Transit's revenue through their U-Pass fees, and to the HRM economy in general, giving weight to their concerns. The HSA calls on HRM Council to approve funds in the 2009-2010 budget to support a pilot late-night transit project on major institutional routes to ensure student safety.

The 5 Year Transit Plan is a step in the appropriate direction for HRM but there is no mention of implementing a late-night bus service. In addition to ameliorating student safety, the HSA feels that a pilot extension of service hours will mitigate service gaps between transit demand and actual service that are currently contributing to rider dissatisfaction.<sup>11</sup> The pilot extension will also provide Council with an opportunity to evaluate the efficiency of the extended service before fully committing to the service change.

Support from Council will not only signify their recognition of the important role students play in the community, but also help to support post secondary-institutions and social venues across Halifax. Late night transit will allow safer and more convenient access to institutional and social activities for both students and other community members.

Late night transit will allow safer and more convenient access to institutional and social activities. HSA calls on HRM Council to approve funds in the 2009-2010 budget to support a pilot late-night transit project on major institutional routes. Support from Council will signify their recognition of the important role that students play in the community, but also help to support both post secondary institutions and social venues across Halifax.

### **BIRT:**

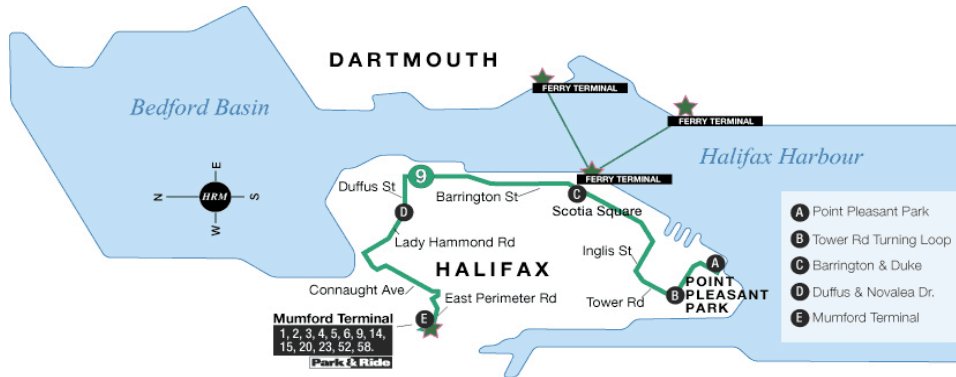
**Halifax Regional Council fund a late-night bus service pilot project on all major institutional routes for a period of 1 fiscal year at minimum.**

### **BIFRT:**

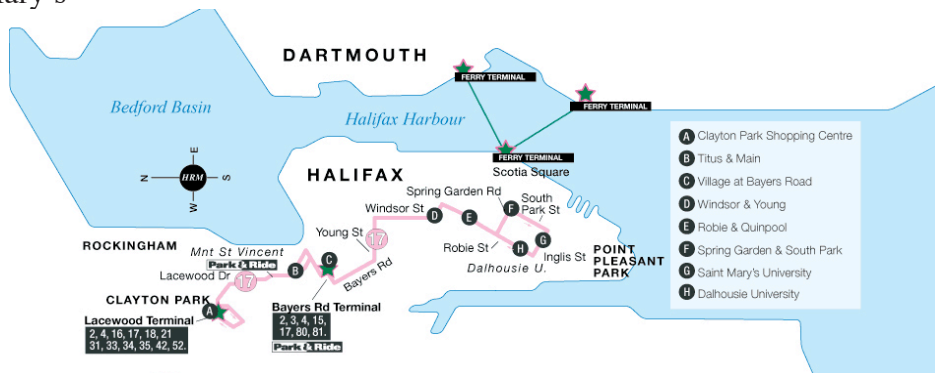
**Halifax Regional Municipality, upon completion of the late-night transit pilot project, will conduct a review of the program before permanent implementation.**

# Appendix 1-4: All images retrieved from: www.halifax.ca

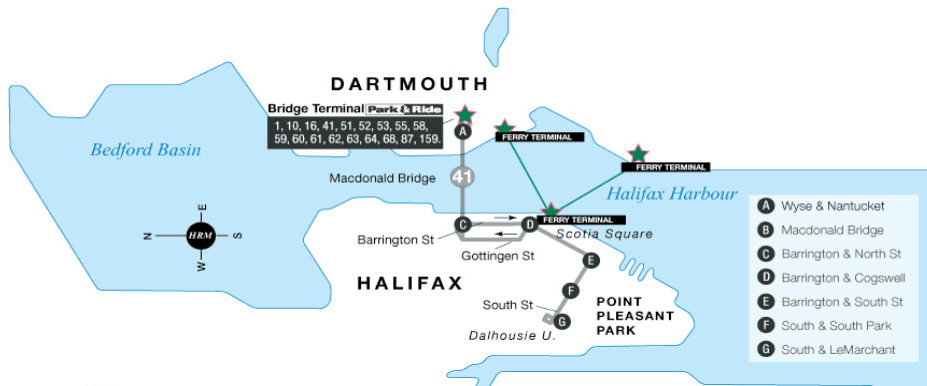
## Route 9: Barrington



## Route 17: Saint Mary's



## Route 41: Dalhousie



## Route 1: Dartmouth - Spring Garden - Mumford

