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Item No. 6

**Halifax Regional Council
June 16, 2009**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Labrecque".

Mike Labrecque, Director Transportation & Public Works

DATE: June 11, 2009

SUBJECT: Sambro Transit Service

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This report originates from the June 2, 2009 Halifax Regional Council request for a staff report outlining the scheduling/costing/routing and fares that would pertain to the Sambro Loop Rural Transit Route as approved by Council on May 5, 2009.

BACKGROUND

On May 5th, 2009 Halifax Regional Council approved the following motion:

1. Proceed with introducing the Sambro Loop Rural Transit Route in 2009/10 on a “pilot” basis using available vehicles and funding provided by the fare increase.
2. Defer any requests for the additions of any new Rural Transit Services not currently in the 5-Year Approach to Transit Enhancements until a plan is in place to pay for the expanded services.
3. Develop Rural Transit Service Standards, and return to Council in September 2009 as part of the updated Operational Plan, with an outline approach and a financial plan to introduce Rural Transit Services, including recommendations to help Council determine under what conditions rural service should be expanded, and in what order of priority, recommendations regarding operational issues, service design and required changes to the 5 year Capital Plan, as well as the necessary adjustments required to the current approved 5 Year Approach to Transit Enhancements.

DISCUSSION

The above motion was approved following Council debate over two Committees of the Whole. Staff’s original recommendation for this type of service was to wait until Council had the opportunity to consider rural based service standards as part of the 5 Year Operating Plan given the fact this service wasn’t included in the approved 5 Year Transit Approach. Staff did provide an alternative which, after some debate, resulted in the approved motion.

Staff’s interpretation of the approved motion is based on the following:

- Council approved a pilot, which will be reviewed once the new standards are approved;
- Staff are working to a budget of 200-300K operating, which has been funded from a re-allocation of a portion of the approved 25 cent fare increase;
- The motion outlines ‘available vehicles’ and staff’s initial plan contemplated the use of two Metro X vehicles. In the debate, staff did indicate that 40 ft. conventional buses were not the best vehicles for this service. The motion allows staff to consider any available vehicle and if necessary a 40 ft. could be used, provided Transit could manage the resource within the vehicle availability; and,
- Staff understood the initial service to Sambro was something Council was prepared to accommodate as a trade off to service enhancements on other existing routes. The service options would have to be designed based on the resources available above. The result would be service to the area, certainly not perfect, but reasonable given the other transit priorities in the region.

Given the assumption that two Metro X buses are available (if not, two other vehicles), there are two options proposed by Metro Transit for service to Sambro.

Option 1: Metro Transit service recommendation is as follows:

Recommended Option 1 would see 2 MetroX vehicle providing community transit service. The buses would leave Dentith Road at the South Centre Mall and proceed to Sambro via Harrietsfield and Williamswood and return along the same routing, servicing only one side of the Sambro Loop. This routing would give the Sambro Transit route the best opportunity to succeed by generating ridership and meeting standards, and would see this service exist beyond the one year pilot.

The proposed service would provide hourly frequency with the first trip departing Sambro at 5:45am and the last trip departing Dentith Road at 6:22pm from Monday to Friday. This route would be fully integrated with Metro Transit's conventional transit system providing timely connections and giving residents of the Williamswood, Harrietsfield and Sambro the ability to easily access the conventional transit system.

The estimated Operating Costs for this option is approximately \$300,000.

The Local Transit tax rate, as approved by Regional Council on May 26, 2009, will apply to all residential/resource properties within 1 km of a bus stop or flag stop along the new route. This rate will be in effect for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

This is the service staff had contemplated during the COW sessions.

Option 2: Service provided to the Sambro Loop

Option 2 again would see 2 MetroX vehicle providing community transit service. One bus leave Dentith Road at the South Centre Mall, proceeding to Sambro via Harrietsfield and Williamswood and returning along the same routing, servicing the west side of the Sambro Loop. The second bus would leave Dentith Road at the South Centre Mall and proceed to Sambro via Herring Cove Road and Ketch Harbour Road, and return along the same routing.

Unlike the recommended service under Option 1, this routing would provide a two-hour frequency to each side of the Sambro loop. The first trip departing Sambro via Williamswood and Harrietsfield would be 5:45am and the last trip departing Dentith Road for Sambro via Harrietsfield and Williamswood would be 5:22pm from Monday to Friday. The first trip departing Sambro via Ketch Harbour Road and Herring Cove Road would be 6:39am and the last trip departing Dentith Road for Sambro via Herring Cove Road and Ketch Harbour Road would be 6:19pm. This service would be integrated with Metro Transit's conventional transit system.

The estimated Operating Costs for this option is approximately \$300,000.

The Local Transit tax rate will apply to all residential/resource properties within 1 km of a bus stop or flag stop along the two new routes. This rate will be in effect for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

District Councillor's Expectations

Staff understand the Councillor is looking for the type of service outlined in Option 2 for the whole of the Sambro Loop but with a one hour frequency as in Option 1. This would be twice the operating cost and would require twice the number of buses required by either Options 1 or 2, or operating costs of approximately \$600,000 and four buses respectively. Staff does not have the funds or buses to carry out this level of service.

Staff's Plan of Action

Staff plan to work with the District Councillor on the planning of the implementation of either Option 1 or 2 unless Council directs otherwise.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications with this report.

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.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Option one map

Appendix B: Option two map

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

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Option 1



Option 2

