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Item No. 3
Halifax Regional Council
January 26, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ken Reashor", written over a horizontal line.

Ken Reashor, P.Eng., A/Director of Transportation and Public Works

DATE: December 21, 2009

SUBJECT: Response - Petition to Reinstate the Proposed Downtown Shuttle

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Petition submitted to Regional Council by Councillor Dawn Sloane on October 27, 2009.

BACKGROUND

The Downtown Shuttle was originally conceived as a means to transport people throughout downtown, and to provide connections between the Ferry Terminal, Scotia Square and other key destinations in downtown.

The Metro Transit Five-year Strategic Operations Plan does not endorse the Downtown Shuttle concept, instead recommends service improvements to existing routes serving downtown as a more effective and efficient means to achieve the original goals of the Downtown Shuttle. Metro Transit staff support this recommendation.

DISCUSSION

Existing Downtown Service

There are currently 36 routes that serve the Peninsula from other areas of HRM. Many of these routes already serve a circulation/shuttle function within downtown and the Peninsula, since they provide service to key destinations other than Scotia Square.

For example, many routes from outside the Peninsula serve Scotia Square, then proceed to Spring Garden Road and either the Hospitals or Universities. Other routes proceed from Scotia Square to the VIA Rail/Acadian Lines Station near South/Barrington Streets. Most of these routes typically drop off a significant portion of their passengers at Scotia Square before continuing through downtown, providing sufficient capacity for passengers transferring from MetroLink and MetroX services at Scotia Square. Other routes primarily contained to the Peninsula also radiate from Scotia Square, providing service to major destinations on the Peninsula.

As a result, frequent “circulator” service is already provided between most major destinations on the Peninsula through existing routes.

Proposed Service Improvements

There are many service improvements proposed over the next five years in the Metro Transit Strategic Operations Plan that will enhance the downtown circulation provided by existing service. The proposed improvements consist of the following:

- Route 1 Spring Garden will be converted to Bus Rapid Transit, providing enhanced service including a peak frequency improvement from 10 minutes to 7.5 minutes as well as off-peak frequency increases;
- Routes 6, 7, 9, 10 and 14 will see frequency increases;
- New Route 8 Waterfront will provide service every 30 minutes, seven days per week between Scotia Square, the Halifax Ferry Terminal, and Pier 21 via Lower Water Street northbound and Hollis Street southbound; and
- Route 20 Herring Cove will be modified to service the Halifax Ferry Terminal, providing a link to the Spring Garden Road/Hospitals area from the Ferry.

These changes will bolster the already high level of service to and within downtown. Also, these service changes will improve connectivity between downtown and other major transit hubs such as the Mumford and Bridge Terminals, further supporting the Regional Plan objectives of increased transit modal split, enhancements to the Regional Centre, and increased transit service to designated employment centres.

A map of proposed future services in downtown is provided as Appendix A.

Need for a Downtown Shuttle

With the service improvements recommended for the Peninsula and downtown, implementing the Downtown Shuttle would provide an unnecessary additional layer of service to an area that is already the most heavily served in HRM.

Most communities that implement a Downtown Shuttle do so to meet a specific capacity demand that is not being serviced by the rest of the transit system. No such capacity deficiency exists in Downtown Halifax; the current high level of service and proposed increases supply sufficient service to meet the demand.

Also, service changes are proposed to serve some of the connections (i.e. Ferry Terminal to Hospitals) that are currently not served without a walking connection.

If there is a desire by Regional Council to provide free transit service to cruise ship passengers arriving at Pier 21, it would be possible to allow these passengers to use their cruise ship credentials as a free transit pass during their stay in Halifax. Many of these passengers utilize the free FRED service, and as such are not currently paying transit fares. This would permit free access to not only the new Route 8 Waterfront, but also the entire Metro Transit network, expanding the ability for cruise ship passengers to visit various areas of HRM.

The goals of the Downtown Shuttle (and the apparent intent behind the recommendations in HRM by Design regarding the Downtown Shuttle) can be met more effectively and efficiently with changes to the existing service than by overlaying a whole new level of service on top of existing service. Further, the proposed improvements to existing service will have further reaching benefits to HRM residents than would the Downtown Shuttle.

Allocation of Funding to Date

On March 27, 2007, Halifax Regional Council approved the transfer of \$700,000 from Capital Account No. CVD00435, *Conventional Transit Bus Replacement*, to Capital Account No. CMU00974, *Downtown Shuttle*. This funding was used to leverage \$600,000 in funding from Conserve Nova Scotia for the purchase of two sixty-foot Articulated Hybrid-Electric Transit Buses.

Subsequently, *Request for Proposal # 08-332 - Supply of up to Three (3) Sixty-foot Transit Buses with Diesel Electric Hybrid System*, was awarded by the CAO under the Interim Award Policy to the highest scoring proponent, New Flyer Industries. This award was reported to Regional Council on June 16, 2009 through the information report "Award of Contracts - CAO Approval Interim Award Policy".

Two vehicles were purchased under this award, and are expected to enter regular service with Metro Transit in early 2010. These vehicles will primarily be used on high visibility, high volume routes that operate in downtown such as the route 1 Spring Garden. In conjunction with Conserve Nova Scotia, the vehicles will feature an exterior full bus advertising wrap promoting hybrid technology.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

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 - Map of proposed future services in downtown.

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.

Report Prepared by: Dave Reage, MCIP, LPP, Planning & Project Delivery Coordinator, Metro Transit, 490-5138



Report Approved by: _____
Pat Soanes, CMA, General Manager, Metro Transit, 490-6388

Appendix A - Proposed Downtown Circulation and Connectivity Service



Key

1 Spring Garden

6 Quinpool

7 Robie/Gottingen

8 Waterfront

9 Barrington

10 Dalhousie

14 Leiblin Park/Auburn

20 Herring Cove