



PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5, Canada

Item No. 3
Halifax Regional Council
January 26, 2010
Committee of the Whole
February 9, 2010

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan English".

Dan English, Chief Administrative Officer

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Wayne Anstey".

Wayne Anstey, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer - Operations

DATE: January 6, 2010

SUBJECT: Metro Transit Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

November 10, 2009 meeting of Halifax Regional Council Committee of the Whole, Item 3.

MOVED by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Streach, that Halifax Regional Council receive the Metro Transit Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan and request staff to bring forward a report relative to the corresponding Operational and Capital Plans and responding to concerns and questions of members of Council regarding the Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. receive this supplementary report as an addition to the Metro Transit Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan, and,
2. approve in principle the Metro Transit Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan and direct staff to annually bring details on proposed service changes and their corresponding cost implications to Halifax Regional Council for approval as part of the Operating and Capital Budget process.

BACKGROUND

This report is in response to questions raised by Council at Committee of the Whole meetings on October 27, 2009 and November 10, 2009. As well, staff has conducted a series of meetings with Council to address individual questions and solicit feedback. This report is intended to provide further information on Capital and Operating budget impacts of introducing the Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan as well as other transit projects identified as part of the Five-Year Approach to Transit Enhancements previously approved by Council in April 2008. It also includes implementation time lines for specific projects.

DISCUSSION

The intent of the IBI review was to take a fresh look at the full scope of Metro Transit's conventional transit service. The Consultant's recommendations contained in the plan should be considered a roadmap to achieving the Regional Plan objectives, rather than a blueprint that defines specific service changes. The service redesign suggested in the Plan is the result of feedback received during extensive community engagement with almost 9,000 respondents participating in the online survey. As well, recommendations for future transit service enhancements were based on the objectives set out in the Regional Plan, namely modal split targets, growth concentration areas, designated employment centers and the focus on the regional center. By adopting the Plan in principle, Council is not committed to each and every service recommendation detailed in the Plan.

Each year over the five year life of the Plan, staff will be preparing an Annual Service Plan (ASP) for Council's approval. In preparing the ASP, staff will rely on the Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan and their corresponding Council approved service standards to shape service recommendations in each year. As well, staff will consider on-going customer feedback, ridership analysis, employee feedback, and technology available to Metro Transit. The ASP will be presented to Council as part of the annual budget process and therefore all service changes will be based on the available operating funding. The service changes contemplated for 2010/11 are attached in Appendix A.

The following sections address the key areas of interest expressed by council.

Capital and Operating Budget Plans

Table 1 summarizes proposed annual capital budgets for the next five years as well as the projected funding gap for each year generated through the additional capital.

Table 1: 5 Year Operating and Capital Costs

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Capital Budget	26,300	22,900	20,000	20,000	20,000
Operating Increase (Gap)	3,000	5,700	5,200	3,300	3,300
Cumulative Operating Gap	3,000	8,700	13,900	17,200	20,500

*Cost in Thousands

Regional Service Implementation Time Lines

Staff propose to deliver the Regional services detailed in Table 2 below. These time lines are dependant on budget, vehicle availability, and direction from Regional Council.

Table 2: Regional Services

Service Type	Route	Expected Implementation Date
MetroX	Hubley (Exit 4)	November 2010
MetroX	Airport & Fall River	February 2012
MetroX	Porters Lake	2012/13
MetroX	Enfield	2013/14
MetroX	Lake Echo	2013/14
MetroX	Musquodoboit Harbour	2014/15
MetroX	McCabe Lake	2014/15
MetroLink	Clayton Park	August 2011
MetroLink	Spryfield	Outside Current Five-Year Capital Plan
MetroLink	Bedford	Outside Current Five-Year Capital Plan
Conventional Ferry	Woodside Expansion	2013/14
HarbourLink	Bedford	Outside Current Five-Year Capital Plan

Rural Local Service

Recent changes to the Transit tax structure have allowed Metro Transit to respond to the Community and Regional Council's desire to provide local service to rural areas of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The communities identified in Table 3 below are considered to have the greatest opportunity for a success using an alternative service delivery model, and currently have no local transit service. Staff intend to work with the communities to determine their transit needs, and assess the most appropriate means of providing transit service. It is expected that the planning process for each community would commence approximately one year in advance of service implementation.

Table 3: Communities

Community	Planning Phase Begins	Expected Implementation Date
Lucasville	2010/11	2011/12
Cow Bay	2011/12	2012/13
Lawrencetown	2012/13	2013/14

Funding Options

The funding options presented in the Plan were included to provide Regional Council with information on potential funding mechanisms outside those currently available to Metro Transit: fares, advertising revenue, and property tax. Most of these potential funding mechanisms are outside the control of Regional Council and would therefore require Provincial legislative changes.

Metro Transit's current fare recovery ratio of 53% is consistent with the Plan recommendation of **50-55%**. In the past, Metro Transit's recovery ratio was as high as 78%, however, within the transit industry recovery ratios such as this are indicative of a system in distress and not meeting customer needs or expectations. Since 2002 when the first Five-Year Plan was instituted transit service has grown significantly and as a result ridership has had unprecedented gains.

Advertising revenue is a relatively static funding source, therefore the remainder of funding must come from either an increase in fares or property tax, the only avenues Regional Council has available to them.

Council also expressed interest in Metro Transit's timed transfer policy. The introduction of a time-based transfer has significantly improved safety for our Operators. A simpler transfer system has resulted in fewer fare disputes, which is the single biggest factor in Operator assaults. It is industry practice to offer time-based transfers to customers. This practice has proven to increase ridership as

people who are only making a short trip can do so on a single fare rather than two fares. Many of these people would have previously not made the trip by transit as the cost was not competitive with other modes of transportation. Most transit providers have found that moving to a time-based transfer system is revenue-neutral since the increase in new trips offsets the impact of a time-based transfer.

Downtown Shuttle

More details regarding the Downtown Shuttle are provided in the *Response - Petition to Reinstate the Proposed Downtown Shuttle* report.

Transit Only Corridors on Barrington Street and Spring Garden Road

Metro Transit is not recommending that Barrington Street or Spring Garden Road be considered as transit only corridors at this time, or during the five-year span of this Plan. The Plan discusses the concept of closing Barrington Street and Spring Garden Road to all traffic except transit vehicles. Given the modal split targets set out in the Regional Plan, the consultants included these potential transit only corridors to provide some context for the types of decisions Council may need to consider in the future in order to achieve the targets.

Ferry Service

Proposed capital plans, beginning with the 2010/11 budget, include funding for a fourth conventional ferry capable of providing a 33% increase in the Ferry service. This vessel will be assigned to the Woodside route.

On December 8, 2009, Regional Council approved an increase to the IBI Group contract in order to undertake a Ferry Strategy (Ferry Needs Assessment). This study will provide operational guidance and direction for the future of Metro Transit's Ferry Service. In addition, early in 2010 a comparative analysis that assesses options for meeting Regional Transit service from the Bedford area will be brought forward to Council. The options being considered include HarbourLink and MetroLink.

Rail Transit

Light rail is typically a rail system that operates wholly or partially within a public roadway and uses rail cars with a "light" capacity relative to commuter rail or subway systems. Streetcars in Toronto or the C-Train in Calgary are examples of Light Rail.

Commuter Rail is a heavy rail system operating on fully segregated tracks such as the GO Train operation in Toronto and West Coast Express in Vancouver. Previous studies in HRM have

examined options for Commuter Rail on the existing CN tracks through Bedford and beyond. Light rail has not been examined in this regard and cannot legally be operated on active freight tracks such as the CN tracks through Bedford.

Light Rail is contemplated in the Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan as a long-term initiative (10-15 years), well outside of the five year scope of this Plan. The average capital cost of the current light rail project in Toronto is \$80 million per kilometre of track, including all project costs such as construction, rolling stock, maintenance and storage facilities.

More details regarding rail and commuter transit will be provided in a report to Regional Council at a later date.

Transit and Sustainability

Transit is one of the most sustainable, “green” transportation alternatives available. Metro Transit is further enhancing our sustainability through our fleet renewal process by purchasing fuel efficient, clean diesel vehicles. New vehicles purchased meet rigorous 2010 emission standards. These engines emit 1/60th of the emissions of a bus manufactured in 1988. As well, Metro Transit currently uses B5 bio-diesel in the MetroLink fleet and plans to expand the use of bio-diesel throughout the fleet in the future.

All new buses are equipped with two position bicycle racks. As well, Metro Transit is currently working to retrofit the entire fleet with bicycle racks.

Metro Transit adheres to HRM’s Anti-Idling policy. Operators are instructed to shut down their vehicle if dwelling for more than three minutes. There may be exceptions to this in circumstances such as cold or hot weather so as to ensure customer comfort.

The new Ragged Lake Transit Centre is being built to a LEED Silver standard, demonstrating Metro Transit’s commitment to green solutions. Future major transit terminal buildings will also be built to a LEED Silver Standard at minimum.

Accessibility

The Plan speaks to improving accessibility through increasing accessible infrastructure at bus stops and terminals, purchasing additional accessible low floor buses, and increasing the number of routes providing accessible service. However, the Plan does not provide a comprehensive review of accessibility issues throughout the transit system.

On December 8, 2009, Regional Council approved an increase to the IBI Group contract in order to undertake a review of the Access-A-Bus system. This study will provide operational guidance and

direction on how to best meet the needs of Access-a-Bus clients as the entire transit system continues to grow. Further, staff is putting forward a Capital Budget request for the 2010/11 fiscal year to conduct a study of overall accessibility in the Metro Transit system. This will guide future decisions surrounding accessibility, including items such as stop annunciation.

Parking Management

Council discussed the option of having customers pay to use Park and Ride lots under the control of Metro Transit. Currently, Metro Transit requires that passengers parking at the Woodside Ferry Terminal either purchase a monthly transit pass, or pay to use the parking lot. Charging fees for parking at other Metro Transit Park and Ride lots may be a feasible option. This would help to balance the demand for parking with the supply available while at the same time providing an additional revenue stream for Metro Transit. This could happen in one of three ways:

- Charge all customers using the lots a monthly fee to do so;
- Provide free parking only with the purchase of a monthly transit pass; or,
- Offer “premium” reserved parking for those who wish to pay in order to have a guaranteed parking space, while leaving remaining spaces free.

OC Transpo (Ottawa) and GO Transit (Greater Toronto) both follow the latter practice.

Care would need to be exercised in selecting the price point for a parking pass so it does not make the use of transit more expensive than driving and parking Downtown. Staff has not evaluated the revenue potential from this opportunity, but expect that it would be minimal. Either option would require production of parking passes and a local vendor willing to sell the passes and would require further investigation by staff.

Transit Terminals

Metro Transit’s newest terminal facilities, Portland Hills and Sackville Terminals, feature improved security, enclosed waiting areas and bicycle amenities in order to provide a more attractive place for customers to wait for their buses. Subject to budget approval, Metro Transit plans to continue to enhance customer amenities at its Transit Terminals. Terminal projects planned for the next five years are as follows:

- Bridge Terminal - Replacement 2010/11
- Highfield Terminal - Renovation 2010/11
- Lacewood Terminal - Replacement 2011/12
- Burnside Terminal - New Terminal 2012/13
- Mumford Terminal - Renovation/Replacement 2013/14
- Penhorn Terminal - Renovation 2014/15

Park and Ride at 4 Pad Arena Site

There are no provisions in the Five Year Capital Plan to develop a park and ride lot or terminal at the 4- pad arena site at the Hammonds Plains Road. Rather, these lands will be kept in reserve until such time as a Harbour Link or Bedford Metro Link service is brought on line. As noted previously, both these services are currently outside of the Five Year Capital Plan.

Technology

Regional Council has supported the investment in technology for Metro Transit. Recent examples include the installation of on-board video surveillance cameras, acquisition of mission critical operating software and service optimization software. Other technological advances under consideration include stop announcement systems and improved fare collection technology. These solutions represent significant cost and therefore must be balanced against other capital and operating budget priorities.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications related to this report. Future budget implications will be presented as part of the Annual Service Plan and budget process.

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.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Proposed 2010/11 Annual Service Plan

**Supplemental Report
Metro Transit Strategic Operations Plan - 9 -
Council Report**

January 26, 2010

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 and Project Delivery Coordinator, Metro Transit, 490-5138



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



Report Approved by: _____
Ken Reashor, A/Director, Transportation and Public Works Services, 490-4855

Metro Transit Service Plan - 2010/11

Route	Service Description		Annual Hrs 11/12
Route 1	Sunday	Additional AM Trips from Bridge Term to Mumford Term - 5:55am & 6:25am	75
Route 8	Wkd,Sat,Sun	New Route 8 Waterfront (Barrington & Duke,Waterfront to Pier 21) - service span 6am to 10pm at 30 minute frequency	5,710
Route 20	Saturday	Service extended to downtown - all trips	1,652
Route 22	Wkd,Sat,Sun	New Route 22 Armdale (Exhibition Park, RLTC, Mumford) - service span 6am to 11pm at 30 min frequency	13,688
Route 32	Weekday	Urban Express - 15 minute frequency - additional trips added - 2 AM trips & 3 PM trips	840
Route 57	Wkd,Sat,Sun	New Route 57 Russell Lake (PHT to Woodside Via Baker) - 6am to 11pm, 30 min frequency peak/midday & 60 minute frequency evenings Weekday & Saturday. Sunday 60 minute frequency	11,935
Route 65	Wkd,Sat,Sun	Feeder Route - Service between Portland Hills Term & Astral/Pearl - service removed to Penhorn & Woodside - service span 6am to 10pm at 30 min freq weekday. Sat & Sun 60min freq with additional trips.	-866
Route 72	Wkd,Sat,Sun	Route Adjustment - service extended to Wright Ave & Dartmouth Crossing - 30 minute frequency Peak/midday & 60 minute frequency evening Weekday & Saturday. Sunday 60 minutes frequency	9,227
Route 80	Weekday	Additional AM trips from Sackville Terminal to Halifax - 6:45am, 7:20am, 7:45am & 8:15am	1,141
Route 165	Weekday	Route extended to service Penhorn Terminal	1,012
MetroX	Weekday	Implement service to exit 4, Hwy 103	2,241
AAB	Wkd,Sat,Sun	Implement six expansion vehicles for demand service	12,439

Gross Total	\$4,137,158
Revenue	\$482,319
Operational Efficiencies	\$1,044,425
Net Total	\$2,610,414