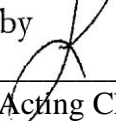


Item No. 11.4.1 (i)
Halifax Regional Council
July 10, 2012

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by 
Mike Labrecque, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 13, 2012

SUBJECT: Metro Transit Universal Accessibility Plan

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

- Approval of 2010/2011 Capital Budget including funding for an accessibility study.
- Completion of the Metro Transit Universal Accessibility Plan by IBI Group (RFP #10-088).
- January 9, 2012 request by the Transportation Standing Committee of Council for additional information.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council approve in principle the Universal Accessibility Plan and direct staff to use the plan on a go-forward basis as guidance in the development and implementation of Universal Accessibility standards and policies for transit.

BACKGROUND

In a report dated December 12, 2011, staff provided an overview of the Metro Transit Universal Accessibility Plan prepared by IBI Group and recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee of Council (TSCC) bring the document forward to Regional Council for approval in principle.

The TSCC had several questions, and requested that additional information be provided to Regional Council in conjunction with the Metro Transit Universal Accessibility Plan.

DISCUSSION

The following is a discussion of the topics raised by the TSC on January 9, 2012.

Level of Detail in the Staff Report

The staff report dated December 12, 2011, does not describe in detail the projects or changes recommended by the Universal Accessibility Plan or Metro Transit's ability to implement them. This is intentional; at this time, the Plan has been brought forward for Regional Councils review and approval in principle, but staff are not requesting that Council approve any specific projects or changes described in the Plan. Although the Universal Accessibility Plan contains valuable information and recommendations, it is not an implementation plan. If approved in principle, staff intend to review the Plan's recommendations in much more detail and identify those improvements that can be integrated into existing practices or projects, those which can be adopted as new standards or policies, and those which must be brought forward to Regional Council as separate budget items.

Some of the initiatives described in the Universal Accessibility Plan were implemented concurrent with the development of the Plan, as a result of a Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Consent Order, and are now in place. These include the following:

Accessible Service Handbook:

A new Accessible Service Handbook was created to provide information to the public on accessibility, including accessible routes and stops, and how to use accessible services. This handbook can be found on the Metro Transit website at:

http://www.halifax.ca/metrotransit/documents/ALFHandbook_2.pdf

Accessibility of Routes/Stops:

Accessible Low Floor (ALF) buses now pick up or drop off customers in wheelchairs regardless of the route, providing the accessible ramp can be lowered to load or unload the customer without causing any damage to the ramp. A list of the bus stops that are inaccessible (where the ramp cannot be deployed under any circumstance) can be found on the Metro Transit website at:

<http://www.halifax.ca/metrotransit/documents/Inaccessiblebusstoplist.pdf>

Personal Care Attendants:

Personal care attendants accompanying mobility-impaired customers may travel for free upon display of proper identification by the customer. If approved, mobility-impaired customers must present the Personal Care Attendant ID card issued by Metro Transit upon boarding all Accessible Low Floor (ALF) buses.

Snow Clearing:

Snow clearing at the bus stops in front of the Dartmouth Sportsplex next to the Bridge Terminal, and on Mumford Road at the Mumford Terminal, has been improved and increased to a 24 hour priority.

Request Stop:

The Request Stop program has been extended to mobility-impaired customers 24 hours a day, if it becomes reasonably necessary to accommodate them. This would likely occur in situations of adverse weather or for safety reasons.

Automated Transit Stop Annunciation

Automated transit stop annunciation is used to visually and audibly announce upcoming transit stops. This feature makes transit more accessible to residents with visual impairments, and is also useful to passengers that are not familiar with the route, or in situations where visibility is reduced due to crowded buses or inclement weather. The only Metro Transit service that currently uses some form of automated stop annunciation is the ferry system.

Although automated transit stop annunciation would be a valuable asset, there are no immediate plans for implementation. The 2012/2013 Council approved budget for Finance and Information, Communications and Technology includes the completion of an AVL (Automated Vehicle Location) roadmap. This roadmap is considered a precursor for future investment in transit technology. Once complete, it is anticipated that there will be more opportunity to investigate the way forward with other transit related technologies, which includes automated transit stop annunciation. Assigning any proposed timeline to automated transit stop annunciation would be premature prior to the completion of the AVL roadmap and other future transit specific explorations, and without details on interdependencies, implementation, and costs for these measures.

Real Time Information

Real Time bus arrival information is currently available to the public through the GoTime system, both by telephone, and on monitors located at terminals. When passengers telephone the GoTime number (480 plus the 4 digit bus stop number), the automated message advising when the next bus will be departing from that location is based on Real Time information. Please note, during maintenance or in the event of an equipment malfunction, the automated message will specify when the bus is *scheduled* to depart. If the word *scheduled* is used, the information being relayed is not based on Real Time.

Providing Real Time information to the public through other mediums (web-based, text messaging, etc.) is subject to system upgrades that are to be identified as part of the AVL roadmap, mentioned in the previous section.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time. Any recommendations that have budget implications will be brought forward in future annual budgets for consideration by Regional Council.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement was not deemed to be necessary in this process as this report is only providing Council with additional information.

ALTERNATIVES

Halifax Regional Council may choose not to approve in principle the Universal Accessibility Plan. This is not recommended as the approval in principle of the Plan will allow Metro Transit to prepare standards and policies to improve the accessibility of the transit system.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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 : Patricia Hughes, MCIP, LPP, Supervisor, Service Design & Projects, Metro Transit, 490-6287

Report Approved by: _____
Dave Reage, MCIP, LPP, Manager, Planning & Scheduling, Metro Transit, 490-5138

Report Approved by: _____
Philip Herriott, Manager, Technical Services, Metro Transit, 490-6649

Report Approved by: _____
Eddie Robar, Director, Metro Transit, 490-6720

Original Signed