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Item No. 7
Halifax Regional Council
December 2, 2014

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

SUBMITTED BY:

Eddie Robar, Director, Halifax Transit

DATE: October 31, 2014

SUBJECT: Response – Petition for Porters Lake Route 401

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This report originates from the May 23, 2013 Regional Council meeting. Councillor Hendsbee submitted a petition with 50 signatures requesting:

- More reliable bus service for the Route 401 bus route and better hours of operation;
- Weekend bus service for the communities of Porters Lake, Lake Echo, and East Preston; and
- Park & Ride locations in both Porters Lake and Lake Echo.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 69(1) of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides the legislative authority for the municipality to provide a public transportation service. Section 79(1)(o) provides the authority for Council to expend money required by the municipality for public transportation services.

Policy T-7 of the *Regional Municipal Planning Strategy* establishes the geographic areas in which investment in transit service can occur.

BACKGROUND

At the May 28, 2013 Regional Council meeting, Councillor Hendsbee submitted a petition containing 50 signatures requesting *“more reliable Metro Transit bus service to the #401 bus route and better hours of operation; and weekend bus service for the communities of Porters Lake, Lake Echo, East Preston. In addition, a bus Park and Ride location both in Porters Lake and Lake Echo.”*

Specifically, the petition stated that residents of Porters Lake, Lake Echo, and East Preston, were requesting transit service departing the Porters Lake Shopping Centre on weekdays at 5:30 am, 7:30 am, 9:30 am, and 11:03 am, with return trips at 4:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 8:00 pm, and 10:30 pm. On weekends, the request was for trips at 7:00 am, 9:00 am, and 11:00 am, with return trips at 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm. In addition, the petition requested that a Park & Ride be established in both Porters Lake and Lake Echo for residents to park and access the route.

Halifax Transit currently provides Community Transit service, known as Route 401 Porters Lake, beginning at Portland Hills Terminal to Porters Lake and Seaforth. This service travels Cole Harbour Rd., Ross Rd., Highway #7, to East Preston, Brooks Dr., Upper Partridge River Rd., Highway #7 to Porter's Lake and onto the community of Seaforth.

This route departs the Porters Lake Shopping Centre on weekdays at 6:00 am, 7:40 am, 9:22 am, and 11:03 am. Return trips depart the Portland Hills Terminal at 3:50 pm, 5:46 pm, and 7:42 pm. There is no service on Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays.

DISCUSSION

The petition requests modifications to the existing trip departure times on the Route 401, the addition of a late night trip, and the addition of weekend service.

Policy T-7 of the *Regional Municipal Planning Strategy* states:

“The Urban Transit Service Boundary, illustrated in Map 7 of this Plan, shall establish the area within which HRM will direct future investment in public transit services, with the exception of rural commuter express service which may be considered outside of this Boundary. The level of service outside this boundary shall not be increased, but modifications to services may be considered that serve to facilitate operational planning. Existing routes and services not contained within this boundary will continue to exist, and as with any public transit routes or services, any service reductions will be based upon performance standards approved by HRM.”

A large part of Route 401 Porters Lake falls outside of the Urban Transit Service Boundary, and as such, the addition of a late night trip and/or weekend service would result in increasing service outside the boundary and cannot be accommodated. However, the service could be modified and trip times adjusted if there is no net increase to service.

On April 1, 2014, Regional Council approved Halifax Transit's 2014-15 Annual Service Plan including recommended service adjustments. The Annual Service Plan did not include any service adjustments to the Route 401. As the proposed trip times increase the span of service and therefore budget for the Route 401, it is not possible to implement these changes at this time. In addition, the existing trip times were determined in consultation with the passengers of the Route 401, and any modifications may have negative impacts on the existing ridership.

Halifax Transit is in the process of preparing the *Moving Forward Together Plan*. This process includes a comprehensive review of the entire transit route network. Public consultation on the first draft of the *Moving Forward Together Plan* is expected to begin in January 2015. The proposed service adjustments should be considered in relationship to the potential proposed changes to the Route 401 as part of this strategic planning process, and not in isolation.

The petition also requests the creation of Park & Ride facilities in both Porters Lake and Lake Echo. In November 2013, the Porters Lake Park & Ride began providing free parking for passengers accessing the MetroX Route 370. Although not directly connected to the Route 401, it does provide a Park & Ride facility for residents to access transit service to travel to the Regional Centre. There are no additional Park & Ride facilities in Porters Lake or Lake Echo planned in the ten year project budget.

Moving Forward Principles

The Moving Forward Principles were endorsed by Regional Council on January 8, 2014, and *The Moving Forward Together Plan* will be drafted based on the implementation of these principles. In addition, requests for services changes will be evaluated against these principles to ensure they are consistent with the goals of *The Moving Forward Together Plan*. The principles that are relevant to this request are highlighted and discussed below:

1. **Increase the proportion of resources allocated towards high ridership services.**
2. Build a simplified transfer based system.
3. Invest in service quality and reliability.
4. Give transit increased priority in the transportation network.

The Route 401 Porters Lake serves a low density area outside the Urban Transit Service Boundary, and is not a high ridership service. In addition to being in violation of Policy T-7 of the *Regional Municipal Planning Strategy*, adding evening or weekend service would be contrary to Principle #1.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report as it is an information report only.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement took place as part of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Route 401 Urban Transit Service Boundary Map

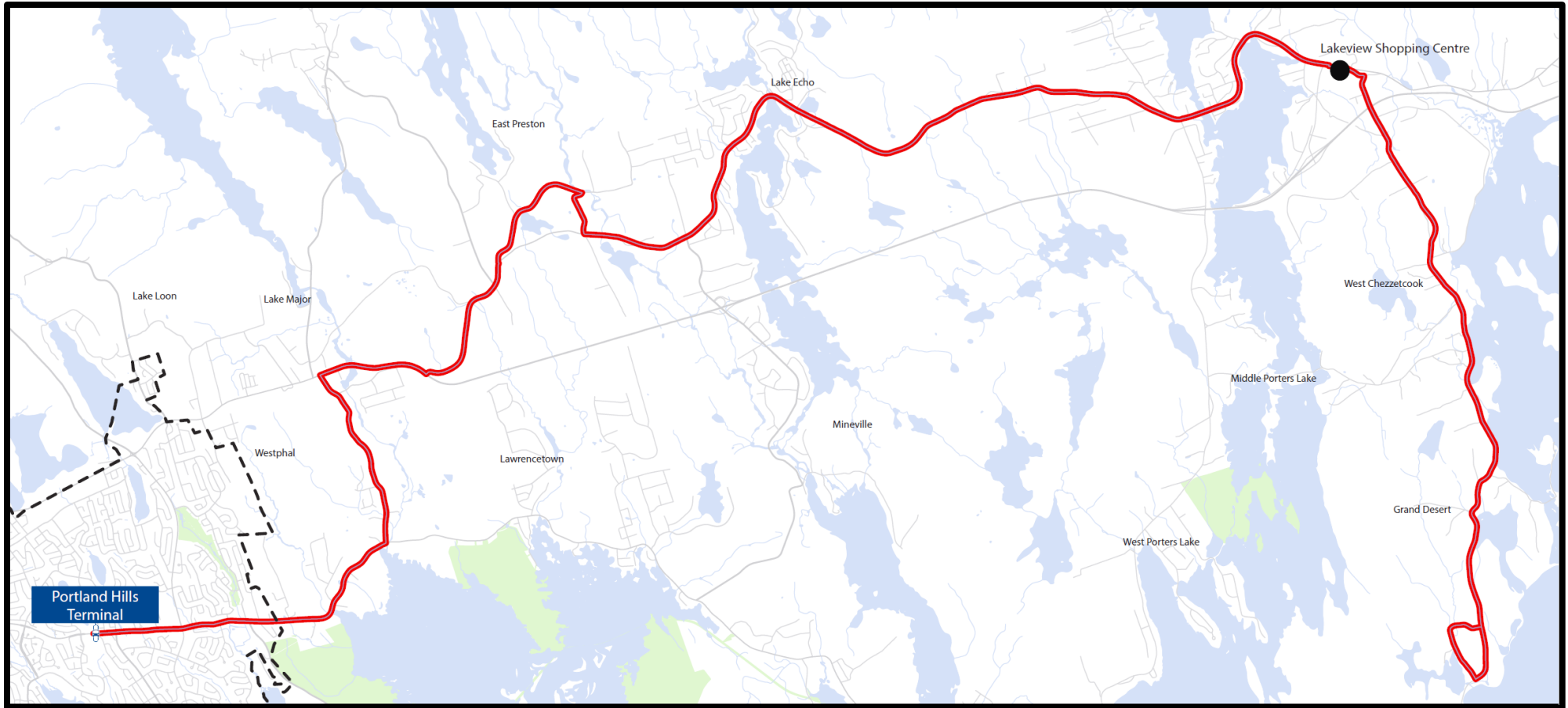
A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at (902) 490-4210, or Fax (902) 490-4208.

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Route 401 – Urban Transit Service Boundary Map



Legend



Route 401 Porters Lake



Urban Transit Service Boundary

Image provided for illustration purposes only.