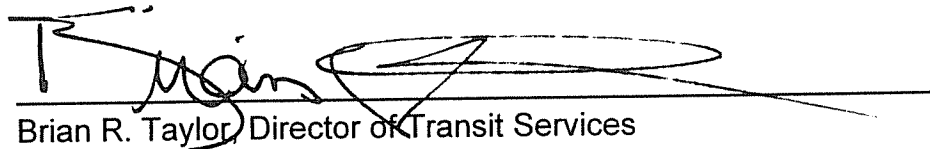

Halifax Regional Council
Committee-of-the Whole
March 19, 2002

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


Brian R. Taylor, Director of Transit Services

DATE: March 13, 2002

SUBJECT: IBI Presentation - Transit Study

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

A Transit Strategy Study was initiated in early 2001 in order to chart a course for the future of public transit in HRM that would focus on high quality customer service.

In March 2001, Halifax Regional Municipality issued a request for proposals for consulting services for a Halifax Regional Metro Transit Strategy study. This tender was awarded to IBI Group.

BACKGROUND

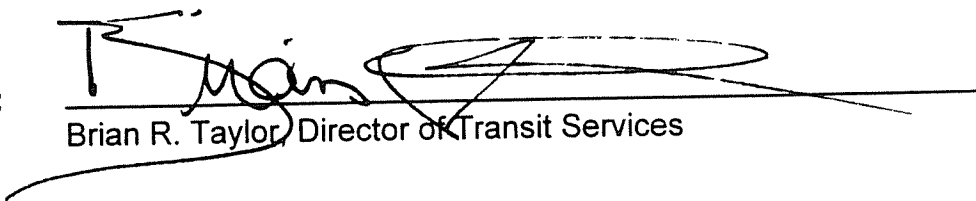
A number of issues indicated a need for a Transit Strategy for HRM:

- Historically, Metro Transit was evaluated on its short term fiscal performance. The focus on fiscal performance was reflected by increased fares from 1996 to the present, accompanied by significant service reductions. Public opinion suggested many citizens believe public transit service should be evaluated on more than the short term bottom line.

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A number of issues indicated a need for a Transit Strategy for HRM:

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- Service adjustments and fare increases over several years to address budget issues have made conventional transit service less attractive to riders.
- Transit Services does not have an adopted fleet replacement plan.
- Most of the fareboxes now in use are more than thirty years old.
- The trend of residential development occurring further away from employment centres has a negative impact on ridership and operating costs.
- Halifax Regional Municipality commenced a regional planning project in the spring of 2001. The regional plan is scoped to include, at a minimum, planned growth, transportation and infrastructure. There was a need to position the Transit Services business unit to participate effectively in the longer term regional planning project.

In March 2001, Halifax Regional Municipality issued a request for proposals for consulting services to conduct a Halifax Regional Municipality Metro Transit Strategy. This tender was awarded to IBI Group.

The purpose of this study was to seek public input into Metro Transit's role and recommend:

- A sustainable cost effective fleet and facility infrastructure program to ensure cost effective replacement of aged equipment and facilities.
- Service standards to establish guidelines for the quantity and quality of transit service.
- Business practices used by other North American Transit properties that could be implemented by Halifax Regional Municipality.
- Issues to be addressed to ensure that public transit service is successfully integrated into regional planning exercises.

DISCUSSION

The Strategic Transit Study outlines practical advice that will lead to substantial improvements in customer service. It provides opportunities to raise service standards and plan effectively for the future as conceived in HRM's Vision 20/20 and in support of the Regional Plan's Healthy Growth theme.

The main objectives of the transit study is to focus on quality customer service, including tapping into new transit markets and increasing transit ridership. Significant emphasis has been placed on public consultation and developing a five year business plan that includes service standards,

improved service levels and vehicle and infrastructure replacement and expansion needs. Once the study and its recommendations become public, there will be a considerable challenge for HRM and Metro Transit to manage expectations, because, once approved, improvements and enhancements of the current service will not take place at once but will take several years to implement.

Public consultation included a review of transit user surveys, completion of a non-user survey, and consultation and focus groups with key stakeholders including business groups, special interest groups, employers, universities, bus operators and staff and Halifax Regional Council members.

A preliminary draft report has been submitted by IBI. At the Committee of the Whole meeting on March 19th, 2002, IBI Group will provide a high level overview of the draft report, focussing on recommended service standards, service strategies and infrastructure replacement & expansion needs and the impacts these will have on ridership and service levels.

Following this presentation, there will be a public presentation, specifically to review the main recommendations of the draft report with key stakeholders and solicitation of public feedback via the HRM website.

The draft report will be finalized by IBI and provided to Staff. Staff will then table the report at Council and recommend that the report be forwarded to Program and Service Review Committee for detailed review. Also for discussion at Program and Service Review Committee, staff will prepare an action plan that will identify:

1. Short, medium and long range actions,
2. Go/no go decision points for Council,
3. Timelines,
4. Resources.

Following review by the Program and Service Review Committee, the final report and action plan will be sent back to Council for approval.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Staff will return to Council with a recommended action plan which will include budget implications. Adoption of recommendations on future infrastructure replacement, expansion and increased service levels will have an impact on future budgets.

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

None

ATTACHMENTS

None

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared and approved by:

Brian R. Taylor, Director of Transit Services