

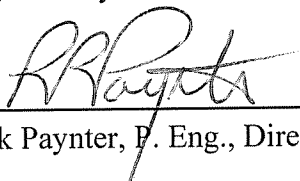


PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Halifax Regional Council
November 4, 2003

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


Rick Paynter, P. Eng., Director, Public Works & Transportation

DATE: October 27, 2003

SUBJECT: Student Bus Pass

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Halifax Regional Council passed a motion at their September 23, 2003 meeting requesting a staff report regarding the possibility of implementing a student bus pass to grade school students.

BACKGROUND

Metro Transit's fare structure includes discounted transit tickets and monthly passes in addition to regular cash fares. Monthly bus passes are further discounted to students, children and seniors. MetroPass users are entitled to unlimited travel during the month the pass is in effect. Metro Transit sells a further discounted student pass to the Halifax Regional School Board for use by students travelling to and from school. This Halifax Regional School Board student pass has restricted use between 6:00 am and 8:00 pm, Monday to Friday when school is open.

In September 2003, Metro Transit introduced a U-Pass for students attending Saint Mary's University. The U-Pass program was coordinated through discussions with the Saint Mary's University Student Union and the TRAX committee of the Ecology Action Centre. U-Pass programs are now available to a number of universities throughout Canada. The Saint Mary's U-Pass provides unlimited travel on Metro Transit service for the September to April university term. The cost of the U-Pass is \$110 per student for the school term and is based on the participation of all full time students enrolled in a Saint Mary's undergraduate program whether they use the transit system or not and is added to the university's student fees. The cost of additional transit service to the university area to accommodate added student ridership was factored into the price of the U-Pass.

The U-Pass concept has been very successful in other cities, encouraging increased use of public transit and reduced car traffic and demand for parking. It also allows students to seek living accommodations further from the immediate university area by ensuring unlimited use of the transit system.

Metro Transit staff have had some general discussions with Dalhousie University to determine their interest in including the U-Pass fee in their tuition/student fees. The Dalhousie administration has expressed a general interest but there is no agreement or target dates for its implementation. There has also been some interest expressed by Mount St. Vincent University.

DISCUSSION

Metro Transit works closely with Halifax Regional School Board staff to identify opportunities where students can conveniently use Metro Transit service. Currently over 1,000 students are issued transit passes for use on Metro Transit to travel to and from school. Student passes, child and Halifax School Board Passes are all discounted to provide transportation to students at a reasonable price.

The Halifax School Board operates many schools in both areas served by Metro Transit and in more rural areas that have limited or no access to Metro Transit services. In areas served by public transit, schools aren't always on streets where public transit service operates. In some case the current transit route structure would not provide students a direct link between home and school, and would require

transferring and walking to/from the bus route.

Another challenge with offering a U-Pass program to grade school students would be the full participation of all students and a mechanism to collect the fee from each student. Not only would this have implications for students who have access to school board transportation, it would also mean collecting a new student fee.

Staff feel that grade school transportation needs can best be met through School Board Transportation, whose primary objective is to meet student transportation needs. Metro Transit's broader objective of offering a travel alternative for all residents, make it difficult to efficiently serve the needs of all student without disadvantaging other user groups. However, Metro Transit and the School Board do currently work together to address student transportation needs to those schools located on or near an existing transit routes.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

No Budget implications.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

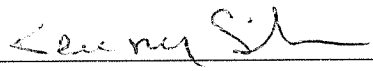
This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

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.

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