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Item No. 14.1.4

**Regional Council
March 28, 2017**

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

Jane Fraser, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 13, 2017

SUBJECT: Grants to Community-Based Rural Transit Service Providers

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

May 2, 2016 – Grants Committee recommendation to Regional Council to direct staff to submit a Supplementary Report with recommendations in regard to capital funding opportunities for rural transit.

May 10, 2016 – Grants Committee recommendation approved by Regional Council.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- HRM Charter, S.N.S 2008 c.39.
s.79(1) The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for.... (av) a grant or contribution to:
(v) any charitable, nursing, athletic, educational, environmental, cultural, community, fraternal, recreational, religious or social organization within the Province;
- Administrative Order 2014-012-ADM Rural Transit Grants Administrative Order.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that requests for capital funding for rural transit be directed to the Community Grants Program.

BACKGROUND

In 2014, the Municipality introduced a designated grant program to support community-based rural transit service providers. The program is administered pursuant to Administrative Order 2014-012-ADM a copy of which is available online at: Halifax.ca/legislation/adminorders/index.php. In consultation with non-profit rural transit operators, the program is designed to prioritize operational funding due in part to the availability of provincial funding towards capital expenditures.

In 2016, the Community Grants Program received a request from the MusGo Riders Cooperative Ltd, Musquodoboit Harbour for a capital grant towards the purchase of a new passenger van. Although the Rural Transit Funding Program does not preclude the use of an HRM operating grant towards a capital expenditure there is no dedicated capital funding category or funding threshold. The Grants Committee approved the staff recommendation to provide a grant in the amount of \$18,500 in the Healthy Communities: Environment category and to review the eligibility of non-profit rural transit service providers.

DISCUSSION

In consultation with staff of Halifax Transit three (3) options were considered. Namely, (i) expand the existing Rural Transit Funding Program, (ii) amend the Community Grants Program to include community-based transit, or (iii) exclude capital funding from consideration based on the provision of provincial funding opportunities.

The review concluded that the frequency of capital grant requests towards the purchase of a vehicle or related adaptive upgrades is expected to be intermittent and that the current Community Grants Program has sufficient capacity to consider such requests.

An amendment to the Community Grants Program eligibility criteria and funding priorities is not warranted, but applications would be considered under the Cultural Communities: Community Diversity category. Data on rural transit ridership suggests that a significant portion of users and charter bookings are persons with limited transportation options/financial capacity. Ridership could include a disproportionate number of persons with a disability or mobility challenge, lower income persons/households, and small non-profit groups. As such, community-based rural transit appears to have a greater impact on accessibility as compared to environmental protection. The inclusion of rural transit under Cultural Communities: Community Diversity is consistent with Council's recent decision to extend subsidized transit passes to lower income persons via the Low Income Pass Pilot Project.

In practice, the Community Grants Program takes into account funding from government sources, including municipal. Notwithstanding exceptional circumstances, rural transit service providers might be expected to cost-share and to have made application to designated transit programs, including federal and provincial.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None. Amendments to the Community Grants Program are not required. Awards are merit-based and relative to the program's annual budget.

RISK CONSIDERATION

None.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could overturn the staff recommendation and direct staff to amend Administrative Order 2014-012-ADM.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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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