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Item No. 12.1.3
Transportation Standing Committee
February 22, 2018

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Dave Reage, MCIP, LPP, Director, Halifax Transit

DATE:

January 17, 2018

SUBJECT:

Halifax Transit Ongoing Engagement Model

ORIGIN

At the June 20, 2017 meeting of Regional Council, the following motion was put and passed:

That Halifax Regional Council:

1. Direct staff to continue developing project-based engagement strategies for public transit projects, ensuring that the most appropriate consultation strategy or format is used to solicit the feedback required to inform the project's development.
2. Direct staff to work with Planning & Development to develop new engagement tools that would provide regular feedback from Transit users and non-users and return to the Transportation Standing Committee with a report on the proposed engagement model.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 69 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter provides the legislative authority to provide a public transportation service.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. Direct Halifax Transit staff to work with Corporate Communications to initiate an online advisory panel as an ongoing method of public engagement.
2. Direct Halifax Transit staff to undertake in person consultation to complement the online advisory panel.

BACKGROUND

The Halifax Community Engagement Strategy defines Engagement as “the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people to enact positive action. It includes information sharing, consultation and active involvement in decision making.”¹

Public engagement, through its various methods, has increased in the past decades due to the desire of the public to actively participate in the decision-making process. As per the Halifax Community Engagement Strategy: “Residents expect to be involved in the decisions that affect them, and citizen involvement in deliberations about what is important to them, how their community grows and develops is crucial to more informed government decisions and better service delivery. Effective public engagement taps into collective knowledge and wisdom of residents and contributes to building more connected, harmonious and resilient communities. When people are involved in initiating and promoting change, the resulting solutions tend to be more successful and lasting.”²

High quality public engagement benefits not only the public, but also greatly benefits the municipality and municipal staff as well. By engaging appropriately, comprehensively and sincerely with the public through the planning stages of a project builds strong relationships and typically a better final product.

The North West Transit Advisory Committee (NWTAC), dissolved in 2013, was HRM’s only public transit-related advisory committee. It was felt that the committee was not functioning as originally envisioned and that other methods of structured public engagement should be considered for transit. Upon the dissolution of NWTAC, at the March 28, 2013 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, staff were directed “to prepare a report identifying engagement models through which citizens can advise HRM on transit issues.”

As a result of the motion noted above, at the November 13, 2013 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, a staff report describing several models for public engagement related to transit service provision was discussed. The report examined engagement models which would allow members of the public and stakeholder groups to provide feedback to Halifax Transit on an ongoing, sustained basis. The report also included the results of a survey undertaken by the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) on behalf of Halifax Transit, which asked Canadian transit agencies of a similar size how they engaged with their ridership and the public at large on an ongoing basis.

Similar to Halifax Transit, all agencies surveyed indicated that they regularly hosted project specific engagement. Some also reported that they engage with the public on an ongoing basis in another format.

In summary, the ongoing engagement tools discussed in the November 2013 report can be categorized into one of the following five categories:

- **Standing Advisory Committees**: Standing advisory committees (also called stakeholder working groups, or citizen advisory committees) are used by some transit agencies to formulate the backbone of public engagement programs, and play an advisory role on general agency operations.
- **Project-Based Advisory Committees**: A project-based advisory committee is generally involved in the planning or development stages of a major capital project. It has a narrower mandate than a standing advisory committee, as the scope of work is usually limited to one project.
- **Standing Advisory Committees for a Specific Operational Topic**: A standing advisory committee on an operational topic provides insight into the management of a particular ongoing issue, for example accessibility or customer service.

¹ Halifax Community Engagement Strategy (2008), page 10

² Halifax Community Engagement Strategy (2008), page 10

- Ad Hoc Sounding Boards: This unique engagement model typically provides members of the public an opportunity to provide feedback on a transit agency's proposed service changes. Sounding boards are flexible, and are established on an ad hoc basis when required and disband once they develop their recommendations.
- Web Based Engagement Panels: Technology offers a valuable opportunity to have a large group of people provide feedback to a transit agency quickly and on a regular basis via on-line surveys or questionnaires. Panel members sign up online and are invited to provide feedback through an online portal. The agency posting the questions can target a particular subset of the panel in order to better understand the feedback of a particular group or residents of a particular geographic area.

It was determined that no action should be taken at that time, and that the topic should be revisited upon the completion and approval of the *Moving Forward Together Plan*.

Upon the approval of the *Moving Forward Together Plan*, a second staff report, dated September 20, 2016, was completed summarizing further options for engagement, which included an updated scan of engagement models supported by Canadian transit agencies. At the December 8, 2016 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, the committee reviewed the report. It was recommended that a third report, dated April 3, 2016, expand the range of comparison municipalities to better benchmark, provide cost ranges, and options for improving diversity and inclusion in current and future public engagement models.

The Transportation Standing Committee discussed both the September 20, 2016 and April 3, 2017 reports at the June 7, 2017 meeting. At that time, the Transportation Standing Committee directed Halifax Transit to complete a third report with a recommendation for new engagement tools that Halifax Transit can use to engage transit users and non-users. This motion was put and passed by Regional Council at the June 20, 2017 meeting of Regional Council.

On December 5, 2017, the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) was approved by Regional Council. Section 5.1.2 of the Plan contains an overview of how HRM will consult with the public to implement the IMP, the role of public engagement, when is the right time to engage, and how to engage. For example, when public engagement is a good idea (major change to a street, intervention located in a high-profile area) versus when it may not be required (change is relatively small and involves no trade-offs, public is not significantly impacted by project).

DISCUSSION

In the development of this report, a workshop was held between Halifax Transit, Planning & Development and Corporate Communications. Members of the workshop group considered the 2008 Community Engagement Strategy, which is based on a Continuum of Community Engagement from Information Sharing to Consultation to Active Participation. While the Strategy does not mandate specific community engagement methods, it introduces a consistent strategic approach which equips HRM with the framework needed to conduct meaningful, inclusive, and effective public involvement.

Corporate Communications has included the re-establishment of the Community Engagement Committee as a deliverable in its 2018-19 Business Plan. Building from the 2008 Community Engagement Strategy, staff are modernizing the methods and tools that are used to engage with the public and stakeholders. To modernize the engagement process, there is a need to provide more engagement options to the public in addition to reaching segments of the population not currently reached. Some of the general objectives of renewing HRM's engagement tools include:

- Public consultation processes strive to be inclusive to all citizens making effort to remove the barriers to participation found in many typical consultation methods.
- The public consultation process is modernized to reflect the modern lives of citizens and the

- technology available to outreach into the community.
- Public consultation processes are transparent, credible, effective, and useful to the decision-making process.
- The community's ability to influence the decision of various municipal authorities is formally recognized.
- Citizens are encouraged to participate in civic life through a variety of mediums.

Multiple public engagement tools were evaluated to determine what would be achievable, meaningful, and effective as both short and long-term public engagement strategies for Halifax Transit. This includes building on the ongoing engagement activities being undertaken by Halifax Transit.

Current Halifax Transit Engagement Methods There are several ways in which Halifax Transit currently engages with its residents:

a) Halifax Transit regularly engages the public on a variety of capital projects through project-specific engagement. Recent examples include the functional design of transit priority measures on Bayers Road and Gottingen Street, and on the siting of the new Mumford Terminal. In recent years, Halifax Transit's project-based engagement strategies have evolved and diversified to meet the changing needs of residents. In addition to conventional public open houses or workshop sessions, technology now plays a large role in project-based engagement, and recent projects have made use of online survey tools, forums, online Q&A sessions, and even Twitter Town Halls.

b) Halifax Transit hosts an Accessible Transit Liaison Group (ATLG, previously the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee). This group includes eight municipal staff, two registered Access-A-Bus users and six members from community organizations or groups representing people with disabilities and whose members utilize Halifax Transit services. The purpose of the ATLG is to provide advice, input, and assistance to Halifax Transit staff on all matters relating to the accessible transit services provided by Halifax Transit, from a user's perspective.

c) On an on-going basis, Halifax Transit collects general feedback from the public via 311, the Customer Contact Centre, Twitter, and through an online web form. This feedback is typically initiated by the public and focused mostly on service-specific items (service changes, delays, suggestions for routes).

Public engagement plays an essential role in shaping the services delivered by Halifax Transit and leads to better and more inclusive decision-making processes. Further, good public engagement supports increased citizen influence in municipal decision-making. Although the above-mentioned formats of engagement have been mostly successful, especially at collecting public feedback for specific projects, there are opportunities for Halifax Transit to increase engagement through on-going dialogue as well as provide better transparency into service design and operational decisions.

By introducing on-going engagement tools, Halifax Transit has the opportunity to create a more inclusive and holistic process as well as encourage a shared commitment to an important public service. As opposed to being reactive, and waiting for projects to lead engagement, the new strategies suggested look to engage on a regular basis, utilizing technologies that have worked well in other transit agencies, and with tools that will allow a more concentrated engagement, especially in neighbourhoods and communities that are more challenging to engage and with non-transit users.

In addition to the tools already outlined in this report, to achieve the direction described by the motion noted above, an online advisory panel, supplemented by in-person engagement, is recommended:

Online Advisory Panel

In recent years, technology has proven to be an extremely effective, modern way to reach out to the public – both transit users and non-transit users. For example, in September 2017, members of the public were

invited to view and comment on proposed locations for the new Mumford Terminal. Within a two-week period, over 6,000 people visited the site with approximately 1,200 providing detailed feedback. By comparison, the open house event had 100 members of the public attend.

In addition to the Mumford engagement, success with other projects including the *Moving Forward Together Plan (MFTP)* consultation has indicated that web-based engagement is the preference for many members of the public in Halifax. This also includes non-transit users, who had significant participation in the MFTP consultation. The development of an online advisory panel would complement existing engagement strategies, and would allow Halifax Transit to solicit feedback from a large number of people quickly, easily, and on an on-going basis.

Online Engagement Panels in Action

Metro Vancouver's TransLink has made a serious commitment to continually engaging members of the public by sending out monthly online surveys through their online advisory panel, TransLink Listens. TransLink Listens is used mostly for marketing research purposes, to gauge public opinion on potential offerings and existing services. It has also been used as a consultation tool through the open-link capabilities that allow for non-members to participate in studies.

Panel members sign up to participate on the TransLink website, and through the registration process, panel members enter basic information such as age, neighbourhood of residence, transportation modes used, car ownership, and basic demographic information. This information allows targeted surveys to be distributed at a later date.

In the Greater Toronto Area, GO Transit has recently launched a similar initiative called "Let GO Know." Although the panel encourages users to register, this is not mandatory. For those non-registered users who opt to complete the survey, user data is collected by requesting a postal code and date-of-birth. To encourage registration, there are monthly draws consisting of a transit voucher worth \$100.

Opportunities and Benefits

The benefits of an online advisory panel are numerous. The use of technology offers a valuable opportunity to have a large group of people provide feedback to a transit agency quickly and on a regular basis, without asking members of the public to dedicate a lot of their time to attend a more traditional public meeting.

One of the key advantages of a web-based engagement format is that it will allow Halifax Transit to not only target surveys to specific geographic areas, but it will also allow staff to develop targeted engagement methods in area of underrepresented populations. By having participants provide a postal-code, age, and whether they are transit users or not, it will allow Halifax Transit to identify demographic and geographical gaps in the sample size. This participant information can be extracted and analyzed from online engagement tools in a way that is challenging through public events such as open houses. If geographic areas or subsets of the population are identified as being underrepresented, further on-site engagement methods can be used to target these communities. This could include pop-up engagement sessions in local communities, or outreach through community partners to encourage participation. Halifax Transit is committed to consulting with the Diversity and Inclusion Office in designing the engagement method to ensure that traditionally underrepresented groups are meaningfully engaged. If directed to establish an online engagement panel supplemented by in-person engagement where gaps are identified, Halifax Transit will report on the findings and participation levels in the quarterly reports to the Transportation Steering Committee.

A final advantage is that there will also be flexibility for people to suggest what areas they would like to see Halifax Transit provide surveys or collect feedback about.

Challenges

A challenge often faced by this type of engagement is that the conversation can be fairly high-level, and prescriptive, due to the nature of a close-ended survey as compared to a more conventional in-person meetings. However, as applicable, there will be the opportunity for participants to provide open-ended responses at the end of a survey.

Another potential challenge would be that as the panel is open to participation from anyone, there is no way to ensure that results provide an accurate representation of transit users or Halifax residents. In addition, due to the dependence on technology, it is possible that some Halifax residents may be unable to participate. This could be mitigated by analysis of the user-data and deployment of additional engagement strategies as discussed above.

In order to verify whether the survey is fulfilling the intent of providing improved ongoing engagement opportunities, Halifax Transit will complete an evaluation method, in cooperation with Corporate Communications, within one-year of the first survey asking participants if they are finding the methodology effective.

Next Steps

If directed by Regional Council to establish an online advisory panel, an online engagement portal could be a permanent subpage to Halifax Transit's page on Shape Your City. The portal will allow panel members to register and, when prompted, check back in to complete a survey.

Similar to TransLink Listens, interested members of the public could register online, and Halifax Transit could use this web panel to solicit feedback on topics as wide-ranging as proposed new routes/services, supplemental project-specific feedback, and other items such as updates, initiatives, and new projects. Registrants would be contacted by e-mail and asked to follow a link to participate in the survey. For non-registrants, links to surveys could be posted on the Halifax Transit website, HRM Twitter, etc.

Long Term Engagement Strategy

Corporate Communications is in the initial stages of coordinating various municipal business units to review past and current engagement programs to define and guide more consistent, predictable and meaningful public engagement practices across business units. This will involve the establishment of a Community Engagement Steering Committee comprised of representatives of all business units involved in community engagement work.

It is Halifax Transit's intent to sit as a member of the Community Engagement Steering Committee. This will allow Halifax Transit to further evaluate and evolve the online advisory panel, consider the feasibility of other engagement methods, and continuously improve upon existing project-based consultation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant financial implications associated with the report recommendations. The online Advisory Panel could be established using the resources of Corporate Communications, and housed on the existing Shape Your City Portal. Costs associated with the promotion of the online advisory panel can be accommodated within the existing R624 6912 operating budget.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report. The risks considered rate low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No public engagement has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. The decision to proceed with the implementation of any of the recommendations above would improve community engagement on public transit topics by providing for a continuum of engagement as outlined in the 2008 Community Engagement Strategy, while applying more modern, inclusive tools and approaches.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

ALTERNATIVES

The Transportation Standing Committee may recommend that Regional Council not direct staff to implement the recommendation as described in this report.

The Transportation Standing Committee may recommend that Regional Council delay the implementation of the online advisory panel until the Corporate Communications' Community Engagement Steering Committee has been established.

ATTACHMENTS

Halifax Transit Ongoing Engagement Model - Attachment A

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Derek Nawrot, Coordinator, Project Planning, Halifax Transit (902.490.5956)



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Attachment A
Transportation Standing Committee
April 27, 2017

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Dave Reage, MCIP, LPP, Director, Halifax Transit

DATE: April 3, 2017

SUBJECT: Public Transit Engagement Model Supplementary Report

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the December 8, 2016 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, the committee reviewed the report entitled Public Transit Engagement Model, dated September 20, 2016. The following motion was put and passed:

That the Transportation Standing Committee defer consideration of the September 20, 2016 [report] and request a supplementary staff report with further information on the following:

- An analysis of comparison cities with 150 to 750 k population including further benchmarking and comparisons for those cities;
- Cost range for Standing Advisory Committees using ATAC as an example; and
- Options for improving diversity and inclusion in current and future public engagement models.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 21 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter provides the legislative authority to establish Advisory Committees.

BACKGROUND

In November 2013, Halifax Transit staff authored a report to the Transportation Standing Committee which described several models for public engagement related to transit service provision. It further reviewed the engagement models used by other agencies in Halifax Transit's Canadian Urban Transit Association CUTA group.

The models discussed in this report included:

- Standing Advisory Committees;
- Project Based Advisory Committees;
- Standing Advisory Committees for a Specific Operational Topic;
- Ad Hoc Sounding Boards; and
- Web Based Engagement Panels.

When this report was discussed at the Transportation Standing Committee in 2013, it was determined that no action should be taken at that time, but that the discussion was to be revisited upon the completion of the *Moving Forward Together Plan*.

Upon the completion and approval of the *Moving Forward Together Plan*, as per the direction of the Transportation Standing Committee, Halifax Transit staff completed a report which describes existing engagement activities supported by Halifax Transit, and also described a variety of public transit engagement models supported by Halifax Transit's Canadian peer agencies.

Like Halifax Transit, peer agencies typically collect feedback on an ongoing basis but also through project-specific public engagement activities. This report focuses on agencies which host a standing advisory committee of members of the public who inform transit staff on operational issues or otherwise provide feedback on draft policies or plans.

DISCUSSION

Comparison Cities' Engagement Models

Based on the 2015 Canadian Urban Transit Association Handbook, the following Canadian transit agencies have service area populations of between 150,000 and 750,000 residents:

- Brampton
- Burlington
- Durham
- Gatineau
- Halifax
- Hamilton
- Laval
- London
- Longueuil
- Niagara Region
- Oakville
- Quebec
- Regina
- Saskatoon
- Victoria
- Waterloo Region
- Windsor
- Winnipeg

Attachment A summarizes the engagement activities specific to transit service that these agencies engage in, excluding those activities which are project specific. The following provides some examples of how some of the peer agencies noted above engage the public on an ongoing basis. For a list of benchmarks such as ridership per capita for each peer agency, see Attachment B.

Review of Engagement Undertaken by Comparable Transit Agencies

Halifax Transit reached out to each Canadian transit agency serving a population of 150,000 and 750,000 residents to better understand the way in which they conduct their consultation. Based on discussion with staff at peer transit agencies, only two have a transit-specific citizen advisory committee which offers feedback on a continual basis to the agency which is composed, at least in part, of members of the public.

Based on this review, it would appear that there is no standard formula for collecting feedback from the public on an ongoing basis. Some agencies or cities host Accessible Advisory Committees, similar to that currently hosted by Halifax Transit, which report on paratransit issues. Other transit agencies receive feedback from the public through more general standing advisory committees on transportation or active transportation issues. The reporting structure of these committees vary (some transit agencies host committees with the public directly, while other committees report to a committee or subcommittee of Council), and so do their composition (a few municipalities host advisory committees on transit issues which are composed of councilors and municipal staff rather than members of the public).

The following sections examine in greater depth the experiences of some of the agencies noted above.

Region of Waterloo (Grand River Transit)

The Region of Waterloo currently does not have any citizen-based Standing Advisory Committee for conventional public transportation consultation. Similar to Halifax Transit, however, the Region does host a body that discusses para-transit issues and is composed of various members of the community. This is in addition to two accessibility advisory committees with a broader mandate for accessibility issues. The former Kitchener Transit did have a citizen-based committee for a short time but this was dissolved approximately 20 years ago.

Winnipeg Transit

Winnipeg Transit does not currently have any standing advisory committee or other formal ongoing engagement initiative with the public. Similar to Halifax Transit, they largely consult on a project-specific basis. However, the city has recently established an Office of Public Engagement under the City's Director of Communications and Customer Service. It is possible that in the future, this new initiative may establish an ongoing consultation initiative for Winnipeg Transit.

Saskatoon Transit

The City of Saskatoon hosts a standing committee on transportation, composed of members of council and senior management. Saskatoon Transit, however, meets regularly with the public transit advocacy group Bus Riders of Saskatoon. Each month Saskatoon Transit meets with three representatives from the advocacy group and answers any questions that they have. In turn, the advocacy group provides feedback on plans and draft policy.

Oakville Transit

A recent committee rationalization eliminated the Oakville Transit advisory committee. When in operation, it was composed of volunteer members and one Council representative. The advisory committee made recommendations directly to Council. The City has an Accessibility Advisory Committee which sometimes provides insight into accessible transit, but does not have a dedicated accessible transit advisory committee.

Durham Region (Durham Region Transit)

Durham Region Transit does host a standing advisory committee. Durham Transit Executive Committee (composed of elected members of Durham Regional Council) receives feedback from the DRT Advisory Committee on public transit matters as they relate to the provision of conventional and specialized transit service in Durham. The DRT Advisory Committee is a volunteer committee established by Regional Council, and the responsibility for the advisory committee falls to the Durham Region Transit Executive Committee. Their scope is as follows:

- Providing input on issues and concerns of public transit users;
- Providing input on the implementation of Provincial and Federal legislation, policies, and guidelines related to the public transit industry;
- Providing input on urban and rural conventional transit and specialized service policy including the review of transit service plans, transit marketing and communication plans, and the provision of on-street passenger amenities and route infrastructure;
- Providing input on the identification and implementation of programs that create public awareness and educate residents on the benefits of public transit; and
- Providing a forum for transit stakeholder groups to identify issues affecting the delivery of transit service and to provide input to the Executive Committee on the disposition of these issues.

The Committee is composed of 18 members, of which two are non-voting. They represent eight transit users appointed by area municipalities, two members at large appointed by the Executive Committee, four members representing Accessibility Advisory Committees, the president of the local student association, the Chair of the Transit Executive Committee, the General Manager of DRT, and the DRT Communications Coordinator. Membership terms are four years to correspond with the term of Regional Council. Meetings of the DRT Advisory Committee are open to the public and are held every six weeks.

Burlington Transit

The City of Burlington hosts an Integrated Transportation Advisory Committee. It is an umbrella advisory committee of Council, and includes representatives from Citizen Advisory Committees on cycling, sustainable development, and accessibility. One staff representative from Burlington Transit sits on the board, as well as a staff member from municipal Transportation Services. Part of their mandate is to provide comments on City of Burlington Master Plans pertaining to transit and transportation issues and provide strategic input to staff and Council on key transportation related projects. Meetings are held quarterly and between meetings committee members review proposals and attend public meetings on behalf of the agency.

Burlington Transit staff note that while it does require a significant amount of staff time to administer the committee, it is an important part of the municipal decision-making process

Cost Range of Establishing a Standing Advisory Committee

The cost of establishing a Standing Advisory Committee to advise Halifax Transit on an ongoing basis could vary widely depending on the Committee's Terms of Reference and mandate.

Of particular importance in determining the cost range and structure of the committee is knowing and understanding its goal. For example, what questions will the committee answer? How will the feedback received from the committee be reflected and/or incorporated on a go forward? Is the intent that the Committee represent the general public or provide expert opinion?

This will determine the frequency of meetings, and term in which the committee will be operational. Factors such as the times and locations of meetings, and size of the committee will all dictate requirements for staffing and overtime, as well as requirement to book and rent space should meetings be hosted in the evenings.

Depending on the variables noted above, if a committee were to be established to advise Halifax Transit directly, it is likely to cost between \$4,500 - \$16,000 per year.¹

¹ Based on cost estimates for the annual operation of three recently established advisory committees: Western Common Advisory Committee (\$10,000 - \$16,000 per year), Feral Cat Advisory Committee (\$4,500 per year), and Arts Halifax Advisory Committee (up to \$15,000 per year).

Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion in Engagement – Project Based Consultation

Regional Council's adoption of the Community Engagement Strategy in December 2008 initiated the development of more engaged communities. Prior to creating the Strategy, staff coordinated a detailed review of HRM's community engagement practices. A number of successful approaches taken by other municipalities were also examined as a part of this research. Based on the findings of these reviews, five strategic approaches were recommended to guide future actions:

1. Adopt an HRM Community Engagement Framework;
2. Improve engagement practices of individual divisions and business units;
3. Increase training and internal support of HRM staff;
4. Invest in public education, outreach and capacity building; and
5. Ensure accountability and promote excellence in Community Engagement.

The Community Engagement Strategy also identified ten principles for Community Engagement. These are:

1. Citizen participation is recognized as an asset, is valued and encouraged;
2. The purpose and the process are clear to all participants;
3. Everyone potentially affected by the process has an opportunity to become involved;
4. Barriers to access are recognized and overcome to ensure diverse, inclusive and balanced participation;
5. The process is respectful, fair, effective and transparent;
6. Communication is clear, timely and effective;
7. Public involvement is adequately resourced;
8. Participants are informed of outcomes of community engagement;
9. The public has an opportunity to provide feedback on the process; and
10. Community engagement is evaluated and improved.

Ensuring diverse and inclusive consultation is critical to ensuring high quality engagement process. Without reaching a diverse cross-section of the public, engagement is incomplete and so ensuring accessibility of all engagement activities is of the utmost importance. With the lens of increasing the accessibility and quality of public engagement, Halifax Transit staff will work closely with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to ensure that engagement opportunities reach communities who have not traditionally participated in conventional engagement activities. Halifax Transit will also continue to reach out to local community partners (for example Canadian Association of Retired Persons, or Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia) to ensure reach and breadth of consultation.

Project Based Engagement Activities to Date

Halifax Transit has undertaken several large scale engagement activities since the adoption of the Community Engagement Strategy. At the core of these engagement strategies have been the ten principles for Community Engagement as noted above. In the context of engagement on the *Moving Forward Together Plan*, this meant:

- Providing consultation opportunities at different times of day: Public engagement meetings have traditionally been held in the evening hours, limiting the ability for those who have evening commitments from participating (i.e. parents of young children, those who work evenings);
- Make it easier for people to engage: Reducing the barriers to access by consulting in more accessible, non-traditional locations (at bus terminals, malls, grocery stores and other community locations), and asking questions in a format that is clear and direct. This could mean providing a workshop or casual, drop in consultation rather than structured, town-hall style;
- Collect feedback in many formats: Don't limit collection of feedback to surveys and town hall meetings, but accept feedback in any format residents are comfortable giving it; and
- Using technology to complement in-person consultation: Some people are unable to participate in consultation in person due to busy work schedules or personal commitments. By providing options to consult online or via social media, more opinions can be considered.

In order to ensure that project-based consultation strategies reach the diverse population which Halifax Transit serves, for each project Halifax Transit designs a consultation strategy tailored to engage riders and non-riders alike who may be impacted by the project. Some examples of this include:

- On site community engagement at the Canada Games Centre for Lacewood Terminal; and
- A region-wide online survey and interactive map promoted by targeted social media ads.

Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion in Engagement – Standing Advisory Committee

One of the benefits of establishing a Standing Advisory Committee is that the composition of the Committee is determined through the Committee's Terms of Reference. Transportation Standing Committee and Regional Council may determine that the Committee must include a representative from traditionally underrepresented groups, or require that individuals representing particular geographic communities are a part of the Committee.

However, availability to participate on the committee may still be a barrier to participation. For example, a shift worker, parents of young children, those living far from the regional center, or individuals with mobility challenges may have greater difficulty in committing to attend the meetings on a regular basis. Further, residents with lower literacy levels or who have no access to technology may be less aware of the opportunity to participate in a standing advisory committee. These factors may be mitigated by:

- Reaching out to organizations which represent groups identified in the Terms of Reference and asking them to communicate to their membership the call for applications;
- Retain flexibility in the meeting times and locations, and consider using technology (i.e. Skype or conference call) if members of the advisory committee are not able to participate in Committee meetings at a particular time of the day;
- Consider providing on-site child care for the parents of young children who are participating in the Committee; and
- Consider providing Halifax Transit tickets to Committee members to facilitate their travel to and from meetings.

If directed to establish a terms of reference for a Standing Advisory Committee, Halifax Transit staff would work closely with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to ensure a transparent, accessible, and inclusive process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report. If a committee were to be established to advise Halifax Transit directly, it is likely to cost between \$4,500 - \$16,000 per year.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As this report is only to provide information to the Transportation Standing Committee, there has been no community engagement related to this issue.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Peer Agency Engagement Strategies

Attachment B: Peer Agency Benchmark Summary Table

Attachment C: Public Transit Engagement Model Staff Report Dated Sept 20, 2016

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.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.

Report Prepared by: Erin Harrison, MCIP, LPP, Supervisor, Service Design & Projects 902.490.4942

City	Agency	Municipal Population	Service Area Population	Does the Agency or Municipality host a Standing Advisory Committee?
Brampton	Brampton Transit	580,600	573,300	Brampton does not host a Citizen Standing Advisory Committee on transit issues. The City of Brampton hosts an Accessible Advisory Committee, which engages with Brampton Transit 1-2 times a year. Consultation is typically project specific, or related to service plans.
Burlington	Burlington Transit	175,779	170,310	The City of Burlington hosts an Integrated Transportation Advisory Committee. See more detailed discussion below.
Durham	Durham Region Transit	660,765	555,111	Durham Region does host a Citizen Standing Advisory Committee. See more detailed discussion below.
Gatineau	Société de transport de l'Outaouais	276,577	276,577	Gatineau does not host a Citizen Standing Advisory Committee on transit issues, although it does host a standing committee of Council for Société de transport de l'Outaouais.
Halifax	Halifax Transit	372,679	308,084	Halifax Transit hosts an Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee.
Hamilton	Hamilton Street Railway	545,850	490,000	Consultation on transit in Hamilton is typically project specific. For example, the Hamilton Street Railway had a 26 member Rapid Transit Citizen Advisory Committee. Their mandate was to identify any current and potential community issues related to the Rapid Transit Initiative. This committee was dissolved upon completing their mandate. The city currently hosts a Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee which reviews and provides input on reports brought forward from the LRT Office and provides input and guidance to project team through the design, planning and LRT construction process. This committee is composed of Councillors and appointed citizen advisors. Citizen advisors do not have voting privileges.
Laval	Société de transport de Laval	425,225	425,225	Public consultation is held on a project specific basis. (significant projects or route reviews).
London	London Transit	381,300	381,300	London does not host a Citizen Standing Advisory Committee on transit issues. The City of London has an Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee which engages with London Transit.
Longueuil	Réseau de transport de Longueuil	416,174	416,174	Project or service specific public consultations take place, and public meetings are hosted by the Board of Directors 10 – 12 times a year. The board is involved in long range planning, budgets, staffing levels and fare structure, so the public meetings are not exclusively related to service changes but have a broader focus.
Niagara Region	Niagara Region Transit	449,098	330,850	Niagara Region hosts a Transportation Strategy Steering Committee which provides input to staff and Regional Council through the Public Works Committee on policies, programs, and initiatives related to transportation systems planning and development. Membership includes members of Regional Council, Members of Local Council, and up to five members of the public at large. Interest groups may also become members. Niagara Region also hosts an Accessibility Advisory Committee who may advise on transit issues as they relate to accessibility.
Oakville	Oakville Transit	188,000	188,000	Oakville does not host a Citizen Standing Advisory Committee on transit issues. Oakville Transit formerly hosted a citizen advisory committee, which was dissolved. See more detailed discussion below.
Quebec	Réseau de transport de la Capitale	590,281	590,281	Public consultation is held on a project specific basis.
Regina	Regina Transit	221,407	221,407	All advisory Committees in the City of Regina were put on hold two years ago pending review of overall public engagement strategy. Regina Transit typically focuses on project specific consultation.
Saskatoon	Saskatoon Transit	262,900	262,900	There is no citizen-based Standing Advisory Committee on transit issues in Saskatoon; however, Saskatoon Transit meets quarterly with representatives of a local transit advocacy group. See more detailed discussion below.
Victoria	Victoria Regional Transit System	361,157	352,706	The City of Victoria has an Active Transportation Committee whose mandate includes transit. It is made up of members of the public. The City does not host a Citizen Standing Advisory Committee on transit issues.
Waterloo Region	Grand River Transit	520,670	434,988	Waterloo Region does not host a citizen advisory committee on transit issues. See more detailed discussion below.
Windsor	Transit Windsor	210,875	210,875	In 2015 Transit Windsor established an Advisory Committee composed of four Councillors and two members of the public to inform transit policy and transit planning decisions.
Winnipeg	Winnipeg Transit	718,400	684,100	Winnipeg does not host a Citizen Standing Advisory Committee on transit issues. See more detailed discussion below.

Year	Municipality	Total Revenues	Net Operating Cost	Provincial Operating Contribution	Municipal Operating Contribution	Provincial Capital Contribution	Municipal Capital Contribution	Total Capital Funding	Total Operating Revenues / Total Direct Operating Expenses R/C Ratio	Municipal Operating Contribution / Capita	Cost per passenger	Ridership / Capita (per annum)	Revenue Vehicle Hours / Capita (Amount of Service)	Average Speed - Bus
2015	Brampton	\$ 53,350,680.00	\$ 65,133,648.00	\$ 9,619,595.00	\$ 55,514,053.00	\$ 13,302,989.17	\$ 13,475,334.72	\$ 48,148,132.76	45%	\$ 96.83	\$ 3.08	37	1.79072	21.60634
2015	Burlington	\$ 5,346,741.00	\$ 9,086,073.00	\$ 842,100.00	\$ 8,243,973.00	\$ 2,110,523.00		\$ 5,102,850.00	37%	\$ 48.41	\$ 4.65	11	0.93989	23.38989
2015	Durham Region	\$ 24,750,999.86	\$ 39,334,130.56	\$ 1,928,551.00	\$ 36,002,732.79	\$ 13,353,663.78	\$ 3,250,726.76	\$ 16,604,390.54	39%	\$ 64.86	\$ 3.74	19	0.89263	25.08372
2015	Gatineau	\$ 36,949,086.00	\$ 92,867,599.00	\$ 6,850,147.00	\$ 37,299,761.00	\$ 18,142,296.00	\$ 8,471,017.00	\$ 26,613,313.00	42%	\$ 134.86	\$ 2.56	69	1.97609	20.03192
2015	Halifax	\$ 34,937,725.00	\$ 61,552,823.00	\$ -	\$ 57,774,402.00	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 8,586,994.00	\$ 18,957,486.00	37%	\$ 187.53	\$ 3.01	63	2.58899	20.13576
2015	Hamilton	\$ 37,565,493.00	\$ 46,319,241.00	\$ 9,227,102.00	\$ 37,092,139.00	\$ 1,213,414.00	\$ 545,000.00	\$ 18,203,043.00	47%	\$ 75.70	\$ 1.90	45	1.58	18.64
2015	Laval	\$ 34,033,729.18	\$ 84,485,941.00	\$ 12,080,504.68	\$ 57,556,544.31	\$ 4,833,756.50		\$ 15,403,175.36	33%	\$ 135.36	\$ 3.16	51	1.43568	20.76873
2015	London	\$ 32,867,082.00	\$ 27,085,072.00	\$ 4,203,673.00	\$ 22,881,400.00	\$ 3,606,041.00	\$ 6,938,534.00	\$ 10,942,203.00	54%	\$ 60.01	\$ 1.21	59	1.52448	18.44029
2015	Longueuil	\$ 61,894,237.00	\$ 91,840,723.00	\$ 6,274,413.00	\$ 70,636,907.00	\$ 19,125,806.00	\$ 17,644,667.00	\$ 36,770,473.00	41%	\$ 169.73	\$ 2.43	80	1.99932	21.84947
2015	Niagara Falls	\$ 5,456,051.00	\$ 6,422,782.00	\$ 532,000.00	\$ 5,890,782.00		\$ 105,930.00	\$ 105,930.00	48%	\$ 73.63	\$ 1.95	28	0.99936	24.90104
2015	Oakville	\$ 7,446,298.50	\$ 14,984,253.15	\$ 545,200.00	\$ 14,439,053.15	\$ 974,430.00	\$ 493,000.00	\$ 5,575,336.00	33%	\$ 76.80	\$ 5.30	15	1.07556	22.82494
2015	Québec	\$ 68,858,520.00	\$ 128,429,695.00	\$ 219,346.00	\$ 84,021,331.00	\$ 33,881,819.00	\$ 843,690.00	\$ 34,725,509.00	38%	\$ 142.34	\$ 2.42	77	1.94762	20.82279
2015	Regina	\$ 9,257,530.00	\$ 16,496,530.79	\$ -	\$ 16,496,530.79		\$ 3,181,316.00	\$ 3,181,316.00	36%	\$ 74.51	\$ 3.18	23	1.27488	19.04759
2015	Saskatoon	\$ 13,143,543.00	\$ 25,309,080.00	\$ 745,175.00	\$ 24,563,905.00		\$ 6,204,301.00	\$ 6,328,045.00	37%	\$ 93.43	\$ 1.83	46	1.41779	18.89081
2015	Victoria	\$ 37,425,854.00	\$ 70,305,039.00	\$ 29,311,523.00	\$ 19,988,194.00	\$ 7,859,751.00	\$ 6,383,487.00	\$ 14,399,242.00	44%	\$ 56.67	\$ 1.90	72	2.2951	20.02553
2015	Waterloo Region	\$ 30,812,781.00	\$ 57,515,351.00	\$ 9,152,587.00	\$ 38,175,386.00		\$ 5,616,451.00	\$ 13,057,552.00	39%	\$ 87.76	\$ 2.35	47	1.58064	20.87345
2015	Windsor	\$ 12,155,895.00	\$ 17,588,200.29	\$ 3,382,946.00	\$ 14,205,254.29		\$ 5,070,277.00	\$ 5,070,277.00	43%	\$ 67.36	\$ 2.51	30	1.11503	22.13934
2015	Winnipeg	\$ 81,716,969.00	\$ 86,706,607.00	\$ 34,023,411.00	\$ 42,368,868.00	\$ 9,091,163.30	\$ 18,377,725.00	\$ 44,069,798.66	57%	\$ 61.93	\$ 1.24	71	2.04396	18.7323



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Item No. 12.1.1
Transportation Standing Committee
December 8, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Dave Reage, MCIP, LPP, Director, Halifax Transit

DATE: September 20, 2016

SUBJECT: **Public Transit Engagement Model**

ORIGIN

At the April 12, 2016 meeting of Regional Council, the following motion was put and passed:

MOVED by Councillor Craig, seconded by Councillor Outhit

That Halifax Regional Council request a staff report (recommendation) to Transportation Standing Committee regarding a public engagement model, to allow citizens to advise Halifax Transit on public transit issues.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 21 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter provides the legislative authority to establish Advisory Committees.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Transportation Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council:

1. Direct staff to continue developing project-based engagement strategies for public transit projects, ensuring that the most appropriate consultation strategy or format is used to solicit the feedback required to inform the project's development.
2. Direct staff to work with Planning & Development on investigation of new engagement tools as per report to Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee dated January 6, 2016.

BACKGROUND

In November 2013, Halifax Transit staff authored a report to the Transportation Standing Committee which described several models for public engagement related to transit service provision. The following summarizes several formats through which transit agencies can consult with the public on a continued or ongoing basis.

1. Standing Advisory Committee: Standing advisory committees (also called stakeholder working groups, or citizen advisory committees) are used by some transit agencies to formulate the backbone of public engagement programs, and play an advisory role on general agency operations. The committee composition and their role vary widely across transit agencies in Canada and the United States, but could include providing input on service changes, infrastructure projects, and operational issues.

The benefits of using this model is that it allows the transit agency and committee members to engage in in-depth discussions, and the appointment of members for one or several years can improve continuity and effectiveness. Some of the challenges of this model are that it can be considered exclusive, and can be perceived to lack transparency. Some agencies also pointed out that their committees often felt frustrated by lack of authority to make decisions. In addition, this model would require staff resources to initiate and manage.

2. Project Based Advisory Committee: A project based advisory committee is generally involved in the planning or development stages of a major capital project (for example the introduction of a new service type). It has a narrower mandate than a standing advisory committee, as it is usually limited to one project, and is disbanded once it has developed its recommendations or otherwise fulfilled its mandate to provide feedback related to the project. Unlike a standing advisory committee where members sit on the committee for a set term, members on a project based committee sit on the committee for the entire length of the committee's mandate, typically the length of the project's planning and implementation phases.

This model allows continuity and in-depth, technical discussion through the life of a particular capital project and, where appropriate, a specialized group of members can be selected to benefit the unique needs of each project. A challenge faced by the Committee could be frustration related to their narrow mandate.

3. Standing Advisory Committee for a Specific Operational Topic: A standing advisory committee on an operational topic provides insight into the management of a particular ongoing issue. Halifax Transit currently has an Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC)

which falls into this category¹. In Canada, some transit agencies have a dedicated committee to advise Council on accessible transit or transportation, while others have accessibility committees who are mandated to advise council on all accessibility issues including those related to transit.

The composition of this type of Committee can vary widely, but will generally include at least one representative of Council, and one or more members with particular expertise related to the operational issue. The benefits of using this model include that it allows continuity and in-depth, technical discussion enhanced by those who can contribute their first-hand experience. Challenges faced by the Committee could be frustration related to the narrow scope of the committee.

4. Ad Hoc Sounding Boards: This unique model typically provides members of the public an opportunity to provide feedback on a transit agency's proposed service changes. Sounding boards are established on an ad hoc basis and disband once they develop their recommendations. Although it appears that this structure is not as widely used, it does provide the opportunity for members of the public to contribute feedback.

The composition of this type of Committee can vary widely, but generally members would be selected to represent a diversity of viewpoints, or to represent the geographic areas that will be affected. The benefits of using this model include that it allows the agency to become more responsive to new ideas which originate in the community, and can alert the agency to any unforeseen consequences of service changes which may seem small. Challenges faced by this type of committee could be the significant amount of staff time required to recruit and select members of the Sounding Board each time there are service changes, and that members of the board may be frustrated at the narrow scope of their mandate and limited ability to make a larger impact.

5. Web Based Engagement Panel: Technology offers a valuable opportunity to have a large group of people provide feedback to a transit agency quickly and on a regular basis. While this is fairly uncharted territory by many agencies, Metro Vancouver's TransLink has made a serious commitment to continually engaging members of the public by sending out monthly online surveys. The program called TransLink Listens includes a panel of approximately 5,000 members who have signed up to participate through links available on the TransLink website, and through a number of other initiatives. The entire panel is engaged regularly with questionnaires on topics related to the various services TransLink offers. Input from these surveys is used to inform ongoing decision-making. In the Greater Toronto Area, GO Transit has recently launched a web based engagement panel called "Let GO Know."

The benefits of using this model include that it allows the agency to engage directly and regularly with a large number of individual transit riders in a timely manner on topics that residents to have the ability to influence. The approach is flexible, allows for broad and more frequent participation by residents from many neighbourhoods, walks of life, age, interests and mobility. Challenges faced by this type of engagement could be that the conversation could be fairly high-level, and prescriptive, due to the nature of a close-ended survey as compared to the more conventional inperson meetings. Another potential challenge would be that as the panel is open to participation from anyone, there is no way to ensure that results provide an accurate representation of transit

¹ ATAC is a group of volunteers that have been elected by Access-A-Bus users to serve on the Committee for a three year term. ATAC makes recommendations to Halifax Transit regarding the accessible services it provides.

users or residents. In addition, residents without easy access to a computer may be underrepresented.

Canadian Engagement Models

In 2013, on behalf of Halifax Transit the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) conducted a review of selected Canadian transit agencies to determine what models they used to continuously engage with members of the public. Agencies surveyed were those which serve a population of 150,000 – 400,000 residents.

Of those surveyed, at that time, only one hosted a standing transit advisory committee composed largely of citizens (Burlington Transit). Since 2013, however, this committee has been dissolved and replaced with the Integrated Transportation Advisory Committee, which has a broader transportation mandate and is no longer transit-specific in its focus. In 2013, neither London Transit or Transit Windsor hosted any advisory committees focused on transit, although some input was gathered from other committees with broader mandates, particularly those related to transportation or accessibility. However, in 2015 Transit Windsor established an Advisory Committee composed of four Councillors and two members of the public to inform transit policy and transit planning decisions.

Based on the 2013 survey findings and more recent changes described above, it would appear that the establishment of any citizen committee, board or panel with a mandate specific to public transit is uncommon in agencies of a similar size to Halifax Transit.

When this report was discussed at the Transportation Standing Committee in 2013, it was determined that no action should be taken at that time, but that the discussion was to be revisited upon the completion of the *Moving Forward Together Plan*.

DISCUSSION

Project Based Consultation in Halifax

It's very important that Halifax Transit receive comprehensive public feedback on a project-specific basis to ensure that the final project (for example, physical infrastructure or future service plan) is reflective of the needs of the Halifax community. With this in mind, it is important that a targeted public engagement strategy is developed and tailored for each project in order to solicit the specific feedback required from stakeholders and members of the public.

Halifax Transit has a history of leading diverse and successful public engagement programs to inform the development of plans and capital projects. Most recently, during the development of the *Moving Forward Together Plan*, staff engaged in two rounds of consultation. The first round of consultation, which took place in the fall of 2013, was values based and asked members of the public for direction as it pertains to prioritization and transit investment. It resulted in the completion of approximately 1,660 surveys. In addition to online consultation, 135 members of the public participated in six public meetings, and 25 stakeholder groups were represented across three stakeholder meetings. The direction of plan's development fundamentally shifted due to the findings of this round of consultation, broadening the scope of work from incremental changes to the establish network.

The second round of consultation for the *Moving Forward Together Plan* represents the largest and most successful public engagement program undertaken in Halifax to date. During a ten week engagement, the *Moving Forward Together Plan* online engagement portal hosted over 50,000 unique visitors and

collected over 15,000 online surveys. A further 20 in person engagement activities took place across the region. Altogether, over 20,000 individual comments were received and analyzed to inform the refinement of the plan. While many comments were related to the specific routes proposed, comments were also made on day to day transit operations such as scheduling, reliability, and service quality of existing routes. These comments were incorporated into policies and level of service guidelines reflected in the *Moving Forward Together Plan*.

In conjunction with Planning & Development, Halifax Transit will be undertaking a significant number of engagement activities in Fall 2016 as part of the development of the Integrated Mobility Plan. This project-based engagement will include workshops, online surveys, and pop-up engagement sessions.

It is also the intent of Halifax Transit to work closely with Planning & Development on the investigation of new engagement tools to improve the quality and consistency of public engagement activities across all municipally led consultation activities.

Ongoing Engagement in Halifax

Although there is no formal panel, citizen board or committee to inform Halifax Transit directly on an ongoing basis, Halifax Transit receives feedback from members of the public via 311 Customer Service outlets. This feedback can be on a variety of topics including routing, scheduling, and connectivity. Comments are tracked by Customer Service Agents and Halifax Transit staff and is used to inform service changes or otherwise actioned where appropriate. Feedback and ideas are also collected informally through corporate social media accounts and from public correspondence.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications of the report recommendations. The costs associated with developing a public engagement strategy and hosting public and stakeholder engagement activities are currently incorporated into the budget of any large project where engagement is warranted. However, should Regional Council direct staff to establish an ongoing public engagement model as described above, it is likely that there will be significant costs and staff requirements to initiate such a program and maintain it on a continuing basis.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report. The risks considered rate low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement has taken place to inform the development of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

ALTERNATIVES

No recommended alternatives.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A Public Transit Engagement Rec Report Staff Report Dated Oct 2013

REFERENCES

Hull, K. (2010). TCRP Synthesis 85: Effective use of Citizen Advisory Committees for Transit Planning and Operations. Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, Transit Cooperative Research Program. Washington, DC.: Transportation Research Board.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/SCtransp/index.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.

Report Prepared by: Erin Harrison, MCIP, LPP A/Supervisor, Service Design and Projects 902.490.4942

Attachment A: Public Transit Engagement Rec Report Staff Report Dated Oct 2013



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Information Item #1

**Transportation Standing Committee
November 13, 2013**

TO: Chair and Members of the Transportation Standing Committee

Original signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Eddie Robar, Director, Metro Transit

DATE: October 24, 2013

SUBJECT: Transit Engagement Models

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

On March 28th 2013, the Transportation Standing Committee directed staff to prepare a report identifying engagement models through which citizens could advise HRM on transit issues:

MOVED by Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Outhit that the Transportation Standing Committee direct staff to prepare a report identifying engagement models through which citizens can advise HRM on transit issues.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 21 of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides the legislative authority to establish Advisory Committees.

Transit Engagement Models

Transportation Standing Committee November 13, 2013 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Transportation Standing Committee directed staff to prepare a report which identifies ways in which citizens can advise HRM on public transit issues. There are a number of diverse

engagement models used across North America which allow members of the public to inform decision making related to public transit planning and operations. These models include standing committees, project based advisory committees, sounding boards, issue specific committees, and technology based panels. Although these are not common in Canadian transit agencies of Metro Transit's size, depending on the type of information and engagement the Transportation Standing Committee would like to elicit from the public, any of the five models (or some combination thereof) could be implemented.

BACKGROUND

The North West Transit Advisory Committee (NWTAC) was dissolved by a motion of North West Community Council on March 25th, 2013. At the March 28th meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, staff was directed "to prepare a report identifying engagement models through which citizens can advise HRM on transit issues."

Transit Engagement in HRM

There are a number of ways in which HRM engages with its citizens on an ongoing basis. The primary model used to support ongoing citizen engagement on a particular topic or issue is through the use of advisory committees. Today, citizens of HRM may serve on 13 Regional Council advisory boards, committees and commissions and five Community Council advisory committees. Of these 18 bodies, none have a mandate specific to public transit; however, transit issues are raised occasionally by the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Additionally, Metro Transit has an Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC). This group is composed of citizens and a Council representative and advises Metro Transit on issues of accessibility related to Metro Transit's Access-A-Bus and conventional transit service.

Currently, there is no public advisory committee, board, or commission which provides feedback to Metro Transit on an ongoing basis on issues beyond those related to accessibility.

In addition to public advisory committees, HRM has also begun to develop a more formal online engagement strategy through the recent implementation of the SustaiNet engagement portal. This tool was used successfully by Metro Transit in the recent public consultation as part of the Five Year Service Plan, and technology could be adapted to support engagement on a more ongoing basis.

The following report discusses these and several other engagement models that are used in agencies across North America to involve members of the public in a more in-depth, ongoing basis than standard public meetings allow.

DISCUSSION

The following summarizes five models of citizen advisory committees that exist for transit agencies across Canada and the United States. Depending on the type of information and engagement the Transportation Standing Committee would like to elicit, any of the five models (or some combination thereof) could be implemented.

1. Standing Advisory Committee

Standing advisory committees (also called stakeholder working groups, or citizen advisory committees) are used by some transit agencies to formulate the backbone of public engagement programs, and play an advisory role on general agency operations. The committee composition and their role vary widely across transit agencies in Canada and the United States, but could include providing input on service changes, infrastructure projects, and operational issues.

The composition of the committee is often intended to represent a broad range of community interests, and usually includes representation from both Council and the transit agency. Members of the standing advisory committee sit for one or more years depending on the terms of reference, and usually apply to become members via a formal application process made through the municipal clerk's office. Meetings are held regularly throughout the year, even when there are no ongoing infrastructure or planning projects.

The benefits of using this model is that it allows the transit agency and committee members to engage in in-depth discussions, and the appointment of members for one or several years can improve continuity and effectiveness. Some of the challenges of this model are that it can be considered exclusive, and can be perceived to lack transparency. Some agencies also pointed out that their committees often felt frustrated by lack of authority to make decisions. In addition, this model would require staff resources to initiate and manage.

The former NWTAC was a standing committee whose purpose was to advise the North West Community Council on issues related to transit services. It is anticipated that any new advisory committee created would be regional in nature, and therefore would have a different, broader mandate. However, it is also anticipated that any new standing advisory committee would face some of the same challenges as the former NWTAC, particularly related to their scope and limited ability to direct changes.

If this model were implemented in HRM, this committee could advise Metro Transit on a variety of operational issues and infrastructure or planning projects on an ongoing basis. Like other standing committees, it would likely meet monthly and members would be selected in order to represent the diverse needs of all current and potential transit users in HRM. Members could remain a part of the Committee for a predefined period of time and would be appointed in accordance with the Public Appointment Policy adopted by Halifax Regional Council August 2011.

There would be a requirement for the committee's scope to be very carefully designed to ensure clarity of their role, particularly versus the roles and responsibilities of staff. This role would need to be clearly understood by committee members for the committee to have the best chance of success.

Examples: The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) has a Customer Liaison Panel which provides a mechanism for ongoing customer engagement. This standing committee is composed of 11 TTC customers and a member of the TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation. Members serve a two year term and meet bimonthly.

The Burlington Transit Advisory Committee is a standing committee that provides input on initiatives affecting public transit, establishes partnerships with other local service providers, provides comments on transit issues in the municipal plan, and assists in hosting public consultation. The committee is established for three year terms, and is made up of both citizen and community representatives, and at least two members who require the aid of mobility devices and use specialized transit service.

2. Project Based Advisory Committee

A project based advisory committee is generally involved in the planning or development stages of a major capital project (for example the construction of a new terminal). It has a narrower mandate than a standing advisory committee, as it is usually limited to one project, and is disbanded once it has developed its recommendations or otherwise fulfilled its mandate to provide feedback related to the project.

Like standing advisory committees, the composition can vary widely but will also generally include at least one representative of Council and one representative from the transit agency. Unlike a standing advisory committee where members sit on the committee for a set term, members on a project based committee sit on the committee for the entire length of the committee's mandate.

The benefits of using this model include that it allows continuity and in-depth, technical discussion through the life of a particular capital project. Another benefit offered by this model is that as these committees are project based, a specialized group of members can be selected to benefit the unique needs of each project. A challenge faced by the Committee could be frustration related to their narrow mandate.

If this model were introduced in HRM, it would be used to advise Metro Transit on specific projects. For example, committees could be established to provide insight into the development of the Metro Transit Five Year Service Plan, or for new infrastructure projects such as constructing a new terminal or Park & Ride. Unlike a standing committee, a project based advisory committee would meet more or less frequently depending on the needs and phase of the project, and members would be selected based on the unique needs of the project, not necessarily with the intent to represent all transit users and community members.

Examples: The Hamilton Street Railway has a 26 member Rapid Transit Citizen Advisory Committee. Their mandate is to identify any current and potential community issues related to the Rapid Transit Initiative, to share information on the study area, and to provide a community perspective. A professional facilitator is present at all of their meetings, and manages communication between the project team and the committee.

TriMet in Portland, Oregon, uses project based Community Advisory Committees. These committees are typically between 21 and 25 members, and their mandate varies depending on the project.

3. Standing Advisory Committee for a Specific Operational Issue

A standing advisory committee on an operational issue provides insight into the management of a particular ongoing issue. Metro Transit currently has an Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) which falls into this category. In Canada, some transit agencies have a dedicated committee to advise Council on accessible transit or transportation, while others have accessibility committees who are mandated to advise council on all accessibility issues including those related to transit.

The composition of this type of Committee can vary widely, but will generally include at least one representative of Council, and one or more members with particular expertise related to the operational issue.

The benefits of using this model include that it allows continuity and in-depth, technical discussion enhanced by those who can contribute their first-hand experience. Challenges faced by the Committee could be frustration related to the narrow scope of the committee.

HRM has an existing Committee, ATAC that advises Metro Transit on both conventional and Access-a-Bus service issues. This model would be useful if another ongoing operational issue became apparent.

Examples: The ATAC in HRM advises Metro Transit on accessibility of the transit service. Victoria Region Transit also has an Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee. Other transit agencies, such as London Transit, and Transit Windsor, have accessibility committees with a broad mandate, which includes transit.

4. Ad Hoc Sounding Boards

This unique model typically provides members of the public an opportunity to provide feedback on a transit agency's proposed service changes. Sounding boards are established on an ad hoc basis and disband once they develop their recommendations. Although it appears that this structure is not as widely used, it does provide the opportunity for members of the public to contribute feedback.

The composition of this type of Committee can vary widely, but generally members would be selected to represent a diversity of viewpoints, or to represent the geographic areas that will be affected.

The benefits of using this model include that it allows the agency to become more responsive to new ideas which originate in the community, and can alert the agency to any unforeseen consequences of service changes. Challenges faced by this type of committee could be the significant amount of staff time required to recruit and select members of the Sounding Board each time there are service changes, and that members of the board may be frustrated at the narrow scope of their mandate and limited ability to make a larger impact.

If this model were introduced in HRM, sounding boards could be established annually or semiannually to advise Metro Transit on proposed service changes. Each sounding board would be composed of different members, thus involving a diversity of residents over time. It is also possible that this format could be adapted to address some decisions related to a particular project, for example, a sounding board could have been developed to complement public consultation related to the design of the new Lacewood Terminal.

Example: King County Metro Transit in Seattle, Washington uses Ad Hoc Service Change Sounding Boards to provide input on proposed service changes and make recommendations to the King County Executive and Council. Sounding boards are composed of 10-15 community members selected through an open application process to represent a variety of viewpoints, and are disbanded once they develop their recommendations on the proposed service changes.

5. Technology Based Engagement Panel

Technology offers a valuable opportunity to have a large group of people provide feedback to a transit agency quickly and on a regular basis. While this is fairly uncharted territory by many agencies, Metro Vancouver's TransLink has made a serious commitment to continually engaging members of the public by sending out monthly online surveys. The program (called *TransLink Listens*) includes a panel of approximately 5,000 members who have signed up to participate through links available on the TransLink website, and through a number of other initiatives. The entire panel is engaged monthly with questionnaires on topics related to the various services TransLink offers and input is used to inform ongoing decision-making.

The benefits of using this model include that it allows the agency to engage directly and regularly with a large number of individual transit riders. The approach is flexible, allows for broad and more frequent participation by residents from many areas of HRM, walks of life, age, interests and mobility. Challenges faced by this type of engagement could be that the conversation could be fairly high-level, and prescriptive, due to the nature of a close-ended survey as compared to the more conventional in-person meetings. Another potential challenge would be that as the panel is open to participation from anyone, there is no way to ensure that results provide an accurate representation of transit users or residents. In addition, residents without easy access to a computer would be underrepresented.

If this model were introduced in HRM, it could be used to gather regular input on a variety of topics, for example the design of the new Lacewood Terminal, the development of the new Metro Transit route map, and in the development of planning documents. It could also be adapted to allow subscribers to make suggestions for the topic of the next survey, and to disseminate the results of past surveys. Metro Transit could also explore the potential for having a paper based subscription to make the program more inclusive.

Example: TransLink, in Metro Vancouver, has a technology based engagement program called "TransLink Listens." There are 5000 participants who have volunteered to regularly provide feedback related to the day to day operations of the TransLink network. An online questionnaire is distributed to the participants monthly, and there is a 40% completion rate.

Engagement Models used by Similar Canadian Transit Agencies

Overall, the most common engagement model in both Canada and the United States is one of three types of citizen transit advisory committee: a standing committee, a project-based committee, or a standing committee for a particular operational issue. The most common model in Canadian transit agencies of a similar size to Metro Transit is a standing committee on a particular operational issue (most often one with a mandate related to accessibility).

As the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) does not formally collect any data related to transit engagement models/ advisory committees, staff conducted a review of selected Canadian transit agencies which serve a population of 150,000 – 400,000 residents. Of those examined, only one currently hosts a standing transit advisory committee composed largely of citizens (Burlington Transit). Both Oakville Transit and Regina Transit formerly had standing transit advisory committees that were recently dissolved. Victoria Regional Transit has made use of project-based advisory committees, while others, including London Transit, and Transit Windsor do not have any advisory committees focused on transit, although some input is gathered from other committees with broader mandates, particularly those related to accessibility. None appear to have made use of either the Sounding Board or technology based models (See Attachment 1).

Budget implications were not evaluated as part of this report, and it is anticipated that they would vary depending on a number of factors, including the model selected, the role it would play, and its composition. All of the committees above would require transit staff resources to support and facilitate the committee activities.

Additionally, if the Clerk's Office were to provide support to a committee, the cost will be an additional \$20,000 to account A121, Municipal Clerk, which is the standard cost for meeting space, transportation, special needs requirements, staff and equipment related to the support of a Regional Advisory Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications with this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As this report is only to provide information to the Transportation Standing Committee, there has been no community engagement related to this issue. The decision to proceed with the implementation of any of the models listed above would improve community engagement on public transit topics.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Summary of Engagement Models in Comparable Canadian Transit Agencies

REFERENCES

Hull, K. (2010). *TCRP Synthesis 85: Effective use of Citizen Advisory Committees for Transit Planning and Operations*. Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, Transit Cooperative Research Program. Washington, DC.: Transportation Research Board.

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.

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Summary of Engagement Models in Comparable Canadian Transit Agencies

Attachment 1

Municipality	Transit Agency	Transit Engagement Models					Description
		Standing Advisory Committee	Project Based Advisory Committee	Standing Advisory Committee for Specific Operational Issue	Ad Hoc Sounding Boards	Technology Based Engagement Panel	
Burlington, ON	Burlington Transit	✓	X	X	X	X	The BT advisory committee is a citizen driven standing committee. Its mandate is to provide feedback to staff and Council on a number of topics including improving accessibility, and expenditure of gas tax money, as well as to review the City's Accessibility Plan. They also provide feedback to other transportation organizations, and liaise with other community groups to improve the experience of transit users and promote transit.
Gatineau, QC	Société de transport de l'Outaouais	X	X	✓	X	X	STO has a Customer Relations Technical Committee which is composed partially of citizens as well as key staff members. It also operates a paratransit technical committee which is largely composed of STO representatives and provincial appointees, though it also has several members of the public.
HRM	Metro Transit	X	X	✓	X	X	Metro Transit's Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee advises Metro Transit on issues of accessibility related to Metro Transit's Access-A-Bus and conventional transit service.

Summary of Engagement Models in Comparable Canadian Transit Agencies

Attachment 1

London, ON	London Transit Commission	X	X	X	X	X	The City has an Accessibility Advisory Committee which sometimes provides insight into accessible transit, but does not have a dedicated accessible transit advisory committee.
Niagara Region, ON	Niagara Region Transit	X	X	X	X	X	The Niagara Region Inter-Municipal Specialized Transit Advisory Committee was dissolved in 2011 after fulfilling its mandate. The region still has an Accessibility Advisory Committee whose mandate includes transit, but does not have a dedicated transit advisory committee.
Oakville, ON	Oakville Transit	X	X	X	X	X	A recent committee rationalization eliminated the OT standing advisory committee. When in operation, it was composed of volunteer members and one Council representative. The advisory committee made recommendations directly to Council. The City has an Accessibility Advisory Committee which sometimes provides insight into accessible transit, but does not have a dedicated accessible transit advisory committee.
Regina, SK	Regina Transit	X	X		X	X	RT formerly had an advisory committee which provided feedback on conventional and paratransit, but this was dissolved. Transit is now an issue addressed by the City's Community Services Advisory Committee. In September 2013, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, stakeholders, and City established the Regina Accessible Transportation Stakeholder Advisory Committee who is mandated to resolve

Summary of Engagement Models in Comparable Canadian Transit Agencies

Attachment 1

							concerns related to accessible transit.
Sherbrooke, QC	Société de transport de Sherbrooke:	X	X	X	X	X	STO works towards incorporating members of the public into working committees, though they are outnumbered by members of Council or agency staff.
Victoria, BC	Victoria Regional Transit	X	✓	✓	X	X	As part of the Regional Rapid Transit study, a community liaison committee was established representing stakeholders and the public on topics related to the project. Victoria Transit
							also has a standing Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee.
Windsor, ON	Transit Windsor	X	X	X	X	X	The City has an Accessibility Advisory Committee which sometimes provides insight into accessible transit, but does not have a dedicated accessible transit advisory committee.