

# HALIFAX

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**Item No. 2**  
**Transportation Standing Committee**  
**June 28, 2018**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed

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Dave Reage, MCIP, LPP, Director, Halifax Transit

Original Signed by



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Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** June 4, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Free Transit Fares for Dedicated Feed Nova Scotia Volunteers

## INFORMATION REPORT

### ORIGIN

This report originates from the following motion passed at the February 22, 2018 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee:

*“That the Transportation Standing Committee forward the February 22, 2018 Feed Nova Scotia presentation for a staff report.”*

### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, R.S.N.S. 2008, section 102 allows Council, by by-law, to prescribe charges for the provision of services for persons who use or benefit from the service, on a basis to be set out in the by-law.*

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, R.S.N.S. 2008, subsection 69(1) enables the Municipality to provide a public transportation service, and clause 79(1)(o) provides authority for Council to expend money to provide public transportation.*

### BACKGROUND

On February 22, 2018, representatives from Feed NS presented to the Transportation Standing Committee. They advised that Feed NS is moving from the Bedford Highway to Wright Avenue in Burnside. The

organization relies heavily on volunteer support, and anticipates the loss of some volunteers due to the relocation. They advised that currently, 45 volunteers rely on public transit (Attachment A). To mitigate the potential loss of volunteers, they requested that Feed NS volunteers be provided with free transit passes.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Halifax Regional Municipality By-law U-100 Respecting User Fees establishes fares for Halifax Transit. As per this by-law, a variety of passengers are able to access Halifax Transit services for free. This includes:

- a child under five (5) years of age;
- a senior between 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. and after 6:00 p.m. until end of service day on Tuesdays;
- a person with a CNIB identification card;
- an employee or retiree of Halifax Transit;
- a Halifax Regional Police officer in uniform;
- a personal care attendant when accompanying a registered Access-A-Bus user;
- a person, and any accompanying family member, who is a veteran or current member of the armed forces and (i) is in uniform, or (ii) who presents an armed forces ID on Remembrance Day; and
- an elementary school student travelling to or from the Beaver Bank Monarch Drive Elementary School on the Route 400.

The by-law also allows Council, the CAO, and the Director of Halifax Transit (if delegated by the CAO), to waive fares in the following instances:

- for Canada Day, Natal Day, and/or after 6 p.m. and until end of service on New Year's Eve; where, in the opinion of Council or the CAO, such a waiver would be beneficial to the Municipality;
- for up to one year for a refugee under the settlement support program or for a refugee claimant; or
- for event volunteers and participants upon application by an event organizer.

The by-law does not explicitly permit the issuance of free passes to volunteer organizations, such as Feed NS, on an ongoing basis. Volunteers who are provided free transit are those associated with specific events, such as the Blue Nose Marathon, FCM conference, ECMA events, Royal NS Tattoo, etc. These events are for a limited time period, and volunteers are typically able to board transit using their volunteer identification badges. Providing volunteers with ongoing or regular free access to transit would not be consistent with past practices, or permitted by the existing by-law.

Generally, providing free transit access has the benefit of increasing ridership and promoting the use of sustainable transportation. However, providing free service also decreases the cost recovery of the transit system, and puts additional pressure on property tax revenue and fares from other passengers. In the presentation, Feed NS noted that there are currently 45 volunteers who rely on public transit, however, that number is subject to change. The annual cost of providing these volunteers with transit passes would be approximately \$42,000. Should the number increase, and additional volunteer organizations make similar requests, the benefits of providing free passes should be balanced with the potential impacts to cost recovery.

Although the by-law does not currently permit for free transit passes to be distributed to volunteers, it does allow for discounted fares for several groups, including seniors, university students, and low-income residents. In addition, effective July 2018, the Municipality and Province of Nova Scotia are launching a pilot program to provide unlimited transit access to recipients of Employment Support and Income Assistance through the Department of Community Services. It is likely that a portion of the existing 45 Feed NS volunteers, particularly those that may be experiencing financial hardship, would be eligible for discounted fares or free passes as members of these groups.

Halifax Transit receives many requests for free or discounted transit fares, and does frequently provide free transit tickets to charitable organizations that request a donation. Typically, requests are for a relatively small number of transit tickets (10-30 tickets), and requests are limited to once every six months. Although requests vary, Halifax Transit processes approximately 150 requests for free tickets each year. Providing free tickets to Feed NS in these limited quantities would be consistent with existing practices for volunteer or charitable organizations. Although the number of tickets provided would not be sufficient to provide ongoing free transit to all volunteers, Feed NS would have the discretion to distribute the tickets to the volunteers in the greatest need, who are not otherwise eligible for free or discounted fares. Unless otherwise directed by Council, Halifax Transit will reach out to Feed NS to arrange for providing tickets as a donation.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of providing free transit tickets to Feed NS is estimated at approximately \$120 per year. This can be accommodated in the Halifax Transit operating budget.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Risks associated with this report are considered low. However, should Regional Council recommend providing ongoing free transit passes, there is a moderate risk that other volunteer organizations would request a similar provision and costs would escalate.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

There was no community engagement undertaken specific to this report.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There were no environmental implications identified associated with this report.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Feed NS Presentation, February 22, 2018

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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# HRM Transportation Standing Committee

Feed Nova Scotia & Its Volunteers

City Hall Halifax

Thursday February 22, 2018

# Purpose

- ▶ To seek transportation support for those who volunteer at Feed Nova Scotia

# Background

- ▶ Feed Nova Scotia:
  - ▶ Provides approx. 8,000 Kgs (18,000 lbs) to 146 food banks, shelters and meal programs ... every day. 56% are perishables
  - ▶ 100% funded by community
- ▶ Operating Model
  - ▶ \$2 is enough for us to deliver 3 meals worth of food, anywhere in Nova Scotia
  - ▶ Most of the food is donated or recovered
  - ▶ Staff are supported by approx. 32,000 volunteer hours per year

# Volunteers: Profile

- ▶ Approx 1,000 volunteers are registered with Feed Nova Scotia
- ▶ Currently:
  - ▶ 392 “active” volunteers i.e. volunteer on a regular basis
  - ▶ 150 - 200 are regular weekly volunteers
- ▶ 60% are retired
- ▶ 78% are over 55 years of age
- ▶ 39% are over 65 years of age
- ▶ 45 regular weekly volunteers have identified public transportation as their means of travel to Feed Nova Scotia

# Volunteers: Geographic Profile

- ▶ Dartmouth 12%
- ▶ Halifax 45%
- ▶ Bedford 13%
- ▶ Sackville 9%
- ▶ Other 21%



THANK YOU!

... Questions