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**Item No. 12.1.1**  
**Transportation Standing Committee**  
**October 25, 2018**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed  
Jacques Dube, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** September 12, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Access-A-Bus Span of Service and Support Persons

**ORIGIN**

On September 19, 2017, Halifax Regional Council approved a motion that included direction for staff to:

“1.b. Prepare a staff report regarding the cost and operational impacts of extending Access-A-Bus service to the full service day, regardless of hours of operation of conventional service in the area and to explore the provision of transportation support for those traveling in support of an Access-A-Bus user.”

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Section 69(1) of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides that “the Municipality may provide a public transportation service ...”

Section 79(1)(o) of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* provides that “The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for ... public transportation services”.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend Regional Council direct Halifax Transit to remove existing weekday time of day restrictions on Access-A-Bus usage, and provide service to registered clients for a minimum service day of 6:00 am to 12:00 am from Monday to Friday.

## **BACKGROUND**

On November 9, 2010, the Access-A-Bus Strategic Plan was approved by Regional Council and Halifax Transit was directed to use it as guidance in the planning and operation of Access-A-Bus (AAB) service. This plan states that AAB services are to operate during the hours of service and the days of the week that the adjacent conventional service operates.

As a result, the existing practice is for AAB service to be provided to registered clients within 1000m of a conventional transit bus stop, only during the hours of service and days of the week that the conventional service operates.

On December 9, 2015, the Committee of the Whole directed staff to review options for expansion and increased flexibility of door-to-door paratransit service for persons who are unable to use the conventional transit system. Specifically, it was requested that consideration be given to not tying AAB service to conventional routes and their timetables.

At the March 24, 2016 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee, Halifax Transit presented intentions to conduct a strategic review of the existing paratransit system.

On September 19, 2017, Regional Council provided direction for staff to prepare a report on several aspects of AAB service, including:

- the cost and operational impacts of extending AAB service to the full service day; and
- the provision of providing travel support to AAB clients.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Service Day Limitations**

It is typical for transit agencies to provide paratransit service with similar parameters as conventional service, particularly in terms of service hours/days. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) speaks to this practice. The AODA is not enforceable in Nova Scotia, however, transit agencies across Canada often look to this legislation for guidance.

Specifically, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act* (AODA) states:

*"Hours of service*

*70. (2) Where a transportation service provider provides both conventional transportation and specialized transportation services, it shall ensure that the specialized transportation services have, at a minimum, the same hours and days of service as the conventional transportation services. O.Reg.1991/11, s.70 (2)."*

There are currently 16 communities serviced by Halifax Transit that do not have transit service during the entire service day and/or week. This number is expected to be reduced to nine as the *Moving Forward Together Plan* (MFTP) is implemented. This is in part because the MFTP strives to have more consistent, reliable service, which includes in most cases providing service seven days a week, and for the full service day. The following table lists the routes, both existing, and proposed under the MFTP, that do not operate for the entire service day or week. For the purposes of this table, the service day is considered to be 6:00 am to 10:00 pm.

<b>Service Limitation</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed Network - MFTP</b>
Weekday Peak Only Service (Commuter focused)	Portions of 6 Routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 60 Heritage Hills</li> <li>• Route 86 Basinview</li> <li>• Route 194 West Bedford Express</li> <li>• Route 330 Tantallon/Sheldrake Lake</li> <li>• Route 370 Porters Lake</li> <li>• Route 433 Tantallon</li> </ul>	Portions of 7 Routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 57 Portland Estates</li> <li>• Route 93 Bedford Highway</li> <li>• Route 310 Middle Sackville</li> <li>• Route 330 Tantallon/Sheldrake Lake</li> <li>• Route 370 Porters Lake</li> <li>• Route 415 Purcells Cove</li> <li>• Route 433 Tantallon</li> </ul>
Weekday Service Only, service may be intermittent, service day ends early (between 6:00 pm and 9:00 pm), no weekend service.	Portions of 3 Routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 63 Woodside</li> <li>• Route 89 Bedford</li> <li>• Route 401 Porters Lake</li> </ul>	Portions of 2 Routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 64 Akerley</li> <li>• Route 401 Porters Lake</li> </ul>
No Late Evening Service (service operates 7 days a week, but tapers off in early evening either on weekdays and/or weekends)	Portions of 7 Routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 15 Purcells Cove</li> <li>• Route 54 Montebello</li> <li>• Route 65 Caldwell</li> <li>• Route 82 Millwood</li> <li>• Route 83 Springfield</li> <li>• Route 88 Bedford Commons</li> <li>• Route 400 Beaver Bank</li> </ul>	No Routes meet this description.

*Please note - this discussion does not include consideration of AAB clients who are currently not within 1000m of transit service, and are grandfathered to receive service.*

**Service Demand – Time of Day**

Although portions of many routes are impacted, it is not anticipated that removing time of day restrictions on AAB service in the short term would result in significant new demand for service. The areas that currently have the most limitations are primarily relatively low density areas, and therefore there is not as much ridership demand as in the more urban areas. For example, although the Route 401 Porters Lake covers a large geographic area, there are only 19 registered AAB clients within the area, and of those, only 10 have used the service in the last year. It is anticipated that the increased flexibility will attract some new clients, or may result in additional usage by existing clients, but the impact will be moderate.

The greater number of clients that would be impacted would be those that would now have access to late night service (last drop off by midnight). There are more than 150 existing clients that would fall into this category, the majority of which are in Sackville/Bedford area. However, there is relatively little demand for travel during these evening/late night periods, and as such, the impact is anticipated to be minimal.

Service on the overall transit network generally tapers off between 10:00 pm and 12:00 am. Providing AAB service until a minimum of 10:00 pm was considered, and only routes that stopped prior to 10:00 pm were included in the table above. However, trip demand is very low between 10:00 pm and 12:00 am, currently averaging well below 10 AAB trips per hour, and therefore a 6:00 am to 12:00 am service day is recommended.

In addition, as the MFTP is implemented over the next several years, the number of communities with time of day limitations on service will decrease, and the impact of eliminating time of day limitations will become smaller. Of the nine future routes that will have service limitations, three will be Regional Express (formerly MetroX) routes. These routes depart from a Park & Ride site near major road connections, and there are

typically few, if any, homes within 1000m of site, and therefore, very few if any AAB clients along these routes. In addition, one route is the Route 64 Akerley, which will operate in the Burnside Industrial Park. It is not anticipated that any AAB clients will reside within close proximity to this route. The remaining AAB clients with time of day service restrictions would be those in Purcells Cove, Tantallon, Porters Lake, as well as small pockets in Bedford and Portland Estates, as shown in Attachment B. Based on existing AAB client information, it is anticipated that the once the MFTP network is in place, time of day limitations would only still be in place for approximately 60 clients.

### **Impact to Transit Operations**

The removal of the time of day restrictions will not have a direct operating cost, however, it will impact operational efficiency. Areas with existing time of day restrictions tend to have lower population density and are further from the Regional Centre, which means that there are fewer opportunities for scheduling efficiencies (carrying multiple passengers, pairing trips), fewer trips can be provided within a given time period, the cost per passenger is higher, and the overall service efficiency will decrease as service increases.

This modification to service will result in additional requests for trips during midday and evening periods from the impacted areas. There is a great deal of demand on the existing system, and this will create additional pressure, albeit in off-peak times, and there is a risk that service for other existing clients will be compromised. To mitigate this impact, the increase in AAB resources approved for 2018/19 can be partly allocated during off-peak periods to offset the expected increase in demand. These additional resources are already planned for, however, the use of these resources to provide service in the areas listed in the table above will consume a portion of new resources available to improve service throughout the system.

### **Weekend Service**

Although it is recommended that service be extended for the full service day, it is not recommended that service be extended to weekends in those areas that do not currently receive weekend service (currently portions of 9 routes). The potential for increased trip requests on the weekends is anticipated to be higher than in the midday and late evening periods, and it is not expected that the additional demand can be absorbed by the existing system. As this would have a greater operational impact, it could be considered as a future phase of service improvements.

### **Travel Support**

Halifax Transit provides public transportation services. In addition to being responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle, AAB Operators are trained to provide increased customer service to their clients, including providing assistance with boarding. However, providing travel support staff to care for the personal or medical needs of passengers would be a significant responsibility that is not typically provided by the public transit industry, and is not recommended for a variety of reasons, described below.

In Nova Scotia, there is no legislation specific to public transit accessibility. The only such legislation in Canada is in Ontario, where the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) exists. The AODA is not enforceable in Nova Scotia, however, transit agencies across Canada often look to this legislation for guidance. It states, as per below, that the responsibility to ensure that a support person is in place lies with the person with a disability:

#### *Fare, support persons*

*38. (1) No conventional transportation service provider and no specialized transportation service provider shall charge a fare to a support person who is accompanying a person with a disability where the person with a disability has a need for a support person. O.Reg.1991/11, s. 38 (1).*

*(2) It is the responsibility of a person with a disability to demonstrate to a transportation service provider described in subsection (1) their need for a support person to accompany them on the conventional or specialized transportation service and to ensure that the appropriate designation for a support person is in place. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 38 (2).*

Currently, AAB passengers are permitted to have a personal care attendant travel with them at no cost. In addition, passengers are permitted to have companions ride with them, subject to seating availability. The definition of companion is not limited, and can include family or friends. This provides flexibility for those that are travelling together, but also provides a means for a client who requires additional support or supervision. Typically, AAB clients that require additional support require that support not only on the AAB vehicle, but when they reach their destination, and as such, are accompanied by a personal care attendant or companion.

When AAB clients travel with their own personal care attendant, they can ensure that the attendant has expertise or specialization that matches their needs. If Halifax Transit were to provide a travel support person, it would create an unrealistic expectation that the individual would be trained to accommodate the needs of the wide variety of passengers, including those with physical, cognitive, or behavioural challenges.

Based on known issues and concerns on trips, it is anticipated that travel support staff would be requested for less than 10% of AAB trips. However, identifying those trips and scheduling staff for them would result in system inefficiencies and reduce the level of service that could be provided to clients. Specifically, if two to four support persons were assigned to vehicles each day, those vehicles would need to be dispatched for all trips requesting monitors, regardless of the geographic or temporal distribution of the trips. This would reduce the capacity of the overall system. Other AAB vehicles in the area that could be deployed would not be, and the clients could wait longer or be denied service. The alternative would be to provide an onboard monitor on every trip, across the system. Based on current service levels, this would result in an increase of approximately 64 staff, as monitors would be required on all shifts, and additional staff would be required to account for absences, etc. In addition, the support persons would reduce the seating capacity onboard the vehicle for AAB clients, resulting in further inefficiencies in the network.

The cost of providing this service would be dependant on the required qualifications and proposed wages, and costs per employee could range from between approximately \$50,000 per year for an employee who functions solely as a monitor, to \$90,000 per year for an employee with personal care attendant qualifications (costs include wages and benefits). Overall costs would need to also factor in scheduling inefficiencies, and lost revenue from service not provided due to the reduced onboard seating capacity, and missed trips. To provide travel support on 10% of trips, the estimated cost would be approximately \$300,000 - \$500,000 per year. For full system implementation, the cost could vary between \$3,000,000 and \$6,000,000 per year.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. However, resources identified in the 2018/19 Halifax Transit budget (Access-A-Bus Expansion Capital Account CM180002 and associated Operating Costs of Capital) will be partly utilized to carry out the recommendations of this report.

It is possible that overall cost per passenger for AAB and cost efficiency will decrease as a result of this recommendation.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There is a risk that ridership demands will be higher than anticipated in off-peak periods, and the removal of time of day restrictions will put additional pressure on the AAB system. This risk is considered low due to the low population density and low number of AAB clients in the impacted areas.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

A survey was conducted of a random sample of 43 existing Access-A-Bus clients. Of those surveyed, only 32% were aware that time of day/day of week travel restrictions existed for some Access-A-Bus clients. The respondents were asked how important it is that these restrictions be removed. Approximately 12% stated that it was not important or not very important, 31% had no opinion, and 57% felt that it was either important or extremely important.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There were no environmental implications identified associated with this report.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

The Transportation Standing Committee could choose not to recommend that Regional Council remove the existing time of day restrictions on Access-A-Bus.

The Transportation Standing Committee could choose to recommend an alternative span of service to Regional Council.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Existing Network and Post MFTP Access-A-Bus Service Restrictions  
Attachment B – Map – Post MFTP Implementation Access-A-Bus Service Restrictions

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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.

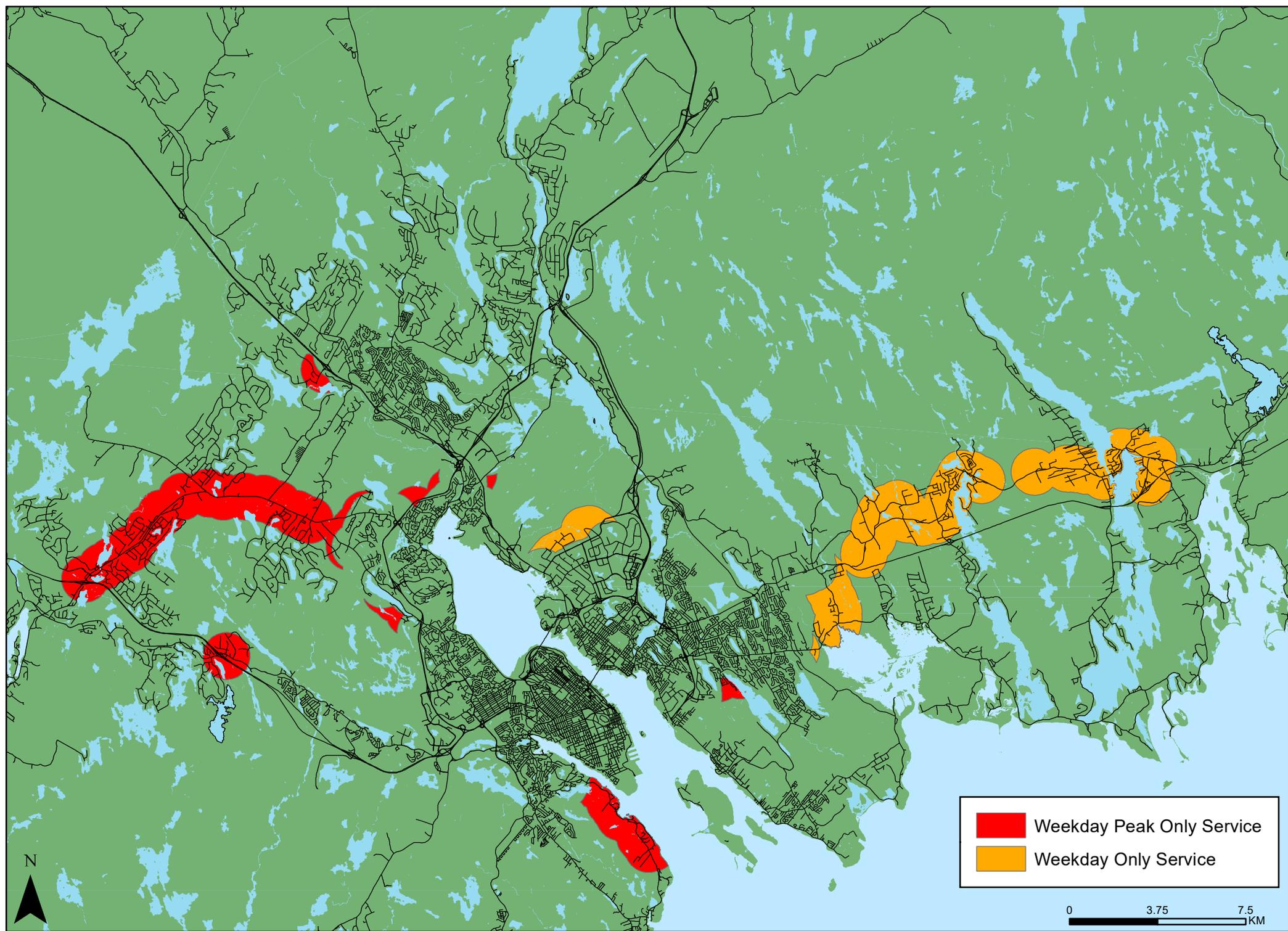
Report Prepared by: Patricia Hughes, MCIP, LPP, Manager, Planning & Scheduling, 902.490.6287

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Existing Network Access-A-Bus Service Restrictions			
Existing Transit Route	Description of Area With Limited Service	Service Hours/Days	Periods with No Service
Route 15 Purcells Cove	Frog Pond to York ReDoubt	Weekday and Weekend service, no service after 8:00 pm	Weekday evenings, weekend evenings
Route 54 Montebello	Dumbarton to Lexington Avenue	Weekdays, Saturday, Sunday until 6:00 pm	Sunday Evening
Route 60 Heritage Hills	Heritage Hills	Peak Only	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Route 63 Woodside	Everette Street, Grant Street	Weekdays until 6:00 pm	Evenings, Weekends
Route 65 Caldwell	Astral Drive and surrounding streets	Weekdays, Saturdays, Sunday until 6:00 pm	Sunday Evening
Route 82 Millwood	Millwood Drive, Stokil Drive, First Lake Drive	Weekdays until 8:00 pm, Saturdays, Sunday until 9:00 pm	Weekday Evenings, Sunday Evenings
Route 83 Springfield	Middle Sackville, Springfield Avenue	Weekdays until 6:00 pm, Saturdays until 6:00 pm, Sundays	Weekday Evenings, Saturday Evenings
Route 86 Basinview	Bedford, Basinview Drive	Peak Only	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Route 88 Bedford Commons	Duke Street, Damascus Road	Weeknights until 6:00 pm, Saturdays, Sundays	Weekday Evenings
Route 89 Bedford	Hammonds Plains Road, Bluewater Road, Kearney Lake Road	Weekdays until 7:00 pm	Evenings, Weekends
Route 194 West Bedford Express	Gary Martin Drive	Peak Only	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Regional Express Route 330 Tantallon/Sheldrake Lake	Hublely Centre and Sheldrake Lake Park & Ride area	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Regional Express Route 370 Porters Lake	Porters Lake Park & Ride area	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Route 400 Beaver Bank	Beaver Bank Road	Limited Weekday until 8:00 pm, Weekend afternoons only	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Route 401 Porters Lake	Porters Lake, Lake Echo, East Preston	Limited Weekday service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Route 433 Tantallon Express	Hublely Centre, Hammonds Plains Road, Bluewater Road, Kearney Lake Road	Peak Only	Midday, Evenings, Weekends

Post MFTP Implementation Access-A-Bus Service Restrictions			
Future MFTP Route	Description of Area With Limited Service	Service Hours/Days	Periods with No Service
Route 57 Portland Estates	A portion of Portland Hills Drive and surrounding streets that are more than 1000 m from Portland Street	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evening, Weekends
Route 64 Burnside	Akerley Boulevard	Weekday Only, ends at 8:00pm	Evenings, Weekends
Route 93 Bedford Highway	Limited areas in Bedford on the periphery of the service, typically with no houses. These areas do not have service currently.	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evening, Weekends
Regional Express Route 310 Middle Sackville	Middle Sackville/Margeson Drive Park & Ride area	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Regional Express Route 330 Tantallon/Sheldrake Lake	Hublely Centre and Sheldrake Lake Park & Ride areas	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Regional Express Route 370 Porters Lake	Porters Lake Park & Ride area	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Rural Route 401 Porters Lake	Porters Lake, Lake Echo, East Preston	Limited Weekday service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Rural Route 415 Purcells Cove	Purcells Cove Road beyond Williams Lake Drive	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends
Rural Route 433 Tantallon	Hublely Centre, Hammonds Plains Road, Bluewater Road, Kearney Lake Road	Peak Only Service	Midday, Evenings, Weekends

# Post MFTP Implementation Access-A-Bus Service Restrictions



	Weekday Peak Only Service
	Weekday Only Service

0 3.75 7.5  
KM