

HALIFAX

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Item No. 15.1.4
Halifax Regional Council
April 2, 2019

TO: Mavor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by 

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 21, 2019

SUBJECT: **Expansion of Halifax Public Wi-Fi**

ORIGIN

This report originates from the following Motion by Halifax Regional Council on October 21, 2014:

“That Halifax Regional Council direct staff to issue a solicitation for Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a service provider to partner with Halifax to provide a fully managed Public Wi-Fi service.”

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Under the HRM Charter, Section 79, Halifax Regional Council may expend money for municipal purposes. See especially, s.79(1)(m), (x) and (y).

Under Appendix B of Administrative Order No. 2016-005-ADM, the Procurement Policy, Council may approve contract amendments of any amount as long as the purchase (i) comes from available and sufficient funds, (ii) results in a corresponding change in the scope of work, (iii) meets the conditions for a sole source purchase, and (iv) is in the best interests of the Municipality.

The following report conforms to the above Policy and the HRM Charter.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to negotiate and execute amendments to the April 25, 2017 “Halifax Public Wi-Fi Solution Services Schedule” to the August 20, 2010 Master Services Agreement between HRM and Bell Aliant Regional Communications, and to the Statement of Work executed with Bell Aliant on August 17, 2017, that are in accordance with the Financial Implications section of this report and

RECOMMENDATION CONTINUED PAGE 2

- i. expand the existing public Wi-Fi program to include access points at Alderney Pedway and Upper Level Theatre, the Halifax Ferry Terminal, Alderney Ferry Terminal, the Lacewood Terminal, and Bridge Bus Terminal, as well as areas of the Public Gardens (Horticultural Hall and Plaza) and the Emera Oval (Pavilion and surrounding area); and
- ii. provide for the orderly termination and removal of access points at the Halifax Public Libraries' public wi-fi sites # 4, 5, and 6.

BACKGROUND

This report provides a summary of a recommended plan for expansion of HRM Public Wi-Fi provided by Bell Aliant by relocating the Halifax Library access points to other locations within the city. This report should be reviewed in conjunction to the Feasibility of Onboard Wi-Fi for Halifax Transit report, as each report recommends installing Public Wi-Fi in Alderney Ferry Terminal, the Halifax Ferry Terminal, and the Lacewood and Bridge Bus Terminals. This report additionally recommends installing Public Wi-Fi at Alderney Pedway and Upper Level Theatre, Areas of the Public Gardens (Horticultural Hall and Plaza) and the Emera Oval (Pavilion and surrounding area).

DISCUSSION

Halifax Regional Municipality originally issued an RFP in 2014 for a vendor-partner to install and maintain a public Wi-Fi service to citizens, business, and visitors for a large geographic region within the city. The RFP identified a significant area of coverage in section 2.7 of the RFP # E14-069.

This RFP selected a vendor but was ultimately canceled as council determined the cost associated with providing the service to this widespread area was prohibitive.

In December 2014, a subsequent RFP was issued (P14-360). This RFP requested the vendors to provide a Public Wi-Fi Service Roadmap, with an initial implementation in the waterfront areas for both Dartmouth and Halifax, as well as some of the same areas identified in the first RFP, described with more detail.

This RFP was awarded to Bell Aliant. City Council discussed the proposed budget and project on February 7, 2017. Ultimately, the Grand Parade, Halifax Waterfront, Dartmouth Waterfront, and three libraries (Halifax North, Alderney, and Halifax Central) were chosen as the first points of implementation, to support Canada 150 and Tall Ships, and Council's social commitment to closing the digital divide providing means to succeed in the knowledge economy. Council approved the award of the contract to Bell on February 7, 2017.

Bell and HRM began the implementation of the Wi-Fi access points immediately in the two Waterfront locations and Grand Parade. All three locations have been implemented since late summer 2017. The access points for Wi-Fi were installed in the three libraries; however, they were not activated. The library staff elected to decline the Halifax Wi-Fi installation, opting instead to continue to utilize their own Wi-Fi services, separate from the Halifax Public Wi-Fi project. Since the decision was finalized by the library staff, ICT has been working with Bell Aliant to assess alternative locations and develop new pricing to utilize the access points originally designated for the three libraries.

As of today, the areas of Halifax that enjoy Public Wi-Fi are the two waterfront areas (Halifax and Dartmouth), and the Grand Parade area.

ASSESSMENT

In February 2014, Halifax Regional Council endorsed the Public Realm Improvement Project List. Free Public Wi-Fi in the urban core was a candidate project identified. Keeping this in mind, HRM staff investigated various locations to expand public Wi-Fi. The RFP response from Bell Aliant in 2017 also

identified several areas on a Wi-Fi “roadmap,” and these were also given consideration for the repurposing of the library access points.

ICT staff have been approached by some areas of the city to evaluate for Public Wi-Fi potential including the Halifax Oval and the Public Gardens, and therefore, these were included in conversations for cost estimates with Bell Aliant. Various other down-town locations were also considered, and an approach of allowing the city to be able to provide the most Wi-Fi coverage possible given the current infrastructure was taken, as well as aligning with the roadmap provided by Bell Aliant as part of the RFP process. Also, it is relevant to note that given the fact that the libraries are indoor facilities, the cost to convert the access point to be “outdoor” (weather-protected) access point was also evaluated.

Halifax Public Gardens

The Friends of the Public Gardens Society expressed an interest in having Wi-Fi available to the patrons of the park. The minimum number of visitors estimated to frequent the park annually is 250,000, and their average length of stay is 1 hour. They have expressed interest in Wi-Fi access for two reasons:

- 1) A mobile tour of the gardens is available for citizens, and they would require access to the Internet to access the mobile tour.
- 2) The Halifax Public Gardens is in the heart of Halifax, and, as a valuable city property where people gather, therefore, access to Wi-Fi for thousands of people will be beneficial. The Wi-Fi contract with Bell Aliant allows for the capability to capture usage data, and will provide a better understanding of the frequency of patrons to this area, which can provide valuable insight to its long-term usage.

Bell Aliant did a comprehensive site assessment of the Public Gardens. Installing Wi-Fi in the entirety of the park is not financially feasible within the current budget because the geographic range is too large, and would require additional access points and significant infrastructure adjustments to install them.

Bell Aliant recommended placing access points on top of Horticultural Hall’s roof, as this will result in the bandwidth expanding to the seating area viewing the bandstand, and central points of the gardens, as these areas are where the majority of visitors to the Gardens tend to congregate. There will also be Wi-Fi available in the Horticultural Plaza, which is located behind the Horticultural Hall. This is the newest updated area of the park, highlighting the fountain and two trellised buildings housing family washrooms.

Emera Oval

When the original RFP was issued for downtown Public Wi-Fi, the Emera Oval was not as established as a prominent city feature as it is today. The facility does not currently offer Wi-Fi to the patrons; however, it is something that has been requested by the Emera Oval staff and public. The contract with Bell Aliant will allow for the capability to capture usage data, and will provide a better understanding of the frequency of patrons to this area, which can provide valuable insight to its long-term usage.

Bell Aliant did a site assessment of the Emera Oval and determined that providing public Wi-Fi in the entirety of the Oval was not feasible because they would be required to do significant construction to install the access points to reach the far side of the skating surface. However, it is entirely feasible and within budget to provide Wi-Fi to the patrons of the main Emera Oval building (the Pavilion and surrounding areas) where most people congregate. This is included in the recommendation section.

Alderney (Pedway, Upper Level Theatre, and Ferry Terminal), Lacewood Bus Terminal, Halifax Ferry Terminal, and Dartmouth Bridge Bus Terminal

These areas were evaluated by Bell Aliant for the feasibility of providing Wi-Fi to the public. It was determined to be feasible given the current footprint and existing infrastructure and is included in the recommendation.

Recommending these areas coincides with the Transportation and Standing Committee Feasibility Report of Onboard Wi-Fi for Halifax Transit that was presented on February 25, 2019.

These areas are also in alignment with the areas identified as part of the roadmap in the Bell Aliant response to the RFP in 2017.

Cost Estimates for Implementation and Maintenance of Public Wi-Fi in the recommended areas.

Bell Aliant provided cost estimates to provide Wi-Fi to all the areas. Note the cost for the bus terminal installations identified in the Feasibility of Onboard Wi-Fi for Halifax Transit report presented at the Transportation Standing Committee February 25, 2019 are included in this report, however the costs for the bus mobile internet pilot from that report are not provided in this report. The total cost to remove the access points from the three Halifax Public Libraries sites and to relocate them to the various areas of HRM is \$54,244 net HST. The details are as follows.

Item	Cost	HST	Total
Total estimated implementation cost to set up infrastructure in all new areas:	\$181,030	\$7,759	\$188,789
Credit provided by Bell:	\$129,015	\$5,530	\$134,545
Net implementation cost to HRM:	\$52,015	\$2,229	\$54,244

There will be no change to the current monthly charge for services. The total monthly charge is \$6,357 net HST for 41 access points. If this implementation is approved there will be 23 access points. An additional 18 access points can be added at no additional monthly cost. Net difference to the monthly (OCC expenditures) service fees: \$0 charge per month.

To see the details in the cost breakdowns, please refer to the [Appendix.A](#)

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the evaluations and recommendations by Bell Aliant, and the desire from HRM to expand the public Wi-Fi to other areas of the city, it is recommended that Halifax Regional Council move forward with expanding the current footprint of the Halifax Public Wi-Fi to include the following areas:

- Halifax Public Gardens (Horticultural Hall and Horticultural Plaza area);
- Emera Oval (Pavilion and surrounding area);
- Alderney Pedway, and Upper Level Theatre

The below locations are also identified in the Feasibility of Onboard Wi-Fi for Halifax Transit

- Halifax Ferry Terminal
- Alderney Ferry Terminal
- Lacewood Bus Terminal
- Dartmouth Bridge Bus Terminal

HRM staff recommends that the existing funds in the Public Wi-Fi account (C1000021) be used to fund the difference between the Bell Estimate to relocate the access points from the libraries to the new areas of the city (a cost to HRM of \$54,244 net HST).

This approach aligns to what has been proposed to the Transportation Standing Committee by Halifax Transit (Feasibility of Onboard Wi-Fi for Halifax Transit). By expanding the service to the key Transit hubs, the Municipality would be able to increase transit user Wi-Fi access and align its services with those seen across other transit agencies in Canada in a cost-effective manner.

These installations would leverage existing technology and support services, as provisioned through the Municipality's current Public Wi-Fi agreement, which would dramatically reduce the effort by HRM staff to implement the service and provide a consistent user experience to citizens moving between public spaces and transit.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for the installation and set-up for the new locations of Alderney (Pedway, Upper Level Theatre, and Ferry Terminal), Halifax Ferry Terminal, Lacewood Bus Terminal, Dartmouth Bridge Bus Terminal, Halifax Emera Oval (Pavilion and surrounding area), and the Public Gardens (Horticultural Hall and Horticultural Plaza) is \$54,244 net HST, and is available in capital account CI000021- Public Wi-Fi.

The monthly charge of \$6,357 net HST for the public Wi-Fi access points will be funded from cost centre A421- ICT Corporate Services.

Budget Summary:	<u>Project Account No. CI000021 – Public Wi-Fi</u>	
	Cumulative Unspent Budget	\$ 467,661
	Less: Implementation cost - net HST	<u>\$ 54,244</u>
	Balance	\$ 416,417

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are not significant risks associated with the recommendations of this report. The risks considered are low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement took place as part of this report; however, citizens were engaged resulting in the original motion for an RFP for Public Wi-Fi services.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There were no environmental implications identified associated with this report.

ALTERNATIVES

The Regional Council may direct staff to not proceed with the expansion of the existing public Wi-Fi technology to the Alderney (Pedway, Upper Level Theatre, and Ferry Terminal), Halifax Ferry Terminal, Lacewood Bus Terminal, Dartmouth Bridge Bus Terminal, the Emera Oval (Pavilion and surrounding areas), and the Public Gardens (Horticultural Hall and Horticultural Plaza). This is not recommended, as ICT has been working with Bell Aliant to establish alternative locations and develop new pricing to offset the loss of the access points originally designated for the three libraries.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Bell Aliant Implementation estimated cost details:

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: Sarah Teal, Chief Information Officer, Finance and Asset Management and Information Communication and Technology, 902.292.1933

Appendix A

Bell Aliant Implementation estimated cost details:

New Location	Circuit Speed	Circuit Monthly Charge	# of AP	AP Monthly Charge	Total Monthly Charge	Infrastructure Cost
Alderney (pedway, upper level theatre, and ferry terminal)	1000Mbps	\$400.00	6	\$720.00	\$1,120.00	\$47,753.00
Emera Oval (Pavilion and surrounding area)	200Mbps	\$300.00	3	\$380.00	\$680.00	\$30,499.00
Halifax Ferry Terminal	200Mbps	\$300.00	2	\$240.00	\$540.00	\$11,356.00
Public Garden Horticultural Hall and Horticultural Plaza	200Mbps	\$300.00	2	\$260.00	\$560.00	\$21,862.00
Lacewood Bus Terminal	400Mbps	\$375.00	4	\$600.00	\$975.00	\$26,831.00
Dartmouth Bridge Bus Terminal	400Mbps	\$375.00	6	\$750.00	\$1,125.00	\$42,729.00
Subtotal – Implementation Cost		\$2,050.00	23	\$2,950	\$5,000.00	\$181,030.00

Bell Current Billing Breakdown:

Current Location	Circuit Speed	Circuit Monthly Charge	# of AP	AP Monthly Charge	Total Monthly Charge	Infrastructure Credit
Halifax Central Library	1000Mbps	\$400.00	32	\$4,082.00	\$4,482	\$71,356.00
Halifax North Memorial Library	100Mbps	\$250.00	3	\$535.00	\$785	\$10,080.00
Alderney Gate Library	200Mbps	\$300.00	6	\$529.00	\$829	\$11,006.00
Bell Aliant Credit					N/A	\$36,573.00
Subtotal – Current Billing		\$950.00	41	\$5,145.00	\$6,095	\$129,015.00