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Item No. 12.2.3
Audit and Finance Standing Committee
October 23, 2019

TO: Chair and Members of Audit and Finance Standing Committee

- Original Signed -

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 10, 2019

SUBJECT: **Route 91 Routing Options Supplemental Report**

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

On October 8th, 2019, Regional Council approved a motion that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to prepare a supplemental staff report proposing a funding source to pursue changes to the current routing proposed for Route 91 – Hemlock Ravine and refer the matter to the Audit and Finance Standing Committee for consideration and recommendation to Regional Council.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Section 69(1) of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter provides the legislative authority for the municipality to provide a public transportation service.

In addition to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, authority is also provided by Section T-5 of the 2014 Regional Municipal Planning Strategy which reads “Transit Service Plans shall be prepared at regular intervals for consideration by HRM. These plans will be developed in consultation with the public and other stakeholders and, upon adoption by HRM, shall provide guidance for investment in transit services.”

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Audit and Finance Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to fund the Route 91 – Hemlock Ravine detour along Southgate Drive using Halifax Transit’s existing operating budget.

BACKGROUND

There is currently no transit service on Oceanview Drive. The *Moving Forward Together Plan* (MFTP), as approved by Regional Council in 2016, introduced Route 91 Hemlock Ravine to the surrounding area. The Route 91 Hemlock Ravine was updated with minor routing changes in the *2019/20 Annual Service Plan* (approved by Regional Council in 2019) to provide operational improvements as illustrated below.



Figure 1: Route 91 Hemlock Ravine as per Approved 2019/20 Annual Service Plan

The implementation of the routing has been completed by Halifax Transit aside from the on-street infrastructure. This means that all electronic information, including trip planning applications, automated messaging and departure line times, printed documentation including, rider's guides, maps, posters and booklets along with all other media related to the November 25th, 2019 implementation is complete and cannot be revised in time for November 25th. Any alternative routing will be implemented as an operational detour which does not allow for live updating on trip planning applications or the departure line.

A request for consideration, as well as correspondence from District 16 residents, was presented at the June 20, 2019 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee.

At this meeting, staff were directed to prepare a report with recommendations on how to address the documented concerns related to:

- Existing and anticipated safety;
- Speeding;
- Traffic volume;
- Short cutting; and
- Congestion issues on Oceanview Drive.

Customer Service Impacts of Detour

Utilizing Southgate Drive to access the Bedford Highway north of Larry Uteck Boulevard allows some residents along the original routing to remain within walking distance of the route. Residents north of Southgate Drive would have reduced access to transit. When compared to the routing presented in the *2019/20 Annual Service Plan* approximately 840 residents who would have been within walking distance of a route will now be outside walking distance. This is an approximation based on straight line distances, additional analysis would be required to determine walking distance along the street network. This alternative is a reasonable compromise as it maintains some connectivity for passengers north of Southgate Drive.

One of the key benefits of this routing is that it does not require any additional running time, which lowers the risk of delays to this and other routes, and also minimizes Transit's operating cost.

In implementing a Southgate Drive detour routing, accessible bus stop infrastructure can be planned, but will not be in place in the short to medium term. As with other bus stops without accessible infrastructure, this will cause winter operations challenges until appropriate infrastructure is constructed, as funded through future capital budget allocations. In addition, bus stops along this detour would also not be included on any trip planning applications or communications documentation (i.e. maps, promotional materials). As with any detour, there will be no live updates to transit planning apps or to the departure line times, buses may arrive in advance of the scheduled time and the automated messaging between Bedford Highway and Starboard Drive will not work.

All electronic materials are finalized 10 weeks before the pick date (November 25). At that time, there are two different processes.

1. Technological, which prepares the schedules for public interfaces, including departure boards, preparing the stop announcements, etc.
2. Picks, which refers to employee work, and posting and selecting rosters for work.

All of these processes have long since been underway. To change any single item, including this route detour, cannot be isolated and requires this whole ten week process to restart.

The next opportunity to upload the correct information to align the technology with the detour is the February service change, which is 3 months out. We are working towards making the change for February and it is likely that we will be able to have the information updated for this time.

During the *Moving Forward Together Plan* community engagement, Southgate Drive did have a proposed route, however it was an express route that would travel in one direction only during peak hours, Monday to Friday. As a result, the community has not had an opportunity to comment on an all-day route travelling on this street, in both directions.

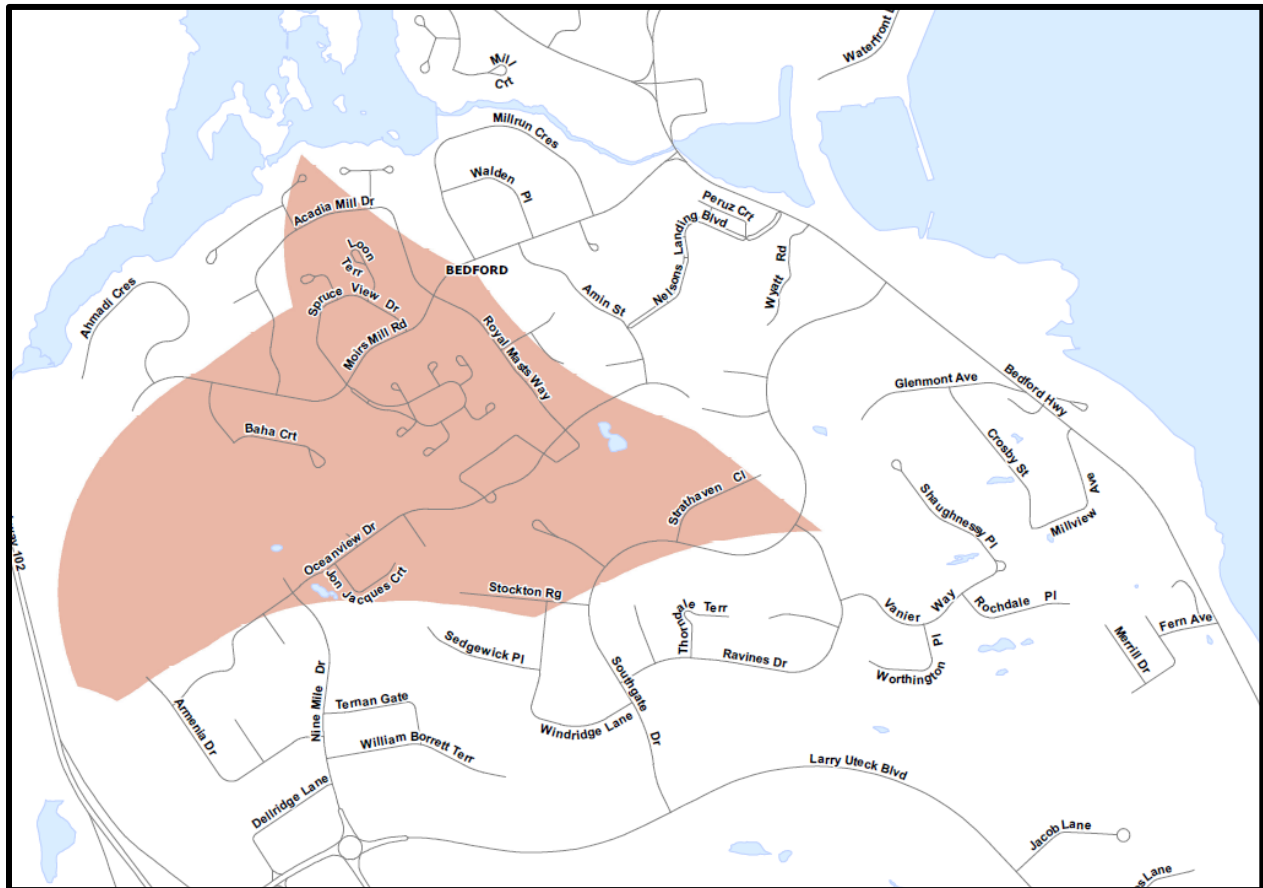


Figure 5: Service Area Loss from Annual Service Plan Routing to Recommended Detour

The alternate detour requires an additional running time of 3 minutes to each round trip which will increase the total service hours required. These service hours are costed annually at a total of \$16,926. In addition to the increased service hours required, this detour would result in an added 5.6 kilometers per round trip, resulting in an annual cost of \$58,362. Together, this detour would require \$75,288 more annually when compared with the routing approved in the 2019/20 Annual Service Plan and budgeted for 2019/20.

Additional Annual Costing					
	Hours	Hours Cost	KMs	KMs Cost	Total Cost
Alternate Detour	380	\$16,926	42,552	\$58,362	\$75,288

Table 2: Additional Annual Costing for Alternate Detour

Comparison of Detour Options		
Consideration/Impact	Detour via Larry Uteck Boulevard	Detour via Southgate Drive
Public Information	Route planning applications, automated stop announcements and departure line times will not work correctly. Documentation including route maps will not have the correct route displayed.	Route planning applications, automated stop announcements and departure line times will not work correctly. Documentation including route maps will not have the correct route displayed.
Costs	There will be an additional cost of \$75,288 annually.	There will be an additional cost of \$27,097 annually.
Bus Stop Impacts	Infrastructure for bus stops exist along the route.	There will be no accessible stops along Southgate Drive and adjacent streets for November 25, 2019, creating winter operations challenges, and installation of many bus stop signs will be temporary in nature. Work to create permanent accessible stops will continue through the year.
Schedule Impacts	Additional running time has the potential to delay other routes.	It is not anticipated that additional running time will be required.
Service Area	Approximately 1,830 people who would have been within walking distance of the Route 91 using Oceanview would be outside the walking distance.	Approximately 840 people who would have been within walking distance of the Route 91 using Oceanview would be outside the walking distance.
Consultation	Full transit service exists on all impacted streets, and was considered in past consultations/network redesign.	Only express service (weekday, peak hour, one direction) service has been contemplated on Southgate Drive in the past, and residents have not had the opportunity to provide feedback on the addition of all day/all week/bi-directional service.
Permanency of Detour	Detour would be implemented as an interim solution, with the intent to consult and modify the route at a later time.	Detour would become a permanent route change at the next available opportunity.

Table 3: Summary of Considerations for Detour Options

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommended detour has a total annual Transit operating cost of \$27,097 and the alternate has a cost of \$75,288. These costs would come from the Halifax Transit Operating Budget.

Route 91 Hemlock Ravine Alternate Routings - Additional Annual Costing					
	Hours	Hours Cost	KMs	KMs Cost	Total Cost
Alternate Detour	380	\$16,926	42,552	\$58,362	\$75,288
Recommended Detour	0	\$0	19,756	\$27,097	\$27,097

Table 4: Route 91 Hemlock Ravine Alternate Routings - Additional Annual Costing

Both detour options will change the service area and therefore the number of properties where the local transit tax would be applied. This would not apply to the current fiscal year however may impact future budget years.

It should be noted that some additional operating costs, such as the cost of annual maintenance of bus stops is not provided in the costing above. Funding for maintenance of additional bus stops implemented as part of transit service changes, will be sought through the 2020/21 budget and business plan. Further, it should be noted that the cost of infrastructure upgrades to create accessible permanent stops along this route, and all routes in the transit network, are funded incrementally through the annual capital program.

RISK CONSIDERATION

The proposed and alternate detours as presented in this report come with a variety of implementation risks, as discussed in this report. The recommended route will have the risk of having only temporary bus stops while the alternate route has additional costs and may impact future operating budgets.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During the development of the *Moving Forward Together Plan* Halifax Transit undertook a comprehensive public engagement process. During the second round of engagement, 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*.

Of these route specific comments there were 15 comments made directly relating to service on Oceanview Drive and/or the Millview area. Of these 6 indicated positive sentiments towards the service being implemented as proposed, while 2 indicated concerns with these service changes. Six additional concerns were received over street width, in part due to parking currently being permitted on both sides of streets along the routing, to which HRM traffic has proposed introducing restrictions that would mitigate these concerns where necessary.

The proposed network during this engagement included only a one-way, peak hour express service on Southgate Drive, but no bidirectional local service, as such residents did not have an opportunity to comment on that service level. There was one comment received expressing concerns about the proposed express service on Southgate Drive.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified

ALTERNATIVES

The Audit and Finance Standing Committee could recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to implement a temporary detour routing for the Route 91 – Hemlock Ravine along Larry Uteck Boulevard and direct staff to complete public consultation on routing options in the Oceanview area. This alternative is not recommended for reasons outlined in Table 3 of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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.

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