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Item No. 8.1
Transportation Standing Committee
Special Meeting
March 25, 2021

TO: Chair and Members of the Transportation Standing Committee

-Original Signed-

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Dave Reage, MCIP, LPP, Executive Director, Halifax Transit

-Original Signed-

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: **March 9, 2021**

SUBJECT: **Expanded 2021-2022 Student Transit Pass Pilot Program**

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

ORIGIN

At the February 25, 2021 meeting of Transportation Standing Committee, the following motion was put and passed:

That the Transportation Standing Committee defer item 12.1.1 - 2021/22 Student Transit Pass Pilot Program to the March 25, 2021 meeting of the Transportation Standing Committee and request a supplementary report dealing with extending the student pass pilot program to all students from the four identified schools.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, 2008, c. 39

Subsection 69(1)

The Municipality may provide a public transportation service by:

- (a) the purchase of vehicles or vessels and operation of the service;
- (b) providing financial assistance to a person who will undertake to provide the service; or
- (c) a combination of these methods.

Section 102

Subject to the approval of the Board for those services that are subject to the Public Utilities Act, the Council may, by by-law, 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.

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Approve the phased in Student Transit Pass Pilot Program as described in this report dated February 1, 2021, with Pilot Phase 1 expanded to include all students at each of the four identified schools in grades 9 through 12;
2. Adopt By-law U-108, the purpose of which is to amend By-law U-100, the User Charges By-law, to enable the Student Transit Pass Pilot Program, as set out in Attachment C to this report.

BACKGROUND

At the February 25, 2021 meeting of Transportation Standing Committee, the Committee reviewed and discussed the staff recommendation to implement a limited Transit Pass Pilot for one grade at each of four schools. These schools were:

- Dartmouth High School
- Prince Andrew High School
- École Mosaïque
- École du Sommet

The original staff recommendation included a three phased approach:

- Pilot Phase 1: A pilot program limited to one grade at four select schools which are currently well served by Halifax Transit service. The Pilot Phase 1 period will provide an opportunity to adapt the program as required due to any unforeseen impacts, and ensure adequate time is provided to negotiate an appropriate funding agreement with both HRCE and CSAP ahead of Pilot Phase 2. This phase will be offered at no cost to HRCE and CSAP.
- Pilot Phase 2: An expanded pilot program would see the program incrementally extended and offered to the remaining grades within the four pilot schools, and the program launched in three to six additional high schools that are well served by transit. Details of the Pilot Phase 2 will be dependent on the findings of survey and data collected in Phase 1 and will require a formal funding agreement between the school organizations and the municipality.
- Full Program Roll Out: The objective is to create a permanent program offered to all middle and high schools that are served by Halifax Transit.

This phased-in approach was recommended to help Halifax Transit to understand the cost of the program, as well as the impact that many additional riders at school dismissal times may have on capacity.

At the February 25, 2021 meeting of Transportation Standing Committee, staff were directed to return with a staff report showing a Phase 1 Pilot revised to include all grades at each of the four pilot schools. This report discusses the benefits and risks associated with a revised, expanded Phase 1 Pilot.

DISCUSSION

Expanded participation will include approximately 2400 students, an increase of 350% over the original planned uptake of approximately 530 students for Pilot Phase 1. Students are distributed as per Table 1 below.

School	Number of Students by Grade				Total
	9	10	11	12	
Dartmouth High	118	259	291	311	979
Prince Andrew High	0	225	225	295	745
École Mosaïque	88	71	56	86	301
École du Sommet	103	82	84	93	362

The benefit of the expanded Pilot Phase 1 is that more students benefit from the program in the first phase. It is anticipated that this will be well received by both HRCE and CSAP, and that it will likely reduce the complication and administrative burden of this phase of the pilot. The additional student participants will also provide further information to inform the development of a funding agreement in Pilot Phase 2.

This revised approach is not without risk. There is a significant risk that the additional passenger load could cause overcrowding on some routes at sometimes of the day. It is anticipated that this is a lower risk at the CSAP schools due to the overall lower enrollment, and the larger school catchment areas.

There is likely to be a considerable impact to revenues, as described in the financial implications section of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are approximately 2,400 students who would be included in the pilot program. It is anticipated that the revenue loss associated with Pilot Phase 1 of this program is between \$72,000 and \$108,000 annually. The potential loss varies depending on how frequently the students are currently paying for transit, and the length of the pilot (anticipated to be between 6 and 18 months). Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of Pilot Phase 1 on ridership and revenue is anticipated to be lower than it would be in a more typical year. However, it is not expected that this would be a long-term revenue loss beyond the Pilot Phase 1; once Pilot Phase 2 is rolled out and funding agreements are in place with HRCE and CSAP, it is expected that Halifax Transit will recoup any lost revenue, and potentially even increase future revenues by building sustainable transportation habits in Halifax youth.

RISK CONSIDERATION

It is likely that some trips will be overloaded by a significant increase in ridership as a result of this program. This risk has been mitigated to some degree by the careful selection of pilot schools for this program, but it is still likely that there will be trips regularly that overload. At this time, Halifax Transit has no additional resources to reallocate to provide additional trips in the case that there are regular overloads.

It is also a risk that staff will not reach a funding agreement with HRCE and CSAP. If this is the case, then the pilot will not continue beyond Pilot Phase 1.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No engagement has been undertaken in the preparation of this supplementary report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

This program will likely increase transit ridership for school trips, but it is also possible that those participating in the program will be more inclined to use transit for other trips. Students may choose public transit because it accommodates their schedule or extracurricular activities, and otherwise helps to build their independence by facilitating other trips. This means that in the longer term, these youth and young adults are more likely to build sustainable transportation patterns.

ALTERNATIVES

The Committee may recommend that Regional Council approve the original scope of the Phase 1 Pilot, including only Grade 9 or Grade 10 students at all four pilot schools.

The Committee may defeat the staff motion recommending the Student Transit Pass Program as described in this report and not adopt By-law U-108. The consequence of this is the status quo would be maintained.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: 2021 22 Student Transit Pass Pilot Program Rec Report 210225tsc1211

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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