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Item No. Info Item 1
Transportation Standing Committee
February 24, 2022

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: January 6, 2022

SUBJECT: Mineville Park & Ride Terminal

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

April 6, 2021, Regional Council motion (Item 11.4.2):

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Kent

THAT Regional Council request a staff report for Halifax Transit to consider assessing the possibility of establishing and implementing a Park and Ride Terminal at Hwy 107 Exit 18 in Mineville as a supplementary bus stop for the current Rural Express Service 370.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. SNS 2008, c. 39, subsection 69(1) provides:

- 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.

Halifax Regional Municipality Administrative Order 1. 2020, Schedule 7, subsection 6 provides:

6. The Transportation Standing Committee shall:
- (a) review and oversee policy direction and long-term funding approach to promote and encourage Transit alternatives as outlined in the Regional Plan;
 - (b) review and oversee specific strategic planning directions related to Transit Services coming from the Regional Plan such as the five-year strategic plan, Accessibility Plan, and the Ferry Plan;

BACKGROUND

Halifax Transit's Regional Express service is intended to provide residents of outlying communities the option of using transit for regular commuting. The Porters Lake Regional Express (Route 370) was introduced in November 2013. It offers 14 daily trips, Monday to Friday, primarily during peak hours, between Scotia Square in Halifax and the then new Porters Lake Park & Ride near Exit 20 on Highway 107. A map of the route has been included as Attachment A.

Regional Council has approved two documents that currently guide the implementation of new services, including rural transit Park & Ride facilities. The first is the *Regional Municipal Planning Strategy*¹, revised in 2014 and also known as the Regional Plan. The second is the *Moving Forward Together Plan*² (MFTP) which was approved in 2016. A 2007 study entitled *HRM Regional Transit Plan – Park & Ride, Express and Rural Transportation Services* provided initial guidance for the implementation of Regional Express services, but has been superseded by these plans.

DISCUSSION

Policy Review – Regional Plan

The Regional Plan addresses public transit by seeking to make land use and transportation planning mutually supportive. With respect to investment in transit service, Regional Plan policy T-7 defines the Urban Transit Service Boundary (UTSB) within which HRM will direct investment in public transit services, however rural commuter express services like Regional Express Route 370 are an exception to this policy and so service level increases may be considered.

The Regional Plan also identifies different types of growth centres and describes the associated design characteristics, including transit service, that should be supported in each type of centre. A map showing these centres has been included as Attachment B.

Support for rural express bus service to the regional centre is limited to “Rural District Growth Centres” like Porters Lake. Mineville has not been designated as a rural centre of any classification, while the nearby community of Lake Echo has been identified as a Rural Local Growth Centre which includes support for community-based transit rather than express bus service. As such, the implementation of a rural Park & Ride facility near Exit 18 on Highway 107 would not be in keeping with the Regional Plan as it would be outside of a Rural District Growth Centre.

Policy Review – MFTP

Regional Council's adoption of the MFTP has led to a restructuring of the transit network, which is currently ongoing, based upon its four guiding principles:

1. Increase the proportion of resources allocated towards high ridership services.
2. Build a simplified transfer-based system.
3. Invest in service quality and reliability.
4. Give transit increased priority in the transportation network.

With respect to Regional Express Service, the MFTP states that “any additional stops added to a Regional Express route must occur inside the Urban Transit Service Boundary and not delay the trip beyond the existing schedule.” It also speaks to route directness and explains that when a deviation is being considered the gain in convenience to passengers who are boarding or alighting during that deviation must be balanced against the additional travel time for the passengers travelling through.

¹ See [Regional Municipal Planning Strategy \(October 2014\)](#)

² See [Moving Forward Together Plan](#)

Serving a new Park & Ride facility in Mineville is anticipated to require additional annual service hours and a schedule adjustment to account for the time and distance it would take for the bus to deviate from its current route. As a result, the implementation of this new facility would be inconsistent with the MFTP’s vision for Regional Express service as this new stop would be outside the UTSSB, the route deviation is expected to delay trips beyond the existing schedule, and the anticipated delay for current riders would exceed the anticipated time savings for new riders.

Capital Costs

Park & Ride facilities can be implemented with fewer amenities than a typical transit terminal, however rising property and construction costs coupled with the desire for safe, high-quality, and inclusive infrastructure mean that this facility would be a significant investment. A new Park & Ride facility would require, at minimum:

- bus stop / passenger waiting area
- turning loop for the bus
- parking area for commuters

Table 1 compares several facilities’ construction costs with their parking capacity to determine an approximate cost-per-parking space:

Table 1: Comparison of Park & Ride Cost-per-Parking Space

Park & Ride	Construction Cost*	Parking Capacity	\$ per Parking Space
Sheldrake Lake	\$ 426,000	48	\$ 8,875
Fall River	\$ 802,000	90	\$ 8,911
Porters Lake	\$ 739,000	132	\$ 5,598
Average:			\$ 7,795

* Dollar values were adjusted to 2021 with the Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator

Given the above, the construction cost of a new Park & Ride facility near Exit 18 with capacity for 50 to 100 vehicles is estimated to be approximately \$400,000 to \$800,000. This estimate does not include any property acquisition costs as a more detailed design would be required to determine those costs. The use of municipally owned land near Exit 18 may provide an opportunity to reduce some of the property acquisition cost, but this would have to be reviewed in more detail.

Furthermore, the capital cost for a new Park & Ride would need to be programmed into a future capital budget and prioritized against other planned transit investments such as Wrights Cove Terminal and Margeson Drive Park & Ride, among others. A proposed Park & Ride in Mineville would rate low in terms of prioritization as it is not supported by policy, as discussed above.

Operating Costs

Operating costs include maintenance costs for the facility such as snow clearing, landscaping, and infrastructure repairs. These costs could range between \$10,000 to \$20,000 annually with winter maintenance expected to be the largest expenditure, assuming the parking lot had a capacity of about 100 vehicles.

Operating costs also include the time and money associated with running buses. Route 370 typically sees fewer passenger-boardings-per-revenue-trip and higher cost-per-passenger than the other Regional Express routes (Route 320 to Airport/Fall Rider and Route 330 to Tantallon/Sheldrake Lake). Serving a new Park & Ride facility near Mineville could improve productivity on Route 370 by potentially increasing passenger-boardings-per-revenue-trip; however, the cost-per-passenger is likely to increase as well given the additional resources and infrastructure required to serve the stop.

There is a potential opportunity to locate the Park & Ride in very close proximity to Exit 18, as the lands immediately around the exit are largely vacant, with the exception of an existing carpool lot. For costing purposes, the assumption is that an ideal location near Exit 18 is secured, and a bus would only be required to deviate from the current route to exit the highway, service the bus stop, and then return to Highway 107. This adjustment would require on average roughly four minutes per trip (in each direction) and an additional approximately 268 annual service hours (given the 251 operational weekdays per year), resulting in an annual operating cost increase of approximately \$25,000.

Ridership Estimate

Table 2 compares the average daily weekday boardings at each of the rural Park & Rides served by Regional Express routes:

Table 2: Comparison of Regional Express Rural Park & Ride Average Daily Weekday Boardings

Park & Ride:	Porters Lake (370)	Sheldrake Lake (330)	Hubley Centre (330)	Fall River (320)
2018 / 19	64	36	167	88
2019 / 20	60	40	186	93
2020 / 21	25	8	34	21

The communities of Mineville, Porters Lake, and Sheldrake Lake are relatively similar in size, so they are expected to have similar levels of ridership demand. An estimation of the potential ridership for a new Park & Ride facility can be made using population data from the 2016 census: the population within a defined driving distance from the facility can be adjusted based on the proportion of automobile trips leaving the community as well as an assumed capture rate for transit mode share.

The census data shows that approximately 1% of trips leaving Porters Lake are made using transit. Using known population and transit ridership data, the estimated capture rate for the Sheldrake Lake Park & Ride was determined to be close to 2%.

Assuming that a new Mineville Park & Ride could capture 2% of the outgoing automobile trips, it could draw about 35 passengers per day. The resulting increase in annual revenue is expected to be approximately \$22,000 based on boardings and earnings from monthly XPass holders, pre-COVID (2.55 \$/passenger * 251 operational days * 35 passengers/day). It should be noted that the estimated 35 passengers per day may not represent entirely new riders as some existing riders using the Porters Lake Park & Ride may switch to the Mineville Park & Ride.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications are described above within the Discussion section and the approximate costs are summarized in Table 3:

Table 3: Summary of Financial Implications

Capital Cost	Construction	\$400,000 to \$800,000 (for 50 to 100 parking spaces*)
Operating Cost	Bus Operations	268 annual service hours (\$22,000 /yr)
	Facility Maintenance	\$10,000 to \$20,000 /yr
Revenue	Fares	\$22,000 /yr

* Not including land acquisition or site preparation

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was carried during the development of this report; however, it was noted that a number of residents expressed support for a new Park & Ride facility near Exit 18 when providing feedback about proposed changes to Rural Route 401 earlier this year.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Map for Porters Lake Regional Express (Route 370)

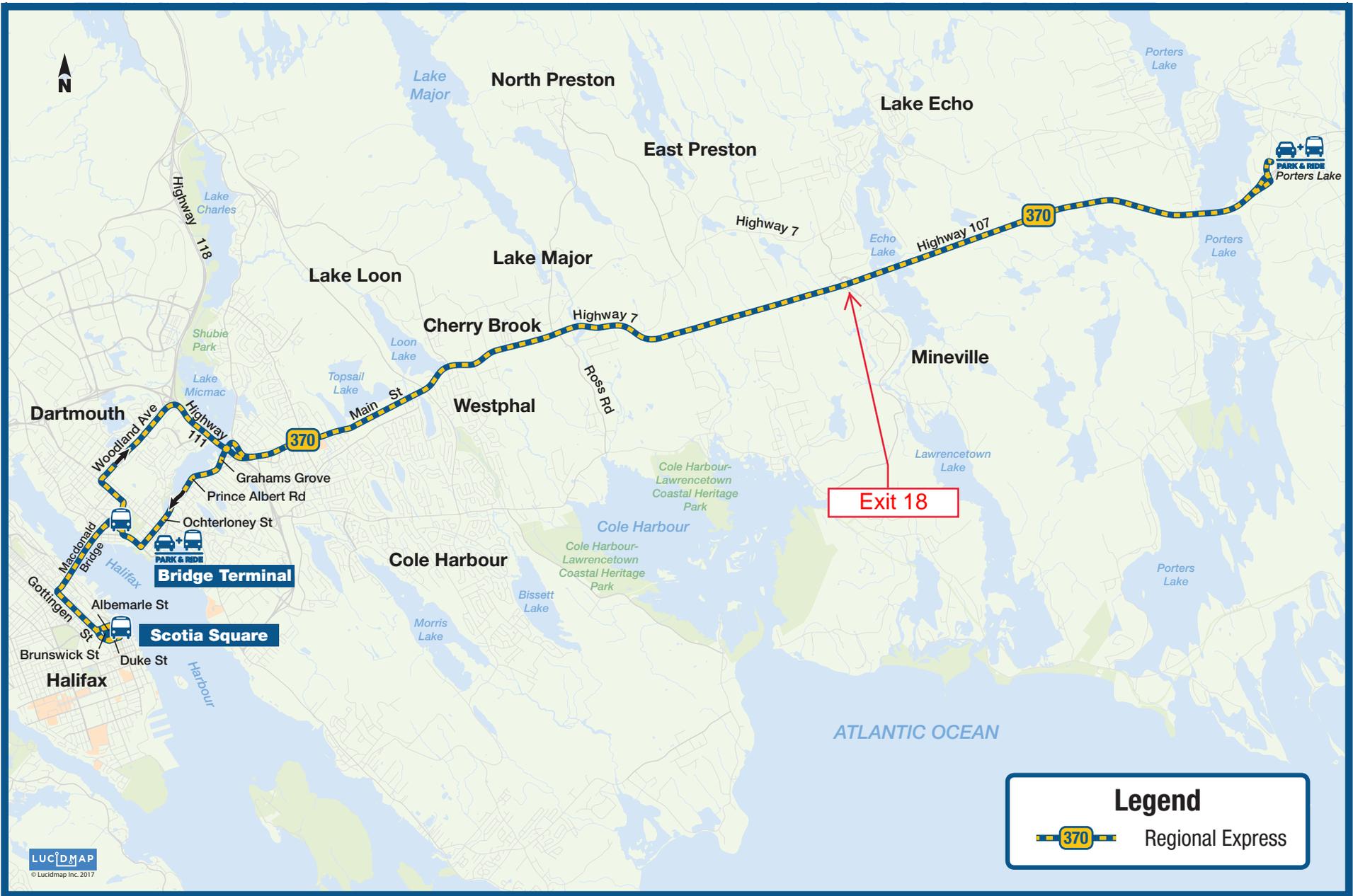
Attachment B: Map of Regional Settlement & Transportation (from Regional Plan, 2014)

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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Porters Lake Regional Express



Effective Date: November 27, 2017

