



**ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TOWN HALL
DRAFT MINUTES
November 5, 2025**

PRESENT: Rachele Manett, Chair
Nikolas Harris, Vice Chair
Councillor Laura White
Councillor Jean St-Amand
Councillor Trish Purdy
Oliver Keith
Anne Sinclair
Jamil Sinno
Céline Vautour

REGRETS: Glenn Babcock
Cathi Stevenson

STAFF PANEL: Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office
Kara Evans, Coordinator to Commissioner of Public Safety
Kim Jollimore, Director Citizen Contact Centres
Anne Sherwood, Director Transportation Design & Asset Management
Kayode Taiwo, Development Engineer, Infrastructure Planning
Allen Lenihan, Call Centre Supervisor, Accessible Transit

OTHERS PRESENT: Elizabeth Macdonald, Legislative Assistant
Alicia Wall, Legislative Support

These minutes are considered draft and will require approval by the Accessibility Advisory Committee at a future meeting.

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, reports, supporting documents, and information items circulated are online at halifax.ca.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and acknowledged that the meeting took place in the traditional and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people, and that we are all treaty people.

The Chair welcomed all in attendance and encouraged attendees to share their feedback. The Chair advised that the panel members would be providing updates on current projects and sharing successes and challenges faced by the municipality with respect to accessibility.

2. STAFF OVERVIEW OF ACCESSIBILITY SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND UPDATE

Melissa Myers, Accessibility Advisor, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office noted Halifax Regional Council approved the updated Accessibility Strategy which included 30 recommendations to improve accessibility within Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). Myers explained a meeting was held in June with business unit directors to provide an update on the revised Accessibility Strategy, more than 55 employees had received accessibility training during the past year, and work was being done with Halifax Regional Police to improve accessibility within the police department.

Kara Evans, Coordinator to Commissioner of Public Safety spoke to the programs within Community Safety that assist with accessibility. Evans explained that the Voluntary Vulnerable Persons Registry was an ongoing effort and alerts were sent out via HFX Alert to people on the registry when weather events occur to gauge the need for assistance or support. Evans noted the Housing and Homeless Division supported people living rough by providing Halifax Transit passes and taxi chits for appointments and work with the Province of Nova Scotia to assist people with accessing shelter spots.

Kim Jollimore, Director Citizen Contact Centres indicated 311 contact centres assisted residents with non-emergency matters and service requests were triaged and directed to the appropriate business unit to be actioned. The centres could be reached via phone, email, online and in-person 7 days a week with after-hours emergency services also being provided. Jollimore explained the centres received over 360,000 calls last year and provided information regarding several topics including transit, garbage collection, by-law enforcement and animal services. Jollimore also noted sign language interpretation service had been implemented.

Anne Sherwood, Director Transportation Design & Asset Management noted ongoing work to update guidelines and standards to align with the new accessibility regulations. Sherwood explained that a 5-year review of winter works operations was being conducted, work was being done with the Province respecting detectable barriers during construction, the use of tactile directional plates was being explored, and work was being done with Solid Waste to update print and online materials for readability and clarity.

Kayode Taiwo, Development Engineer, Infrastructure Planning indicated the department reviewed complex projects to ensure work was being conducted correctly and by-laws were adhered to. Taiwo spoke to sidewalk safety during construction and the need to ensure citizens could move freely when streets were closed. It was also noted that street closure information was available online.

Allen Lenihan, Call Centre Supervisor, Accessible Transit stated that Transit was dedicated to improving accessibility through several initiatives. Lenihan confirmed the Woodside Ferry Terminal had been upgraded to include tactile indicators, Transit was working towards having all bus stops fully accessible by 2030 and an audit of all bus shelters for accessibility was being conducted. Lenihan further noted 31 accessible bus stops had been upgraded, 12 non-standard bus stops were updated to be accessible and several new access-a-buses have been purchased. Lenihan explained the organizational structure of Access-A-Bus was being revamped for increased efficiency and accountability.

3. FEEDBACK, INPUT, QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC

The Chair reviewed the rules and opened the floor for the public to share their feedback.

John Den Hollander explained they used transit and Access-A-Bus regularly and expressed concerns regarding the wait list of 78 people, speed bumps and bus suspension.

Lenihan responded that these concerns come up often and would take the information back to try to find a solution.

Sherwood noted that speedbumps were surveyed after being built to ensure there were no issues at the time of construction and advised the speaker to report any issues to 311 to be investigated.

Lois Miller expressed a need to maintain accessible parking during construction and noted that proper signage was not always used and was sometimes damaged. Miller noted concerns that construction projects were not taking people with disabilities into consideration.

Sherwood noted work was being done to improve construction accessibility and wayfinding and would take the information back to the construction team to be reviewed.

Milena Khazanavicius expressed satisfaction with the 311 service but wanted to see contact centres opened earlier than 8:30 a.m. It was noted that the construction barricades on Oxford Street were an issue, some of the signage respecting the sidewalk closure was in the middle of road and Halifax Water placed signs that infringed on sidewalks and made them impassible. Khazanavicius explained crossings on an angle were dangerous for people with sight impairments despite CSA standards and extended raised bike lanes in crosswalks were also dangerous for people with sight impairments.

Taiwo responded that Oxford Street had several ongoing projects, construction mitigation plans were submitted by developers, and staff were consistently working with developers to ensure minimal disruption during construction. Taiwo encouraged residents to call 311 with concerns so they could be investigated and noted that the Windsor Street and Willow Street project was nearly complete.

Sherwood stated that the Windsor Street and Almon Street project had a challenging design and that CSA standards had to be followed to ensure consistency with the rest of the country.

Nicole Corrado inquired whether 311 had a text option.

Jollimore indicated there was not currently a text option, but the option was being explored, and they could follow up with Corrado regarding timelines.

A community member asked how HRM determined the number of designated accessible parking spots.

Sherwood noted parking staff were not in attendance but they could take the speaker's contact information and reach out to parking staff.

Jeff Overmars inquired as to whether signage could be placed on the street instead of sidewalks and noted construction signage was currently placed haphazardly on sidewalks, often collapsed at night and left in unorganized piles creating hazards for pedestrians.

Sherwood advised that according to the new accessible guidance from the Province, signage should not be placed on the sidewalk but rather mounted or placed in the boulevard area. Sherwood encouraged residents to call 311 to report any issues.

Gabrielle Close asked how Access-A-Bus prioritized trips and cited concerns regarding the lack of availability of accessible transit and requested further information as to the municipality's plan to resolve these issues.

Lenihan responded that a Request for Proposal had been issued for a review of the entire system including scheduling, software and the number of buses and operators. Lenihan explained the current demand exceeded available resources and trips for medical appointments received priority followed by employment, school and then recreation.

Jen Schwartz spoke to a recent negative experience trying to booking an accessible cab and being unable to reach 311 and Access-A-Bus, and contacting police who advised an ambulance could be called at a cost but the wheelchair could not be transported. Schwartz contended this experience revealed a gap in emergency services for those with accessibility needs.

Lenihan responded that a message could be left on the cancellation line, dispatchers check messages until about midnight and would provide a call back.

Darryl MacDonald, West Bedford explained they had recently moved to the area and had faced issues navigating walkways near the two roundabouts in Bedford South due to surface cracks. MacDonald contended the walkways should be reevaluated for accessibility.

Sherwood indicated some of the infrastructure in that area was Provincial and could get details of the issue from MacDonald following the panel.

Carole Arsenault asked what Access-A-Bus was doing to improve user experiences including same day trips and improved scheduling, especially with the number of new users. Arsenault inquired if the number of accessible taxis would be increased to reflect increased population growth and demand.

Lenihan advised they do not have insight into accessible taxis, but Halifax Transit was working to increase the number of operators.

4. CLOSING COMMENTS – Rachele Manett, Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Chair thanked the panel and the public for attending and noted that the concerns had been heard by staff and work would begin on the issues raised.

5. ADJOURNMENT OF PANEL

The panel adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Alicia Wall
Legislative Support