

New Year Commuting Resolutions?

Ride sharing and carpooling reduce the impact of vehicles on our roadways and environment. Carpooling decreases the number of vehicles on our roads, thereby reducing traffic congestion. HRM offers a carpooling service called Ride-Match. It is a safe and secure online ride-matching system that allows commuters to quickly and securely find travel partners. The system matches people based on proximity to origin and destination points and travel route as well as similar working hours, travel mode and compatible preferences. The system can be used to match carpool, transit, cycling and even walking partners. Simply email the individuals on your match list and discuss the arrangements, so that your new commuting option will work for you! This is a free service that is fast and easy to use. www.HfxRidematch.ca.

SmartTrip is a program that offers tools and education on commuting in HRM. HRM offers an employee commuter habits audit; interactive outreach events and workshops – such as SmartCycle Lunch & Learns; marketing and communication materials; a carpool startup kit; carpool parking signage and bicycle rack audits. Current SmartTrip Partners include: Dalhousie University, DND, McInnis Cooper, Irving Shipbuiding, Admiral Insurance, Clean NS Foundation, Efficiency NS, Mountain Equipment Co-op, HRM, HRM Pension Plan, NS Utility & Review Board, Province of Nova Scotia, and VERB Interactive. Enquire with your employer to join this program.

The SmartTrip E-Pass is a discounted Halifax Transit bus pass purchased by employees through a payroll deduction plan. The primary goal of this program is to reduce rush hour traffic in HRM by encouraging employees to use transit whenever possible. Employers must be registered in the SmartTrip program and offer a matching discount incentive. It is valid for travel on all transit routes. The total annual cost of the SmartTrip E-Pass is \$702 (\$850.50 for the Metro-Link Pass and \$999 for the Metro-X Pass.) For more information or to sign up as a SmartTrip Partner contact the SmartTrip Coordinator, Julie Wynn at wynnju@halifax.ca or call: 902-490-4160.

There are three public transportation services available in District 2: The Metro-X Rural Express-Route #370 www.halifax.ca/transit/MetroExpress.php#PortersLake links Eastern Shore residents using the Park & Ride Terminal in Porters Lake by Hwy #107, Exit #20 to the Dartmouth Bridge Terminal and Scotia Square Mall in Halifax. The Community Transit Route #401-East Preston/Porters Lake/Seaforth bus service originates at the Portland Hills Terminal on Cole Harbour Road and continues onto Ross Road, then through Highway #7 in East Preston, Lake Echo and Porters Lake, then along Route #207 into West Chezzetcook, Grand Desert and the Seaforth Back Road.

There is also our very own rural community-based transit service, MusGo Rider. More information on this service can be found at: www.musgorider.com.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT APPEALS

Property Assessment Notices will be mailed out in mid-January. There is now a 31 day official Appeal Period from the date of the mailed notice, whereby property owners can review and perhaps refute their appraisals. If you feel your property has not been properly assessed, you may contact the NS Municipality Agency - Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) and speak with an Assessment Services representative. The PVSC Assessment Office is located at Park Place Two, 238-A Brownlow Avenue, Suite 200, Dartmouth, NS, B3B 2B4. Telephone: 902-720-7872 or Fax: 902-720-7873 or Toll-Free: 1-800-667-5727. Property owners are encouraged to call and speak with an Assessor prior to appealing an assessment, as the Assessor may answer and clear up some questions, potentially avoiding the time and expense of an appeal. If you still wish to make a formal appeal, you must submit it in writing either by letter or fax to their office by the deadline. Appeals by email are not accepted. For more detailed information please refer to your assessment notice or go to the PVSC Appeal Guide: www.pvsc.ca/site/media/PVSC/Documents/Appeal%20Brochure%20December%202012_final.pdf. For general enquiries about property valuation please refer to their web site at: www.PVSC.ca.

TRANSIT PLAN SEEKS MORE INPUT

Halifax Transit is in the process of conducting a comprehensive review of its network, the focus of which is to develop an improved, simplified network that is more user-friendly. During public consultation last fall, members of the public expressed strong support for a transfer-based transit system if trip times would be reduced and service would be frequent enough to make easy transfers. Transit remains committed to the principles adopted during the first round of public consultation on the Moving Forward Together Plan, including the need to build a simplified transfer-based system. Staff will continue to work on fine tuning the details of the draft network design for release to Regional Council and the general public in January 2015 for more input and discussion. This consultation will form the final network design recommendations to HRM Council later in 2015. Stay tuned for more details on the draft network and planned consultation sessions.

RELIEF PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW

HRM staff initiated a review of the current property tax relief program for non-profit organizations. The aim of this redesign is to: develop detailed criteria regarding eligibility and levels of tax relief; simplify the decision making process; increase accountability to the general public in terms of cost and benefits; and provide greater certainty in budget capacity. The issue of tenancy will also be addressed. This review is not limited to real property tax but will also include area rates, deed transfer tax and fire protection tax. Copies of the report will be available for public input, and updates will be posted on the halifax.ca municipal web site. Details on Administrative Order 2014-001-ADM Tax Relief for Non-Profit Organizations are available at: www.halifax.ca/legislation/adminorders/documents/2014-001-ADM.pdf.

FEDERAL ARTS & CULTURE GRANTS

The Federal Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) has a Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage (BCAH) Program. Does your community organize a local festival? The application deadline for the Local Festivals component of the BCAH program is January 31st. Is there a significant local anniversary in our municipality or your community in 2015?

If the anniversary marks a 100th anniversary or greater, in increments of 25 years (e.g., 125th, 150th), and it commemorates a significant local historical event or pays tribute to a significant local historical personality, consider applying to the Community Anniversaries component of BCAH.

The deadline is also January 31st. The Legacy Fund component provides funding for community capital projects that commemorate significant anniversaries and involve the restoration, renovation or transformation of existing buildings and/or exterior spaces with local community significance; encourage arts and heritage activities in your community; and are intended for and accessible to the general public.

For more details, please contact Ginette Garand, Program Officer, at 902-426-7834 or by email ginette.garand@pch.gc.ca.

For more program information go to: www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1267799042836/1276800169608.

DEBATE ON FIRE SERVICES REVIEW

The HRM Executive Standing Committee has referred the Fire Services Operational Review Report over to a Committee of the Whole session of Regional Council, so that all Councillors can fully debate and vote on this issue. The report is available online at: www.halifax.ca/boardscom/SCadmin/documents/esc141215item9.1.1.pdf, and the associated power point presentation is available at: www.halifax.ca/boardscom/SCadmin/documents/esc141215item9.1.1presentation.pdf.

Some of the recommendations include redeploying 4 full-time staff 'E' platoon from Lake Echo Station 21 to Chezzetcook Station 23; closing sub-stations 25-Ostrea Lake and 31-East Ship Harbour; and hiring a full-time 'E' platoon complement for Sheet Harbour Station 28.

The fire department is seeking mutual service opportunities with neighbouring fire departments, including Ecum Secum Fire Station in Guysborough County.

