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Item No. 11.1
Transportation Standing Committee
April 28, 2022
March 24, 2022

TO: Chair and Members of Transportation Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 8, 2022

SUBJECT: Transit Route 55 Turnaround

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

May 18, 2021 Halifax Regional Council Special Meeting motion (Item 11.6.1):

MOVED by Councillor Deagle Gammon, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report regarding options and financial implications of a potential purchase of land to enable a bus turnaround at or near the new termination of route 55 in order to enable the return of the inbound leg of route 55 to the Waverley Road. Mayor Savage clarified that this item does not pertain to a specific real estate transaction and should be discussed in public at a Regional Council meeting.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c.39 provides:

Open meetings and exceptions

19 (1) Except as otherwise provided in this Section, Council meetings and meetings of committees appointed by the Council are open to the public.

(2) The Council or any committee appointed by the Council may meet in closed session to discuss matters relating to

(a) acquisition, sale, lease and security of municipal property;

61 (1) The Municipality may acquire and own property granted or conveyed to the Municipality either absolutely or in trust for a public or charitable purpose.

(2) Where property is conveyed to the Municipality in trust for a public or charitable purpose, the Municipality holds the property according to the terms of the trust and may do anything necessary to carry out the objects of the trust.

(3) The property vested in the Municipality, absolutely or in trust, is under the exclusive management and control of the Council, unless an Act of the Legislature provides otherwise.

(5) The Municipality may

(a) acquire property, including property outside the Municipality, that the Municipality requires for its purposes or for the use of the public;

- Section 322
- (1) The Council may design, lay out, open, expand, construct, maintain, improve, alter, repair, light, water, clean, and clear streets in the Municipality.
 - (2) When a street is laid out, opened or expanded, a survey plan shall be filed in the registry.

BACKGROUND

The *Moving Forward Together Plan* (MFTP), approved in 2016, initiated the restructuring of the transit network and guided the implementation of service improvements. It has introduced new service types, service guidelines, performance measures, and a redesigned transit network.

This network redesign is being implemented in phases with the most recent service changes occurring on November 22, 2021. All proposed service changes for a given fiscal year are approved by Regional Council through the budget process and by approving the *Halifax Transit Annual Service Plan*. Changes to Route 55 Port Wallace, included in the MFTP, were presented to Regional Council for review and approval, as part of the *Halifax Transit 2021/22 Annual Service Plan*¹ (2021/22 ASP). Details of these plans, and subsequent discussions on the Route 55, are presented below.

Moving Forward Together Plan

The MFTP was built on the Moving Forward Principles, one of which was to increase the proportion of resources allocated towards high ridership services. Route 55 passenger boarding data, analyzed during the development of the MFTP, indicated consistently low ridership from Craighburn Drive to the Portobello turning loop and a significantly high cost per passenger. As such, the plan proposed removing Route 55 service between Craighburn Drive and the Portobello turning loop. To facilitate this change, service would be added to Charles Keating Drive and Craighburn Drive and the resources from this change would be reallocated to provide a new Route 55 connection to the Alderney Ferry Terminal, prior to terminating at the Bridge Terminal. Ultimately this change was recommended as it aligned with the Moving Forward Principles and would provide more options to riders.

The *Moving Forward Together Plan Recommendation Report*² was first presented to Regional Council on April 12, 2016. At that time, Regional Council requested a supplemental report outlining options, financial and operational implications on a variety of transit matters including the following:

- g. Consider the extension of Route 55 and that the following options be evaluated:*
- i) extend Route 55 to the community of Waverley and return.*
 - ii) extend Route 55 through Waverley to the Fall River Park and Ride.*
 - iii) extend Route 55 through Waverley to Sackville Terminal on Cobequid Road.*

¹ See [Special Budget Committee, March 10, 2021, Item No. 5](#)

² See [Committee of the Whole, April 12, 2016, Item No. 3](#)

The *Halifax Transit Moving Forward Together Plan – Supplementary Report*³ returned to Regional Council on November 22, 2016. The report noted that extending Route 55 as per any of the options listed above would contravene Policy T-7 of the *Regional Plan*.⁴ Policy T-7 is included here:

T-7 The Urban Transit Service Boundary... shall establish the area within which HRM will direct future investment in public transit services, with the exception of rural commuter express service which may be considered outside of this Boundary. The level of service outside this boundary shall not be increased, but modifications to services may be considered that serve to facilitate operational planning. Existing routes and services not contained within this boundary will continue to exist, and as with any public transit routes or services, any service reductions will be based upon performance standards approved by HRM.

The Urban Transit Service Boundary⁵ crosses Waverley Road at the Waverley Road and Charles Keating Drive intersection. Extending Route 55 beyond Charles Keating Drive, to any of the locations listed in the motion would have required an increase in resources which Policy T-7 states shall not be increased. There were no motions put forth following the review of the supplemental report, to adjust the routing for Route 55 and the MFTP was subsequently approved by Regional Council.

Halifax Transit 2021/22 Annual Service Plan

The 2021/22 ASP included a large suite of service changes, including the MFTP's proposed changes to Route 55 Port Wallace to be implemented in November 2021. As part of the budget discussions, the Budget Committee requested a briefing note regarding residents' concerns around the planned change to Route 55 to service Craighburn Drive. Furthermore, the briefing note was to outline other options that were considered or may be considered in the area.

The briefing note (Appendix A) was submitted to the Budget Committee on April 21, 2021. Staff recommended proceeding with the proposed routing on Craighburn Drive as approved in the MFTP and as shown in the 2021/22 ASP. No further direction was provided by Regional Council at that time. As such, following the approval of the budget and 2021/22 ASP, Route 55 was implemented as per the MFTP on November 22, 2021.

DISCUSSION

In preparation of this report, staff explored a variety of options to facilitate a turning loop for Route 55.

Existing Routing

The current routing utilizes Charles Keating Drive and Craighburn Drive (see Figure 1). Residents along the western portion of Craighburn Drive have access to transit service in this option. This routing was implemented on November 22, 2021. Although there were considerable concerns raised by residents in advance of the introduction of transit service on Craighburn Drive, since implementation, there have been no operational or safety issues.

³ See [Halifax Regional Council, November 22, 2016 and December 6, 2016, Item No. 9.1](#)

⁴ See [Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, October 2014](#)

⁵ See [Map 7 – Urban Transit Service Boundary, Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, October 2014](#)



Figure 1: Existing Routing

Private Property

Staff explored the possible acquisition(s) of two privately owned parcels of land along the route on which a turning loop could be created with upfront capital investment and ongoing operating costs for snow clearing, repairs and maintenance. However, the landowners were not interested in selling one of the lots that was identified, and staff determined after investigation that the other lot was unsuitable.

Wilcot Lane

An alternative using Wilcot Lane was considered. This option would require a new transit-only one way connection from Montague Road to Wilcot Lane to be created to allow the introduction of a loop (see Figure 2). A bus stop would be added on Wilcot Lane, and the bus would layover here, if necessary, to maintain the schedule of the inbound trip.

Conclusion

There are limited options for appropriate alternative turnaround locations for the Route 55 in this area. Any potential options other than the existing routing on the local streets would require capital investments as well as the potential for ongoing operating costs for maintenance. As referenced above, the owner of a lot which has potential for the construction of a turnabout is not willing to sell it; and the other lot that was initially identified is unsuitable. An alternative loop was considered using Wilcot Lane. The Wilcot Lane option may not result in a long term solution, as upgrades are anticipated in the coming years to the intersection of Waverley Road and Montague Road in alignment with the Port Wallace development, which could render this option non-functional. In addition, it is possible that the future Port Wallace development could result in changes to the transit routing in the area, negating the need for a turning loop.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications at this time.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Development of the *Moving Forward Together Plan* included formal public and stakeholder engagement resulting in the values-based Moving Forward Principles, the foundation on which the plan is designed and all objectives, network changes, and policies were created. A draft plan was created based on this consultation and a variety of other data sources and public engagement on the draft took place over a period of ten weeks from February 17 – April 24, 2015 and included a wide variety of engagement methods. The results of this engagement were summarized and included in the *Moving Forward Together Plan* and recommendation report.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Budget Adjustment List Briefing - BN007-1 – Route 55 Proposed Changes

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.

Report Prepared by: Dave Espeseth, Acting Supervisor, Service Design & Projects, 902.497.5139

Budget Adjustment List Briefing

BN007-1 – Route 55 Proposed Changes

COW Date Added: March 10, 2021

Business Unit: Halifax Transit

Tracking Id	Operating or Capital	2021/22 Amount (negative is savings/revenue)	2021/22 Avg Bill Impact (negative is reduction)
BN007-1	Operating	N/A	N/A
Four Year Impact			
Adjustment Description	Regional Council requested a briefing note on four Halifax Transit service items: 1. Route 55 proposed changes		
Priority Alignment	Integrated Mobility - Connected & Healthy Long-Range Mobility Planning		

Service Implications and/or impact on Priority

The 2021/22 Halifax Transit Annual Service Plan proposes that in November 2021, changes to Route 55 Port Wallace outlined in the *Moving Forward Together Plan* (MFTP) be implemented.

As per this service change, the new Route 55 will no longer extend to the Portobello turning loop (bus stop 8459) via Waverley Road. The route will instead begin on Charles Keating Drive, turn on the Craighburn Drive inner loop to Waverley Road and continue inbound to the Mic Mac, Alderney and Bridge terminals. This routing is shown in green in Figure 1 below. The addition of service to Alderney Terminal has been much anticipated by the public and will result in a modest increase in service, despite the removal of service between Charles Keating Drive and Spider Lake.

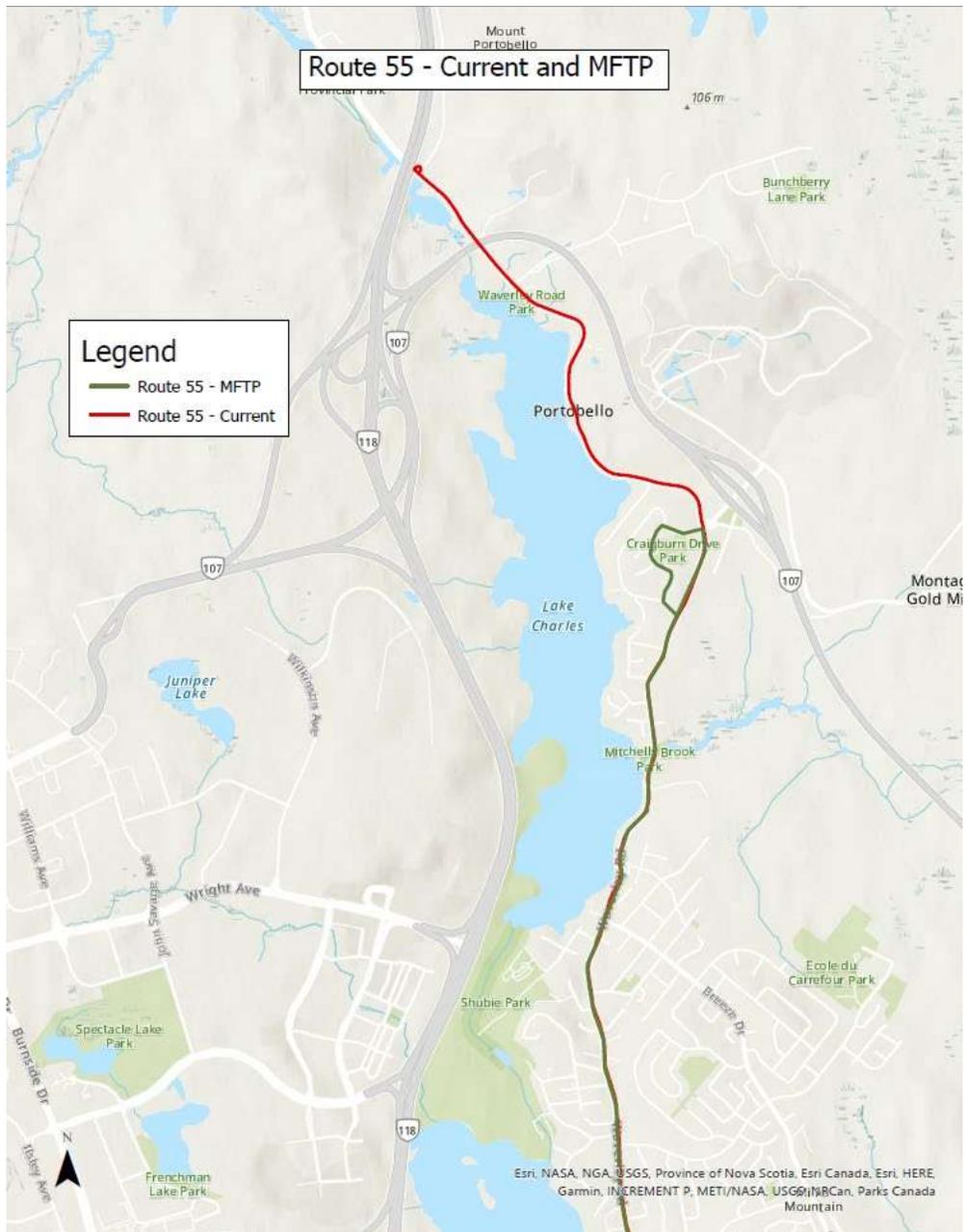


Figure 1: Route 55 Existing and Planned Routing

Rationale for the Routing Change

The *MFTP* included formal public and stakeholder engagement resulting in the values-based Moving Forward Principles, the foundation on which the plan is designed and all objectives, network changes, and policies were created. The plan includes four main principles, one being: Increase the proportion of resources allocated towards high ridership services.

Route 55 passenger boarding data from Craiburn Drive to the Portobello turning loop indicates consistently low ridership and a significantly high cost per passenger.

The second round of public engagement on the draft Plan was carried out over 10 weeks, from February 17– April 24, 2015. Engagement activities included the maketransitbetter.ca website, Pop-Up engagement events, stakeholder sessions, two public opinion research surveys, and an online survey.

Resources on the website included an introductory video, an interactive map, and the proposed changes to individual routes and communities. This background material provided residents with the information they needed prior to responding to surveys and sharing feedback.

Feedback Received during Engagement

Halifax Transit staff reviewed more than 20,000 comments received through this consultation period, and the revised MFTP addressed many of the concerns raised by the public. Halifax Transit received between 100-150 comments related to the proposed change to the Route 55. However, due to the continued low ridership, the routing recommended in the final plan was the same as that included in the draft plan. Since that time, ridership on average has dropped: In 2015, there were approximately 23 passengers boarding per day beyond Charles Keating Drive on the 21 trips. In 2019, that was to approximately 19 passengers per day on the same number of trips.

Community Concerns

In addition to feedback received through public engagement on the MFTP, the community has continued to express concern about the new routing. In summer 2020, the community submitted for consideration an online petition with 193 signatures.² Halifax Transit has also received comments from the public related to this petition. This petition identified several specific points of concern for members of the community:

- The community has grown since 2016 and limiting the bus service would disadvantage members of the community;
- Safety concerns on Waverly Road (lack of pedestrian/cycling facilities);
- Noise and safety concerns within the established residential community.

Staff Response to Community Concerns.

Although there may have been some residential or commercial growth near to the existing Route 55 since the plan was initially approved five years ago, observed ridership has not increased, and the cost to provide this service remains very high. Retaining this service would be contrary to the Moving Forward Principles, which direct staff to focus resources on high ridership services. It would also be inconsistent with other parts of the municipality where similarly underperforming routes have seen service reduced (for example Route 415) or eliminated (parts of the former Route 400 Beaver Bank).

As for concerns related to the lack of active transportation infrastructure, it is true that the are parts of the existing Route 55 which currently lack pedestrian and cycling amenities. The construction of sidewalks or bike lanes on this roadway is not currently programmed and are not likely to be implemented in the near term.

When new service is introduced on residential streets, Halifax Transit works with Transportation and Public Works to ensure there are no safety concerns along the route or at new bus stops. In most cases, buses stopping at bus stops generally slow down traffic in neighbourhoods rather than increase speeds, which is a common misperception. Halifax Transit buses travel daily along many suburban streets throughout the municipality. Operators undergo rigorous training and are accustomed to adhering to posted speed limits and driving safely on main roads, as well as in suburban neighbourhoods that include recreation facilities,

² There were 193 signatures on the change.org petition as of March 25, 2021.

parcs, and busy elementary and high schools. Buses have been tested along Craighburn Drive, and there are no issues anticipated. The width of Craighburn Drive is typical of many streets throughout HRM where buses operate successfully, and in fact is easier to navigate than some of the older residential streets in the other areas. As a result, Halifax Transit has verified that there are no safety issues associated with introducing a bus route on this street.

Bus routes contribute to supporting a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable community. Across Canada, research has shown that proximity to transit helps to increase property values. The community will benefit from the presence of transit by connecting residents along Craighburn Drive to the Alderney Ferry Terminal, providing faster and direct access to Downtown Dartmouth and Halifax.

The Route 55 bus will not idle on Craighburn Drive or in front of any homes in the neighbourhood. There is one bus stop where the bus will be required to wait before starting its route. This timepoint is located on Charles Keating Drive in front of a large retaining wall and was selected to avoid being next to residences.

Alternative Routing Options

Several additional options were considered before selecting the staff recommendation. They are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Alternatives to Charles Keating/Craighburn Routing

Routing	Change From MFTP	Cost Differential from MFTP routing ³	Staff Comment
Proposed MFTP/Annual Service Plan routing on Craighburn Drive	None. Staff recommend pursuing the routing identified in the MFTP which uses Charles Keating Drive and Craighburn Drive.	N/A	This routing is consistent with the principles of the MFTP, and is the same routing recommended in the approved plan.
Current routing on Waverley Road plus extension to serve Alderney Ferry Terminal	Turns at Portobello turning loop as per existing conditions. The route will still be extended to serve Alderney Terminal.	\$40k - \$50k estimated per year	This option would retain underperforming sections of the route and will serve Alderney Ferry Terminal and downtown Dartmouth as per the MFTP.
Alternate on street turning loop -	In this option, the route turns on to another street rather than Charles Keating Drive, such as Rocklin Drive, or the other portion of Craighburn Drive	Negligible or potential savings	This option is not likely to have any operational impact, and may result in time/cost savings, but would be likely to still create concerns for the local neighbourhood.
New off-street turning location	A turning loop would be created on a local property. The existing gravel parking area near the intersection of Waverley Road and Montague Road has been suggested.	Capital and operating costs for purchasing, constructing, and maintaining the new asset	This would require the acquisition of property for the construction of a turn around loop. This is likely to incur upfront and ongoing capital costs, as well as ongoing maintenance costs for snow clearing and state of good repair. It is unknown if any local properties owners would have an interest in selling land for this purpose. Costs for operating the transit service would be dependant on what parcel of land can be acquired and if there are additional kms/time required compared to on street routing.

³ Note that these represent planning level costs.

Costing Considerations and other Trade Offs

If Regional Council decides to direct staff to implement any option that requires additional travel time (i.e., continue servicing the Portobello turning loop), in addition to the budget required, Halifax Transit resources are required that are already accounted for including buses, staff, etc. Specifically, the proposed routing in the Annual Service Plan is anticipated to allow for a two-minute layover at Charles Keating Drive (subject to further detailed scheduling), so any option that requires additional travel time would likely require additional resources, including an additional bus. As the route changes in downtown Dartmouth already represent an overall increase in service, a modification at this time to retain the existing routing to Portobello turning loop would require reallocation of resources from another route, or a reduction in the overall service on this route. One option is to reduce frequency on the new Route 55 to accommodate this change. This reduction would be required at peak times and result either in fewer trips at peak, or an irregular schedule (such as a trip every 40 minutes instead of every 30 minutes). There are very limited options to reduce service on other routes to shift resources without compromising service in these same ways.

The Route 55 beyond Charles Keating Drive was specifically identified as one of the lowest performing route segments across the whole network in the MFTP. If the route were to be retained all the way to the Portobello Turning Loop, it would not be consistent with the Moving Forward Principle of focusing on higher ridership services.

Alternate routings, such as completing a larger loop around Craighburn Drive, or smaller loop at Rocklin Drive and Twilight Lane may be possible but have not been tested. It is not recommended that the Route 55 be shifted to these streets, as Craighburn Drive is equally if not more suitable for transit use, and there is no reason to believe that the concerns raised about the use of Craighburn Drive (i.e. noise) would be any less of an issue for the residents on alternate streets. In addition, using alternate streets could also have the impact of shortening the route, removing transit as a viable option for more residents.

The use of an off-street turning facility is not recommended, as it is more economical for Halifax Transit to make use of existing municipal roads. In addition to any capital costs associated with purchasing land and construction, ongoing operating funding would be required for repairs, maintenance, snow clearing, etc. Time, resources, and budget would be required to explore the purchase and construction of an off-street facility, and it is unknown if it could be completed in time for the upcoming November 2021 service changes. If Regional Council wishes to pursue this option, it is recommended that all changes to the Route 55 (including the modification to serve Alderney Ferry Terminal) be deferred until at least 2022/23 to allow time to explore this option further.

Conclusions

Staff recommend proceeding with the proposed routing on Craighburn Drive as approved in the MFTP and as shown in the Annual Service Plan.

If directed by Regional Council to implement an option other than the proposed Craighburn Drive routing, the preferred option would be to modify the Route 55 to travel on other, adjacent local streets. This routing maintains the integrity of the route for the majority of passengers (by not requiring a reduction in frequency or service span) and allows the route changes to occur without incurring the ongoing cost associated with a new off-street facility. However, it is not recommended, as there are no inherent safety risks associated with travelling on Craighburn Drive, no evidence that the route will be any more well received by residents of other streets and may shorten the route and remove access to transit for more residents.

Briefing Approved by:



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Briefing and Financial
Approval by:



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