



The operation of an efficient transit system has never been more important than it is today, given growing traffic congestion and the reality of global climate change.

To that end, members of Halifax Regional Council are now studying a new public transit Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan. Its recommendations are expected to help position our municipality to meet forthcoming public transportation needs in a timely and financially responsible fashion.

The fact is, our region is expected to grow by another 20,000 residents, to more than 400,000 by 2026. As well, the anticipation is for a substantial increase in the number of residents aged 55-and-over, something which will have important ramifications for our transit service.

The new report covers all the municipality's bus routes and proposes improvements where it feels they are needed.

As a reader of The Chebucto News, I thought it would be beneficial for us to update you on what the plan says about the main bus services in your area, namely: Route 14A Leiblin Park; Route 15 Purcells Cove; Route 20 Herring Cove/Route 19 Greystone; and Express Route 32 Cowie Hill.

Let's see what the new Five-Year Plan says about each of them.

[] Route 14A Leiblin Park – this route provides both a peninsula and a local service between the Mumford Terminal and Armdale and Leiblin Park on the south mainland. Passenger loads are above the standard in both cases, significantly so for the peninsula service. The report says the latter should be considered for a consistent 15-minute frequency during peak periods to 7 p.m. and a 30-minute off-peak service in the evenings until 10 p.m., and then 60 minutes until midnight.

Route 15 Purcell Cove – this route operates on a 60-minute frequency from the Mumford Terminal and serves the Purcell Cove corridor on the lower mainland. Its hours of service and passenger loads are standard for community routes so the Five-Year Plan is not recommending any changes.

[] Route 20 Herring Cove/Route 19 Greystone – this route services both the peninsula and the Herring Cove corridor, South Centre Mall at Dentith, Greystone and Herring Cove. The Five-Year Plan recommends Route 20 be extended to serve the Halifax Ferry Terminal, via George and Duke.

In terms of frequency, the new plan feels consideration needs to be given on Route 20 to providing 15-minute service during the daytime on peninsula section with 30-minute frequencies maintained to Herring Cove. In the off-peak periods to midnight, 30-minute service would be provided the full length of the route. The plan notes, however, to achieve these frequencies, the proposed Spryfield MetroLink service must be implemented. If it isn't, frequencies of 10 minutes will be required on Route 20, to reduce the overloading.

As for Route 19, which supplements Route 20 on the mainland between the Mumford Terminal and Greystone, other than switching peak service from every 12 minutes to every 15, no other changes are recommended.

[] Express Route 32 Cowie Hill – this peak period express route operates from the South Centre Mall and serves the Spryfield/Cowie Hill area on the lower mainland and Scotia Square/Spring Garden and Summer Street on the peninsula. The report recommends this service become a directional peak-period route to be operated on a limited-stop express basis in the corridors it serves. Frequencies would be decreased to 15 minutes during peak periods.

There's an awful lot of information in this new Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan and, I should remind you, it has yet to be approved. The document was expected to go before council Oct. 27 for discussion and, of course, as with all debates, everything is subject to change. We'll keep you apprised of what happens.

In the meantime, if you'd like to see a copy of the plan, you can find it at:

<http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/091027cow4plan.pdf>

Thank you so much for your time.

[] I'd welcome your input on this and any other HRM items of interest. Reach me here at City Hall at kellyp@halifax.ca or by phoning 490-4010.