

News Release

HRM's New Transit Implementation Strategy to be Unveiled

(Monday, April 14/08)-- Halifax Regional Council will get its first glimpse at a proposed \$155 million capital budget plan to expand and enhance Metro Transit operations over the next five years.

The plan, to be presented at tomorrow's Committee of the Whole meeting, includes such things as a new transit garage, a downtown shuttle service, local rural transportation service, Metro Link expansion, upgrades to transit terminals, new fare payment options, added security and a new high-speed Harbour ferry service.

Mayor Peter Kelly said " From 2002 to 2006, Metro Transit increased its ridership by more than 27 per cent. The demand is there but we are unable to even meet our present demands, let alone the needs over the next five years, unless we adopt a strategy. We've got to get more people out of their vehicles and onto public transit. The only way to do that is provide more and better transit options."

To achieve better and expanded service, staff are proposing a new transit corridor across Halifax peninsula, a new and larger terminal in the Lacewood area of Clayton Park and a new satellite garage on the Halifax side of the harbour to accommodate an expanded transit fleet.

Staff state that unless there is a new \$25 million transit garage, there can be no further transit expansion beyond 2009. The proposed \$27 million for expanded conventional transit service and a recommended \$13.2 million for enhanced Metro Link service depend on the new garage facility. The satellite garage also impacts the proposed \$4.9 million earmarked for a downtown shuttle service.

Terminal upgrades have been estimated at \$5.7 million and a new electronic fare collection system would cost \$1.9 million.

HRM would look for local partnerships to provide transportation options with, and between, rural centres for medical, employment, education, shopping and social travel.

\$1.5 million would be set aside for this.

The much talked-about HarbourLink, providing high-speed ferry service on Halifax Harbour, Bedford Basin and eventually the North West Arm, would cost an estimated \$27 million.

Mayor Kelly said "Affordable and convenient modes of public transit will not only help reduce traffic congestion, more importantly, they will also help HRM reduce its environmental footprint by cutting down on our greenhouse gas emissions."

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Mayor Peter Kelly
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