



MEETING OF THE ST. JOHN'S TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

REGULAR BUSINESS

A meeting of the St. John's Transportation was held on Thursday, June 25, 2020 at Noon virtually online and streamed live via Webex.

Present at the meeting were:

Ian Froude	Chair/Councillor
Shawn Skinner	Vice Chair
Dave Lane	Commissioner/City Councillor
Hope Jamieson	Commissioner/City Councillor
Kevin Breen	City Manager
Derek Coffey	Deputy City Manager, Financial Management
Paul Walsh	Commissioner
Kirsten Morry	Commissioner
Judy Powell	General Manager
Linda Ryan	Administrative Assistant

Absent: Colleen Galgay Commissioner

I. PROCEDURAL

- The Chair called the meeting to order.
- L. Ryan recorded the minutes of the meeting.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

- It was moved by Commissioner Lane and seconded by Commissioner Walsh that a modified agenda (in terms of order of items) for this meeting date be approved.
- It was moved by Vice Chair Skinner and seconded by Commissioner Lane that the minutes of the Commission meeting dated May 28, 2020 be adopted as distributed.

III. BUSINESS ARISING

1. COVID-19—Update

➤ CURRENT RIDERSHIP

- Ridership is currently at a 36% overall average compared to June, 2019 levels. Since Alert Level 3 became effective on June 8th, there has been a slight increase in ridership. During the current week, on a daily basis, ridership is at 45% of normal levels. A significant increase is not anticipated with Alert Level 2.
- Since the maximum capacity increased to 19 passengers, there has been one (1) incident where a customer had to be denied boarding due to on-board maximum capacity. Service will continue to be closely monitored over the next several weeks.
- GoBus ridership is currently operating at an average of 28% ridership on a daily basis and will be returning to regular service hours of service on June 29th
- The General Manager and Manager, Accessible Services continue to attend weekly CUTA COVID-19 webinars.

➤ TRANSIT OPERATOR RECRUITMENT

- An ad was recently placed for the next Transit Operator Training Program to commence in July. Applicants are currently being screened for interviews, and training is expected to be completed by August.
- Vice Chair Skinner inquired, due to exceptional circumstances, about the potential to bring back retired transit operators on a call-in basis. The General Manager informed that there has been some discussion regarding this issue and that of semi-retirement for transit operators. Due to complications including restrictions under the Pension Plan, however, there has been no further movement on this item.

1. COVID-19—Update (Continued)

➤ **TRANSIT OPERATOR RECRUITMENT** (Continued)

- The General Manager advised that permanent transit operators are needed in the longer term and it is more advantageous at this time, to run a formal training program for potential new recruits.

➤ **SEPTEMBER, 2020 SERVICE**

- The Chair called for a decision at the next regular business meeting to be held in July regarding September, 2020 service, when more ridership data is available, and asked if members were comfortable with the deferral.
- Commissioner Walsh agreed that he would like to see a few weeks of experience data with Level III prior to make any decision with respect to the fall schedule.
- The Vice Chair noted that post secondary institutions (not including Memorial University or College of the North Atlantic) in the Province have submitted proposals/plans to the Department of Education for resuming in-person classes in September. A response has not yet been received whether or not the request has been approved.
- Commissioner Jamieson opined there should be flexibility if additional service is needed,
- K. Breen questioned if the amount of lead time necessary for staff to implement a new schedule would be sufficient if a decision were delayed until the next meeting, and what kind of pressure that would put on the Commission.
- The Chair indicated there is time pressure in this regard; however, based on the background work previously done by Metrobus staff in developing a shift pick for transit operators based on various scenarios, there is a possibility of waiting until the third week in July to make a decision regarding service levels for the fall,
- The General Manager confirmed that shift picks have been arranged for transit operator work schedules based on current service levels, as well as a potential summer schedule for the Fall. As discussed at the previous meeting, if the Commission were to decide to choose additional/alternate service for September, the gaps could be temporarily filled for a brief period until a new work schedule is in place. However, a decision would be needed no later than the third week in July in order to make any necessary adjustments to the current schedule and prepare customer schedules, infoposts, communications, advertisements, AVL and website content, etc. The earlier a decision can be made, the better to prepare all the background information; but the third week in July would be the latest.
- D. Coffey asked if other transit systems across Canada are anticipating lower service levels or modified service for September.
- The General Manager noted that most post-secondary institutions across Canada have made the decision to hold virtual classes in September. Most transit systems are recording ridership levels currently at anywhere between 22-50%, and are not anticipating ridership to increase beyond 65-75% of regular ridership levels in the Fall. It is her understanding that many are planning for modified services in the Fall. Toronto, for example is planning to remain at 85% service until they reach over 50% ridership before considering a review to increase in their service levels.
- Commissioner Jamieson inquired if there is a benchmark statistic at which the Commission might consider increasing service levels.
- The General Manager indicated that the Commission could certainly consider that. For example, if the summer schedule (as a percentage of the regular/full fall schedule) is at 89.2% of service levels (i.e. hours of service on the road as a percentage of regular service hours on the road), at what trigger point would the Commission consider moving to regular service.
- It was agreed that this item be deferred until July 23rd when more ridership data is available and the parameters can be determined to help arrive at a decision.
- Members will be asked to consider the following at the July meeting:
 - whether or not to maintain the existing (COVID-19) schedule in the Fall
 - implement another/modified level of service (such as summer schedule)
 - if the planned enhancements to the Frequent Transit Network (FTN) will proceed

2. POLICY—REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

➤ BACKGROUND: CONTACT TRACING REQUEST BY EASTERN HEALTH

- At the regular May business meeting of the Commission, the General Manager informed members that on April 11th, Eastern Health informed Metrobus that a person who had tested positive for COVID-19 had used public transit two (2) days prior, on April 9th. Metrobus was subsequently requested by Eastern Health to assist with contact tracing of anyone who may have travelled on the identified routes.
- The General Manager was asked by Vice Chair Skinner to review protocol surrounding a request for information from an official body about an individual during a state of emergency, the release of information under the ATIPPA Act, the appropriate steps to be followed, and develop a formal policy surrounding this issue in the event of any future requests.

➤ DRAFT POLICY—RELEASE OF PRIVATE INFORMATION

- A draft policy as submitted by the General Manager was tabled for members' review on this meeting date.
- Vice Chair Skinner thanked the General Manager and staff for preparing the draft policy in time for members to review and comment for the June meeting. Vice Chair Skinner noted for discussion, the following items pertaining to the draft document:

➤ VERIFICATION OF AUTHORITY TO MAKE A REQUEST

- As a potential area of concern, the Vice Chair suggested that some form of verification of a person's authority to request the information be required and recorded.
- The General Manager noted that the information provided by the person somewhat legitimizes the request (for example, in the case of contact tracing, if accurate details pertaining to routes, dates, etc. are being immediately provided, without staff having to gather information); returning the call is also helpful in verification.
- The intent is to identify the specific nature of information required and the purpose for which it will be used. Only the information that has been specifically requested will be provided, and the most secure way to transfer the information will be determined before its release. □

➤ ACTION SIGNATURE

- The intent is to forward the completed Request for Information Form to the General Manager or, in her absence, her designate for approval. □The approved request would be forwarded to the Operations Manager, or in his absence, his designate, who will coordinate release of information to the official body.
- It was suggested that a space be added to the form itself for the General Manager's signature to indicate final approval and that the release of information has been completed.

➤ RETENTION OF REQUEST FOR INFORMATION FORMS

- It was agreed that a bullet be added to the draft document regarding the length of time completed requests for information are to be retained, by whom and the location of such files.

➤ CONFIDENTIALITY

- The Vice Chair suggested that whoever is involved in the process of gathering personal information in such cases be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

ACTION:

It was moved by Vice Chair Skinner, seconded by Commissioner Walsh and carried unanimously that the policy be supported with the key amendments as noted in the discussion above.

- The Vice Chair expressed his appreciation to the General Manager and staff for their efforts and for the information contained in the policy.

3. Governance Training—Commissioners

NOTE: *This item was missed during the regular business meeting and subsequently discussed during the in camera meeting of this date, which immediately followed.*

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. GoBus RFP—Update

- The General Manager and Donna Power, Manager, Accessible Services held calls with Transit Consultant Lou Carpentier regarding preliminary work that has commenced and next steps in the preparation of an RFP for para-transit services in preparation for the end of the current GoBus contract.
- Mr. Carpentier will also review and prepare a summary of how other paratransit systems deliver their respective services, how their contracts are structured and compensation for private contractors, including an analysis that would best suit the Commission's needs.
- Consultation with the disability community is planned for Fall, 2020. D. Power is working on the focus for these consultations and how to obtain feedback.
- The goal is to have a draft of an RFP will be ready for early 2021. The contract with MVT expires in December 31, 2021.

2. Downtown Pedestrian Mall

- The General Manager informed that changes announced by the City regarding the new downtown pedestrian mall during the summer will impact current Metrobus routes, necessitating detours in the area. Metrobus' Transit Planner has contacted City staff and is working out the details of the detours.
- A decision is to be made whether to keep detours in place at all times throughout the summer, or only during the time Water Street is open to pedestrians (Noon—10 PM). It was noted that if detours were to remain in place at all times, it might be less confusing for customers.
- A discussion ensued surrounding a number of options to facilitate transit culture and support this new initiative by the City, including creating new express transit routes to the downtown and park-and-ride services. The availability of potential secured parking areas throughout the City (including MUN, CONA, and Confederation Building lots, as well as City-owned properties) was also discussed.
- The General Manager cautioned that in terms of efficiencies, up to a maximum of only 19 passengers (50% of regular capacity) can be accommodated on transit buses as per public health guidelines and regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- D. Coffey noted that relevant to costing, uptake on more recent park-and-ride shuttles has been significantly low.
- It was agreed that Metrobus be proactive in promoting its existing routes to the downtown in support of the pedestrian mall.

3. PTIF Projects

➤ Fare Collection and Taxis

- The General Manager noted that a decision to address the issue of collecting GoBus fares on taxis via the use of fare collection technology (for example, portable, electronic GoCard readers) had been approved previously by the Commission (January 24, 2019) as part of the recommendations from the Dillon Report.
- There is, however, no clear minute which addresses approval of this item in a specific context. Under Phase II of the new PTIF application process, a minute must be provided wherein the project has been approved by the Commission and the required portion of funding, in accordance with PTIF stipulations, is in place at the municipal level of government. The General Manager advised that a minute is needed as of this date to proceed with the PTIF application.
- The cost of this item to be made in application under PTIF is estimated at \$350,000 plus taxes, for an approximate total project cost of \$400,000.
- The technology package will also enable fare payments to be made via mobile phone on board conventional transit. The main issue, however, is to address the urgent concern of fare collection on taxis.
- The payback period (which includes licensing fees) is estimated approximately one year.

ACTION:

It was moved by K. Breen, seconded by D. Coffey and approved unanimously that this item be approved for application under PTIF.

3. PTIF Projects (Continued)

• Sidewalk Upgrades

A request has been received from City staff members Krista Babbage and Gary Caul working on sidewalk upgrades in the area of Gloucester Street and Ridge Road, along Metrobus routes 9, 14 and 23. Because these routes are accessible, they have asked Metrobus to partner in application for funding under the PTIF program (wherein 73% would potentially be funded by the federal government and 27% of funding by the municipality).

- There would be no cost to Metrobus, rather the intent is that funding would come through the City's capital budget. Because it would flow through PTIF and public transit stream, it is necessary to bring it to the Commission for consideration.

ACTION:

It was moved by Commissioner Walsh, seconded by Commissioner Jamieson and carried unanimously that this item be approved for application in partnership with the City.

4. Financial Statements—May, 2020

- The monthly financial statements for the period ending May 31, 2020 were tabled and reviewed.

5. Executive Summaries: (Regular)

- The Executive Summary for the month of May, 2020 was tabled and reviewed.

6. Letter to Eastern Health

- In reference to an RFP issued by Eastern Health relevant to the parking challenges resulting from the construction of the new adult mental health and addictions facility, the Chair offered that Metrobus would like an opportunity to discuss with the CEO of Eastern Health, a possible role for public transit in addressing some of the transportation needs for their staff (i.e. requirement of 100 parking spaces within a 10 kilometres of their facility). A draft letter to this effect was tabled and discussed.

- The Health Sciences Centre is well serviced via regular routes operating from many areas of the City with over 100 Metrobus arrivals at Clinch Crescent on a typical weekday.

- Encouraging transit use (possibly through an employer pass program) would reduce the amount of traffic in and around the parking lots of the Health Sciences Centre, reducing congestion and emissions.

- Additionally, if a contract is secured for an external parking lot through the recent RFP process, public transit may be an option for travel to and from the parking lot.

- Members fully supported the engagement of the Eastern Health Authority in this respect.

- The Chair will write Eastern Health, as per the draft letter tabled, and invite discussions with respect to this item.

7. Winter Semester Pass

- A semester pass is essentially a package of four (4) monthly passes at a discounted rate.

- Twelve hundred (1,200) active semester cards were issued for the January – April 2020 session; 460 of which had no rides between March 17th and April 30th.

- If a refund is to be considered, the General Manager recommended refunding only the April portion of the pass and providing an account credit (up to a two (2) -year expiry date) to use towards a future pass purchase rather than processing refunds.

- If a credit were to be given for the April portion of the pass ($275 \times 1/4 = \$68.75$), the potential refund total would be \$31,625 (460×68.75).

- D. Coffey noted that the majority of students elected to use their pass for reasons other than school during the shutdown period.

- The Chair noted that a number of factors are to be considered, including students in residence were encouraged to leave and return home for the remainder of the semester.

7. Winter Semester Pass (Continued)

ACTION:

- After some discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Jamieson and seconded by Commissioner Morry that credit be given for the April portion cost of the semester pass upon request (application made by email or phone call).
- The Chair, Vice Chair Skinner and Commissioner Lane voted in favour of the motion.
- Commissioner Walsh, D. Coffey and K. Breen voted against.
- The total vote was five to three in favour. The motion stands.

8. Financial Statements

- The financials for the month of May, 2020 were tabled and reviewed.

9. Executive Summary (Regular)

- The Executive Summary for the month of May, 2020 was tabled and reviewed. The following item was among those noted:

Route Numbers on Bus Stop Signs

- Commissioner Morry inquired regarding route numbers on signs at bus stops.
- The General Manager noted that this item is part of a broader discussion by the Marketing Committee regarding bus stop design.
- The Chair advised that this item is on the agenda for the next meeting of the Marketing Committee. A meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

V. OTHER (Information/Community)

There was no other business to discuss at this time.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further regular business to discuss at this time, Commissioner Walsh moved and Vice Chair Skinner moved that the meeting be adjourned; live streaming ended at approximately 1:00 PM, immediately followed by an in-camera business meeting of the Commission.
- Commission meetings are generally held the last Thursday of every month. However, due to vacations, the next regular business meeting of the Commission will be held one (1) week earlier, on Thursday, July 23, 2020 commencing at Noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Ian Froude
Chair

Linda Ryan
Administrative Assistant