



**Meeting of the St. John's Transportation Commission
Thursday, February 24, 2022 12:00pm
Via WebEx**

REGULAR BUSINESS

In attendance:

Paul Walsh	Chair
Ian Froude	Vice-Chair/City Councillor
Kirsten Morry	Commissioner
Tolulope Akerele	Commissioner
Ron Ellsworth	Commissioner/City Councillor
Lynn Zurel	Commissioner
Maggie Burton	Commissioner/City Councillor
Derek Coffey	Deputy City Manager, Financial Management
Judy Powell	General Manager
Donna Power	Administrative Assistant

Regrets:

Kevin Breen	City Manager
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I. PROCEDURAL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM. Donna Power recorded the minutes of the meeting.

II. AGENDA/MINUTES

Agenda:

MOTION: To approve the agenda as presented.
Moved by Commissioner Morey; seconded by Commissioner Zurel. Motion Carried.

Minutes:

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the January 26, 2022 regular meeting as presented.
Moved by Vice Chair Froude; seconded by Commissioner Morey. Motion Carried.

III. BUSINESS ARISING

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. General Manager's Report

The General Manager's Report was introduced as a way to inform agenda items in advance and improve meeting efficiency.

Discussion points arising from the report:

- Costs associated with the radio system were not included in the 2022 budget as the necessary information was not available at the time the budget was prepared. The budget will need to be adjusted to cover the expense.
- A yearly fixed number of new shelters is not built into the budget since it is contingent on funding. There is funding in the amount of \$80,000 that is dedicated to shelter work; this is being used to leverage additional funding through federal/provincial/municipal partnerships.
- Signage has been posted indicating that the shelter (opposite The Gathering Place) will be removed if vandalism/excessive garbage continues. All other options will be considered before removing the shelter.
- There are 580 GoBus eligibility assessments (for existing customers) currently outstanding. Telus has hired additional staff to support this contract. It is anticipated that the monthly volume of assessments will increase in March. A defined monthly target/minimum and follow-up reporting from Telus was requested by the Commission to maintain accountability. (Discussion around contractual obligations with Telus was added to the In-Camera meeting agenda.)
- The General Manager spoke with the interim CEO of the Mary Brown's Centre regarding concerns with the bus shelter in the Convention Centre. The CEO will take the issue to their Board for discussion and will follow up when more information is available.

2. Agenda/Meeting Content

Commissioner Zurel expressed concern that operational matters, which are the responsibility of staff and management, often end up before the Commission for discussion. Such issues can be reported directly to staff and management and should only rise to the Commission level if support or direction is required. The new General Manager's report will allow for more efficient use of the Commission's time.

Other Commission members noted agreement that the focus should be on higher level issues such as policy and strategy, and that the new General Manager's report will support this intention.

3. Shelter Van

The current van used for shelter maintenance is in need of replacement. The cost has been budgeted in 2022. A motion of approval is required to support the funding application through ICIP.

MOTION: To apply to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) for funding to replace the shelter van.

Moved by Vice Chair Froude; seconded by Commissioner Burton. Motion carried.

4. Strategic Directions

Chair Walsh reviewed some of the goals/directions from the current strategic plan, highlighting some that have been completed and others that are underway.

The General Manager noted that the City is preparing a public document that outlines their strategic goals for 2022, including transit related goals, and they have requested a submission from the Commission as soon as possible.

Ensuing discussion identified several priority areas – a mix of strategic directions and operational goals – including:

- Establishing ridership and mode-share goals
- Increasing accessibility on conventional transit
- Enhancing paratransit contract
- Developing an electrification plan
- Increasing the shelter to bus stop ratio
- Improving snow clearing

ACTION: The General Manager will compile a short list of items to include in the City's document and circulate to the Commission for comment by Monday, Feb 28, 2022.

Subsequent discussion by email yielded the following list of goals which was submitted to the City on February 28, 2022.

Implement select recommendations from the Public Transit Review

- Implementation of an automated onboard stop announcement system to improve accessibility on all Metrobus routes by December 31, 2022
- Improve transit accessibility through installing bus shelters at ten new locations by October 31, 2022
- Evaluate effectiveness of on demand software for paratransit and identify opportunities for a pilot of on demand service on Metrobus service by September 30, 2022

Other initiatives:

- Completion and adoption of an electrification plan for public transit by September 30, 2022
- Commence the development of an accessibility plan for transit by September 30, 2022
- Improve the customer experience through the introduction of new smart card features (mCard and Go-Card) for customers including instant reloading of passes, save my days feature and automatic reloads by March 31, 2022

5. Active Transportation Fund

Commissioner Akerele highlighted a document previously shared with the Commission (*Active Transportation Fund – Applicant Guide*) as a tool to help maximize funds for projects that align with active transportation goals. Funding can be leveraged for projects such as customer surveys to analyze who Metrobus is serving and if expectations are being met. The fund could also be used to purchase such things as benches and shelters.

The General Manager added that there is a need to examine transit's role within the integrated mobility plan for the City. More work will be done in this area in 2023.

6. Financial Statements – January 2022

Commissioner Zurel asked for clarification around the discrepancy between budgeted and actual taxi trips for GoBus, and if it can be inferred that the new system is allowing better utilization of buses than in the past. The General Manager cautioned that it may be premature to draw that conclusion. The difference is more reflective of the reduced ridership level overall.

Commissioner Zurel asked why the percentage of GoBus customers riding Metrobus is higher this year than previously. The General Manager noted that ridership in total is lower. Additionally, people with higher mobility are still using Metrobus while those feeling more vulnerable are not traveling as much.

Commissioner Zurel asked how the Community Bus is being funded given that support from the Commission and Council has not translated into funding. The General Manager noted that an application for funding has been submitted through ICIP, but to date no response has been received. Vice Chair Froude requested that the Marketing Committee be engaged to examine how ridership on the Community Bus can be increased.

V. OTHER

Re. Paratransit Bus Tender Award E-Poll

Subsequent to the Commission's approval on Feb 7, 2022 to award the tender to Western Bus for 18 new buses for GoBus, Western Bus advised that they could not meet the fuel tank specifications and, due to price fluctuations, could no longer provide the buses at the quoted price. Therefore, their bid was disqualified.

The new recommendation is to award the tender to the next lowest bidder, Crestline Coach Ltd. An e-poll was conducted on February 23, 2022 on the following recommendation:

To rescind the previous motion approving the purchase of 18 paratransit buses from Western Bus and to approve the purchase of 18 gasoline powered paratransit vehicles from Crestline Coach Ltd.

Votes were cast by email.

Votes in favour: 5 Recommendation approved.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further regular business to discuss at this time, the meeting adjourned at approximately 1:04 PM.

MOTION: To adjourn the regular business meeting
Moved by Commissioner Morey; seconded by Commissioner Burton. Motion carried.