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Terminal troubles **Transit expansion to affect Sportsplex parking, Dartmouth High and Common land /5**

Halifax News Net

By Joanie Veitch – The Weekly News

With 17,000 passengers a day getting on and off buses at Metro Transit's Bridge Terminal, it's clear the coming expansion is needed, but the proposed design will cut off about 150 parking spots for the Dartmouth Sportsplex. That's about 35 per cent of the busy facility's total parking capacity.

"Throughout the year we have a parking problem 82 per cent of the year. We can't lose any more parking," said general manager Bob Quigley.

Last November, the provincial legislature amended the Municipal Government Act to allow expansion of the existing bridge terminal onto a maximum six acres of the adjacent Dartmouth Common Land.

Metro Transit spokesperson Lori Patterson said the new terminal, as currently planned, will take up approximately 2.5 to three acres along Nantucket Avenue, from the terminal's existing location up to the crosswalk at McDonald's.

In planning the expansion, Patterson said Metro Transit officials met with area councillors, representatives from the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission, the committee for the Dartmouth Common Master Plan, the Dartmouth Sportsplex and Dartmouth High School.

Although Quigley said he has been aware of the proposed terminal expansion for some time, it was just three weeks ago when the parking issue for the Sportsplex became apparent.

Given the public value the Sportsplex provides area residents, Quigley said he's confident the various groups will be able to work out a solution.

"We're very supportive of the bus terminal expansion and are working with the municipality on it. Various options have already been discussed and I have a lot of faith it will get worked out," he said.

The Sportsplex isn't the only group with some concerns about the proposed plan for the expanded terminal. Some members of the Dartmouth High School community staged a protest last week on Nantucket Avenue, saying they were concerned about the loss of some Dartmouth Common land for the new structure — specifically the naturalized wilderness park adjacent to the school property, which would see about one-third go to the new facility.

Although Patterson had not heard a specific complaint from Dartmouth High School when she spoke to The Weekly News, she acknowledged some people may not want to see any Dartmouth Common land being used for the project.

Metro Transit officials looked at several different options, opting for the proposed site because there are no residences in the immediate area, she said.

"What better use of Common land than to have a public facility that can be used by everyone?"

The expanded terminal's design will be similar to the new one at Portland Hills, with an enclosed building and enhanced safety and security features.

Patterson wouldn't say how much the proposed expansion will cost, as the tender for the construction project had just closed last week, only that it would be "several million dollars."

The project will go to municipal council for approval in July. The terminal should be completed by winter 2010.

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Passengers wait for their buses at the bus terminal beside the Sportsplex in Dartmouth.

DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS

- * Efficient terminal layout, designed to significantly decrease delays for buses and passengers accessing the terminal, particularly during peak service hours
 - * Enhanced safety and security measures
 - * Fully enclosed, heated/air conditioned terminal waiting area
 - * Fully accessible to allow for Accessible Low Floor (ALF) routes and mobility-impaired passengers
 - * 16 bus bays, eight of which will accommodate articulated buses
 - * Passenger access to buses from the curb, rather than in active bus lanes
 - * Environmentally-conscious design and construction
- Source: HRM
Source: Halifax Regional Municipality
(www.halifax.ca/metrotransit/BridgeTerminalExpansion.html)

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