

TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES

Overview

Transportation and traffic movements within downtown Halifax require the integration of sustainable transportation practices and land use. Within the Regional Municipal Planning Strategy, transportation policy addresses how built form and transportation impact one another, while reducing the environmental impacts of growth. The same holds true for downtown Halifax. To create a city where the built form encourages pedestrian activity, and maintains an efficient system of moving people throughout, in and out of the downtown, sustainable transportation options and a strong vision are required.

HRMbyDesign's Focus on Transportation

The basis for any transportation policy is the network within which it functions. The street network is a key component to moving people and goods. It is therefore important that the changes and improvements to the streets within the downtown core be addressed through the development of a street network plan, and improved streetscaping program providing the opportunity for downtown Halifax to become a vibrant area day and night.

Active Transportation

Active transportation is a key focus of HRMbyDesign's Transportation chapter of the new Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy. Generally it will defer to Council's Active Transportation Plan for guidance. For more information, see page 3 of this fact sheet.

Waterfront Trail

A waterfront trail is a significant component of the development of an active transportation network. This trail will not only connect communities to one another, but will also enable connections to be made to other parks, open spaces and natural areas.



Enhanced & Expanded Public Transit

Building on the goals of the Regional Plan, access to downtown should be significantly enhanced through investment in public transportation, which will provide a real alternative to the dependence on the automobile. Development in turn should be provided at appropriate densities to support continued transit use. Transit should become a universally acceptable and accessible means of transportation.

HRMbyDesign has identified the following priorities for enhancing public transit in downtown Halifax:

- a. A downtown shuttle;
- b. High speed ferry system;
- c. An upgraded major transit hub at Scotia Square or other central downtown location; and
- d. Annual additions to the bus fleet.



Parking

Key to encouraging the use of alternative modes of transportation, including active modes and public transit, is providing disincentives to drive.

A **Regional Parking Strategy** is underway that will provide guidance on appropriate parking ratios and requirements to enable a cash-in-lieu of parking system, which would help fund enhancements to the downtown transit infrastructure. Until that strategy is completed and implemented through amendments in the Downtown Plan, provisions will be established in the Land Use By-law to exempt downtown developments from the requirement to provide on-site parking, in order to encourage alternative forms of transportation. The design guidelines prohibit surface parking throughout much of the downtown and require that parking structures, when provided, be integrated within a development project with the parking function not readily apparent. Design guidelines will address the proper integration of these facilities along downtown streetscapes.

Transportation & Streetscape Design Functional Plan

The new Downtown Halifax Secondary Municipal Planning Strategy recommends the development of a Transportation & Streetscape Design Functional Plan to implement the Regional Plan objectives related to transportation within the downtown core of Halifax. The plan will promote enhanced transit service for downtown Halifax and address the following matters:

- a. Designation of corridors for transit;
- b. Provisions for cash-in-lieu of parking in support of transit investment; and
- c. Measures to mitigate the impacts of truck traffic on downtown streets.

Transportation Master Plan

An important component of the Regional Plan is investment in public transportation. The Transportation Master Plan addresses future public transportation services for urban, suburban and rural areas of HRM. These plans include improvements to core transit services along with a number of innovative new services including high speed ferry service, bus rapid transit, express bus service and rural and community transit services.



Downtown Shuttle

Transit services including MetroLink, harbor ferry service and the future express bus service all terminate in downtown Halifax at or near the Scotia Square Transit Terminal, or are planned to do so. There is a need to provide a frequent shuttle service connecting these services throughout the rest of the downtown area including the hospitals and universities as well as attractions such as the public gardens and shopping districts for visitors to HRM. Plans include the introduction of a permanent free downtown shuttle service to meet this need. In response to concerns regarding noise and fumes from the number of transit buses already operating throughout the downtown streets, the downtown shuttle will be serviced using two new diesel-electric hybrid buses. The shuttle is estimated to get underway in 2009, following ongoing public consultations on possible routes, schedules and stops.



Fast Ferry

HRM's Five-Year Transit Plan - approved by Regional Council in April 2008 - includes funding for the initiation of HarbourLink, a

project which would create high speed ferry transit between Bedford and downtown Halifax. Development of additional high speed ferry routes around the harbour may follow in future phases. Work is currently underway to scope out the project, but it is known that the service will begin with two ferries large enough to carry up to 350 passengers, and travel at a speed between 24 and 30 knots (45 to 55 km/h) - or about four times the speed of our existing ferries.

MetroLink Expansion

Bus Rapid Transit (MetroLink) currently offers commuters Park & Ride facilities at two major terminals with frequent, limited stop bus service into downtown. A number of transit priority measures are employed to provide buses with a travel advantage over automobiles traveling the same routes. HRM plans to expand on the success of existing MetroLink routes by offering service from Clayton Park and Spryfield, with additional expansion possible over the life of the Five-Year Transit Plan.

Rural Express Transit

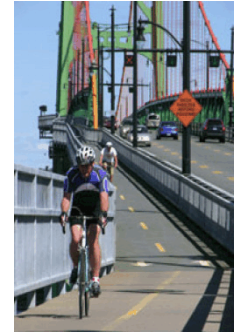
The need for public transportation extends well beyond the major metropolitan area into the smaller suburban and rural communities of HRM. Park & Ride and Express Bus service from outlying areas provides a fast, efficient and convenient transportation option to the single occupant vehicle. Characteristics such as limited stops, transit signal priorities and queue jump lanes will expedite bus travel through key intersections. Express Bus service will make use of 100 series highways and serve strategically located Park & Ride facilities in the rural commuter areas. Express Bus service will be integrated with conventional transit services, a downtown shuttle service, MetroLink service and harbour ferry services.

Active Transportation Plan

The Active Transportation Plan was approved in principle by Regional Council in 2006.

The Plan is a comprehensive document that provides policy direction for the development of an Active Transportation Network within HRM. As well, technical guidelines have been created for the planning and design of the network.

It is anticipated that promotion and education will be fundamental to the increase in the number of residents using active modes of transportation for their day-to-day activities.



For more information:

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