


**Transportation Standing Committee  
January 9, 2012**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Transportation Standing Committee



**SUBMITTED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Eddie Robar, Director, Metro Transit

**DATE:** December 12, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Metro Transit Universal Accessibility Plan

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**ORIGIN**

Completion of the Metro Transit Universal Accessibility Plan by IBI Group (RFP #10-088).

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend to Halifax Regional Council the approval in principle of the Universal Accessibility Plan and direct staff to use the plan on a go-forward basis as guidance in the development and implementation of Universal Accessibility standards and policies for transit.

## **BACKGROUND**

On November 29, 2010, IBI Group was awarded RFP #10-088 to undertake a study with respect to Universal Accessibility for Metro Transit. Metro Transit has also recently completed a Strategic Plan for the Access-a-Bus system; this study was intended to compliment that plan, increasing the cohesiveness of the two systems. The study included the examination of several categories that jointly impact the provision of accessible transit service in HRM:

- Legislative Environment;
- Infrastructure and Technology;
- Operations; and
- Marketing and Communications.

The key objectives of this project were to:

- Examine current practices;
- Engage the public and various stakeholders in the examination of current and proposed policies with respect to universal accessibility;
- Identify current risks and gaps;
- Identify potential future risks and gaps based on an evolving legislative environment and public expectations;
- Develop plans to mitigate these risks and gaps and improve the overall accessibility of the fixed-route bus and ferry systems;
- Identify solutions that can be fully integrated across HRM/Metro Transit; and
- Prepare a prioritized list and implementation schedule for potential improvements.

While there is currently little legislation that governs the provision of accessible transit service in Nova Scotia, the trends across North America are increasingly moving toward strong legislation rather than voluntary compliance. As examples, the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* governs transit accessibility in the United States, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* provides similar governance in the Province of Ontario. While universal accessibility is important regardless of any legislative requirements, it is reasonable to expect that similar legislation could become law in Nova Scotia in the future. Approval in principle of the Universal Accessibility Plan will allow Metro Transit to move forward with developing and implementing Universal Accessibility standards and policies.

## **DISCUSSION**

IBI Group was tasked with engaging the community, HRM staff, and various stakeholders in discussions concerning the current state of Metro Transit's accessibility. The first round of public consultation sessions and stakeholder meetings were conducted in March of 2011. These sessions were open to all HRM residents who were interested in more information or wished

discuss barriers to accessibility. Stakeholder participants included representatives from the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) and the CNIB. A second, follow up round of consultations took place in May 2011, focusing on developing a strategic approach for improving accessibility.

In addition to the above, IBI Group also conducted an audit of Metro Transit's current accessibility, as well as reviewing existing industry standards in both Canada and the United States, and the legislative environment.

The resultant study recommends a variety of improvements and implementation strategies as well as estimated budget implications and suggested timelines. It should be noted that there is currently no budget for any of the recommendations outlined in this plan. Including any recommendations with budget implications in the five year budget plan would result in deferral of other capital projects. However, there are some no-cost improvements that could be implemented in the short term. The following is a summary of the recommended actions:

**Summary and Suggested Timelines**

Universal Design Element	Goal / Requirement	Timeframe	Potential Financial Impact
HRM <i>Municipal Design Guidelines</i>	Reference Section 5.4	Immediate	None – use of existing staff resources
<b>Information &amp; Communication</b>			
Instructional Videos	Provide means for equal access to communication. For example, subtitles	Medium Term	Minimal – typically programming requirement
Public Address	Provide means for equal access to communication. For example, visual messages	Medium Term	Minimal – typically programming requirement
Bus Stop	Provide larger route information in addition to existing signs	Medium Term	<\$100/sign + cost of installation
Route Schedules	Use low glare covers	Medium Term	<\$100/sign + cost of installation
Telephones	Provide text and/or video phones	Medium Term	Approx. \$300 /each + cost of installation
Emergency Communication	Provide light that signals when call is answered (Woodside elevator)	Medium Term	Minimal
Tactile/Braille Signage	Use tactile/Braille signs to identify permanent spaces (e.g. toilet rooms). Such signs should be located on the wall adjacent to the latch side of the door	Medium Term	<\$100/sign + cost of installation
Signage	Develop and implement a graphic standard	Medium Term	None – use of existing staff resources
Accessible Bus Stop Guide	Advise customers on serviceability of all bus stops	Currently Underway	None – use of existing staff resources
Real-time schedule information	Integration of schedule data with actual vehicle location data (via GPS) Maintain Go Time System in the interim	Medium Term	Potential for significant capital cost (GPS equipped vehicles & back office infrastructure) See <i>Note</i> below
Web Design	Reference Section 5.2	Medium Term	None – use of existing staff resources
Print Material	Reference Section 5.3	Medium Term	None – use of existing staff resources Cost of print/production

Universal Design Element	Goal / Requirement	Timeframe	Potential Financial Impact
<b>Bus Terminals</b>			
Access from surrounding neighbourhood and/or dedicated parking areas	Provide paths of travel that are stable, firm and slip resistant. Running slope should be less than 5% (or treated as a ramp), cross-slopes less than 2% and running slopes of curb ramps less than 8.33% (1:12). Flared sides of curb ramps should be less than 10% (1:10)	renovations & new construction	TBD: site specific cost considerations
Access from parking	Provide accessible parking spaces and paths of travel to bus stops at all Park & Rides.	Medium Term	TBD: site specific cost considerations
Toilet rooms	Establish and implement accessible design standards	Medium Term	Renovations/retrofit. \$5,000 to \$8,000 per toilet room
<b>Bus Stops</b>			
Bus stop inventory	Currently underway Incorporate data in trip planning functionality	Currently Underway	Minimal – typically programming requirement
Minimum 1.5m (5') wide pad	To maximum extent feasible	renovations & new construction	TBD: site specific cost considerations
Level pads	To maximum extent feasible provide bus pads that are level (no slope greater than 2%)	renovations & new construction	TBD: site specific cost considerations
Bus stop spacing	Implement design guidelines (per Table 6-2)	Medium Term	Minimal – staff time & production costs
<b>Bus Shelters</b>			
Accessible path of travel into bus shelter	Provide accessible path of travel into all bus shelters on accessible routes	Medium Term	TBD: site specific cost considerations
Visibility	Develop and implement a standard graphic treatment for shelters that maintain visibility while providing some contrast for people with low vision.	Medium Term	None – use of existing staff resources
Wheelchair locations	To the maximum extent feasible provide bus shelters large enough so that a person who uses a wheeled mobility device is afforded protection from inclement weather	Medium Term	Develop standard (use of existing staff resources) Bus shelter: \$5,000 to \$10,000/each
<b>Parking</b>			
Access aisles	Provide designated accessible parking spaces that comply with guidelines similar to the Provincial building code or ADA Accessibility Guidelines	Medium Term	Minimal
Accessible path of travel (to an accessible entrance)	Provide a minimum 1 meter (3') wide accessible path of travel to terminal or facility entrance	Medium Term	Minimal

Universal Design Element	Goal / Requirement	Timeframe	Potential Cost Impact
<b>Ferry Terminals</b>			
Accessible entrance identified	Provide consistent identification of accessible entrances. This can be accomplished via graphics, colour and architectural elements	Medium Term	Minimal
Accessible path of travel	Provide a minimum 1 meter (3') wide accessible path of travel between drop-off, accessible parking and facility entrance	Medium Term	TBD: site specific cost considerations
Accessible toilet rooms	Provide designated accessible toilet rooms that comply with guidelines (similar to bldg. code)	Medium Term	Renovations/retrofit. \$5,000 to \$8,000 per toilet room
<b>Buses</b>			
Audible announcements	Interior & exterior audible announcements (no retrofitting of buses)	Medium Term (and new procurement)	See Note below
Bus route identifiers	Route numbers on front, side and rear of buses (retrofit on any vehicle expected to be in fleet for next five years)	Medium Term	Approx. \$1,500/bus

Note: HRM/Metro Transit will be undertaking a comprehensive review of transit technology [Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) applications] in 2013. The transit technology review will identify further specifics including functional requirements and detailed costing for pertinent ITS applications.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no budget implications at this time. Any recommendations that have budget implications will be brought forward in future annual budgets for consideration by Regional Council.

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Public consultation sessions and stakeholder meetings were conducted by IBI Group and staff. Public sessions were held at the St. Andrews Community Centre, Halifax on March 9 and May 18, 2011, and at the Dartmouth North Community Centre on March 10 and May 19, 2011.

The final document will be available to the public on the HRM website.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

The Transportation Standing Committee may choose not to recommend that Regional Council accept the Universal Accessibility Plan. This is not recommended as the approval in principle of the Plan is key to Metro Transit's ability to prepare standards and policies to improve the accessibility of the transit system.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Universal Accessibility Plan

