

Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee

Annual Report 2008

The Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) is an independent body providing feedback to Metro Transit on the accessible transportation services it operates within the Halifax Regional Municipality. ATAC provides advice, suggestions and recommends policy changes, while monitoring the daily operational accessible transportation. ATAC exists to improve accessible transportation as provided by Metro Transit, with the ultimate aim of promoting and providing a more inclusive society. The Committee works to ensure that disabled persons and their interface with transportation services are as seamless and congenial as possible.

During the 2007-2008 year, Gary Russell continued as Chairperson, Lynn DeMont as Vice-Chairperson and Marcia Guy as Secretary. Together with nine other elected members the Committee attempted to bring a continuing wide variety of expertise on a broad range of issues and critical revision and overviews of policies and procedures that govern Metro Transit as it relates to accessible transportation. Councillor Gary Meade continued to be the representative from City Council on the Committee.

This year proved to be a difficult and trying year for ATAC. During the course of the year, the committee was faced with three resignations of committee members for various reasons and the unexpected death of our Secretary Marcia Guy. Combined with the moving to new facilities for Access-A-Bus, ironing out the bugs in the new telephone system, disruption of the facilities due to safety concerns along with the possibility of a transit strike and the lack of support from senior management in Metro Transit, along with the demise of Satellite Taxi has resulted in some of the committee's work to be stalled. These circumstances and events resulted in a very trying year for ATAC and thus contributed to a lack of any major progress that the Committee was trying to implement. The Committee attempted to do its best and things started to become back on track in January. New senior management came online to Metro Transit and the various committees of ATAC began to see progress again.

During my tenure on ATAC as Chairperson for the last three years I would like to express my sincere thanks to Lynn DeMont as Vice-Chairperson who provided excellent input to me during these years. Thanks also to Todd Hacquoil for his tremendous input, knowledge and suggestions into improving the services of the Low Floor Buses and establishing and recommending new Low Floor Routes, as well as improving the appearance and changes to the HRM Metro Transit Website. To the other committee members, I would also like to thank them for their continued support and contributions to the committee.

Once again I would like to extend my thanks to Larry Hilton, Supervisor of Access-A-Bus for his guidance during this trying year, to Councillor Gary Meade as liaison person with HRM City Council, for his continued guidance and input, to Terri Zinck, Administrative Support and the other management members of Metro Transit. Without the assistance and guidance from the above, ATAC would not have been able to function. Last but not least, thanks to the office staff in scheduling and dispatch and the Access-A-Bus operators for their continued support to the Access-A-Bus clients.

Highlights and Accomplishments of ATAC for the year 2007-2008

- A. On July 1st, 2007 the 8 day booking policy was successfully introduced.
- B. The number of clients using Access-A-Bus still remains around the 1,450 mark.
- C. Nine new operators were added to Access-A-Bus making a total of 40 operators.
- D. 4 New buses were added to the fleet making a total of 24 buses.
- E. Route 16 Parkland Low Floor Bus Route servicing Lacewood Terminal, Mount St. Vincent University, Highfield Terminal and Dartmouth Bridge Terminal areas were added in August.
- F. Low Floor Bus Service (ALF) was offered free during the month of July 2007.
- G. New user friendly facilities were moved into by Access-A-Bus staff.
- H. Plans are in place for a second Access-A-Bus BBQ at the Halifax Forum Complex on August 9th from 1 to 6 PM. Further information will be available on the HRM Metro Transit Website.
- I. A new Metro Transit Sub-Committee has been formed to review Eligibility Criteria. This committee is made up of both Metro Transit Staff and outside parties who will make recommendations back to Metro Transit regarding changes to the Eligibility Criteria and the Registration Process.
- J. Improvements to the Dartmouth Bus Terminal to make it wheelchair accessible are still ongoing and should be in place by year end.
- K. The Access-A-Bus Website on HRM is now updated to April 2008.
- L. Changes have been made to improve the Metro Transit Website to make it easier to use and understand.
- M. There are now a total of 16 A L F (Accessible Low Floor) Bus Routes in regular service plus 3 Metro Link Routes as well as the Halifax/Dartmouth and Woodside/Halifax Ferries which are all wheelchair accessible.
- N. The Special Category of Medical Bookings that may be made in advance (90) days is now in place. Dental and Family Physicians are not included in this criteria.

It is the hope of the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee that the new routes and the improvements to the Access-A-Bus User system will improve service to all.

Access-A-Bus service began in 1981 and is now in its 27th year.

After serving six years on the Committee as Chairperson along with Lynn DeMont as Vice-Chairperson, we wish the new committee success and thanks to the members of the committee we are leaving behind to continue their efforts on making improvements to better the Access-A-Bus System.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Russell

Gary C. Russell

Chairperson

Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee

2007 – 2008 Committee Members

Gary Russell, Chairperson

Lynn DeMont, Vice-Chairperson

Secretary Vacant

Bill Moffatt, Member at Large

Todd Hacquoil

Lynn Eyland

Cathy Cranidge

Murray Holman

Gail Vaughan

Fred Bishop

Gwen Maclachlan

Donald Mullins

Councillor Gary Meade, HRM Liaison

Larry Hilton, Supervisor Access-A-Bus

Terri Zinck, Administrative Support, Access-A-Bus