

MUNICIPALITY OF EAST HANTS

TRANSIT SERVICE OPERATING AND BUSINESS PLAN

APRIL 2020





TRANSIT SERVICE OPERATING AND BUSINESS PLAN

MUNICIPALITY OF EAST HANTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 1 |
| 1 INTRODUCTION..... | 4 |
| 2 TRANSIT SERVICE RESEARCH AND REVIEW | 7 |
| 2.1 Stakeholder Interviews | 7 |
| 2.2 Transit Services Business Plan (2015) Review | 12 |
| 3 SERVICE PLAN | 14 |
| 3.1 Operating Structure | 14 |
| 3.2 Route Concept Development | 14 |
| 3.3 Transit Stops..... | 17 |
| 3.4 Service Schedule and Route Options | 18 |
| 3.5 Annual Service Hours | 19 |
| 3.6 Vehicle Acquisition Options..... | 19 |
| 3.7 Vehicle Maintenance | 21 |
| 3.8 Vehicle Storage..... | 21 |
| 3.9 Fare Media Options | 22 |
| 3.10 Service Fares | 24 |
| 4 PARTNERSHIP MODEL PROPSAL | 25 |
| 5 FINANCIAL PLAN | 29 |
| 5.1 Cost Summary | 29 |
| 5.2 Capital Costs..... | 29 |
| 5.3 Municipal Operating Costs | 31 |
| 5.4 Community Rider Operating Costs | 32 |
| 5.5 Fares and Revenue | 34 |



| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 5.6 | Three-Year Financial Plan..... | 35 |
| 6 | RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION | 37 |
| 6.1 | Recommendations | 37 |
| 6.2 | Implementation (Next Steps)..... | 37 |
| 6.3 | Other Items for Further Consideration..... | 39 |

TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| TABLE 1: SERVICE COST SUMMARY (3-YEAR OUTLOOK)..... | 2 |
| TABLE 2: STEPS FOR TRANSIT SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION, TIMEFRAMES, AND ASSOCIATED COSTS | 3 |
| TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF 2015 TRANSIT SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN AND THIS TRANSIT SERVICE OPERATING AND BUSINESS PLAN | 12 |
| TABLE 4: ROUTE OPTIONS ASSESSMENT | 15 |
| TABLE 5: PROPOSED ROUTE SCHEDULE | 18 |
| TABLE 6: TRANSIT FARES COMPARISON FROM 2015 TRANSIT SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN AND THIS TRANSIT SERVICE OPERATING AND BUSINESS PLAN | 24 |
| TABLE 7: TRANSIT SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE MUNICIPALITY AND COMMUNITY RIDER | 25 |
| TABLE 8 SERVICE COST SUMMARY..... | 29 |
| TABLE 9 DAILY BUS USAGE..... | 32 |
| TABLE 10 DAILY AND ANNUAL BUS OPERATING COSTS..... | 33 |
| TABLE 11: OTHER OPERATING COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH FIXED ROUTE SERVICE | 33 |
| TABLE 12 RIDERSHIP AND FARE REVENUE PROJECTIONS | 34 |
| TABLE 13 SUGGESTED SERVICE PROVISION PAYMENT | 35 |
| TABLE 14 THREE-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN | 36 |

FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| FIGURE 1: PROPOSED FIXED ROUTE TRANSIT SERVICE | 1 |
| FIGURE 2 NEW LANTZ INTERCHANGE AND HIGHWAY CONNECTOR | 14 |
| FIGURE 3 ROUTE OPTION SCHEMATICS | 15 |
| FIGURE 4 PREFERRED ROUTE OPTION | 16 |
| FIGURE 5 ROUTE ADJUSTMENT WITH NO CONNECTION TO TOWERVIEW COURT | 19 |
| FIGURE 6 BRIDGEWATER ON-LINE BUS TRACKER | 31 |

APPENDICES

| | |
|---|---|
| A | ROUTE LAYOUT DIAGRAM |
| B | TRANSFERRING TO HALIFAX TRANSIT |
| C | ROUTE TIMING CONTINGENCY |
| D | COMMUNITY TRANSIT FARE COMPARISON |
| E | SUGGESTED TERMS OF AIRPORT BUS STOP AGREEMENT |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Transit Service Operating and Business Plan recommends a means to implement a fixed route service in East Hants that connects the growing communities of Elmsdale-Lantz to the most frequented destinations in (and just beyond) the area. This report updates the Transit Service Business Plan that was produced for East Hants in 2015 by MMM Group. At the time, Council decided not to go forward with a transit service due to competing municipal priorities. Given the significant growth that has recently occurred in the community, and which is expected to continue for some time, and the development of new road infrastructure that better facilitates a looped transit route, there is opportunity for the Municipality to reconsider transit implementation as a Pilot Study.

Two earlier transit studies completed in 2012 and 2015, by East Hants, both recommend partnering with a private carrier for transit operations and maintenance. This report builds on those recommendations and is guided by Council’s current mandate to explore partnership options with an existing transportation service provider currently operating in East Hants: The East Hants & Area Community Rider. An analysis of the roles and responsibilities for this partnership agreement have been addressed in Section 4 of this report.

THE SERVICE

This report proposes a fixed route looped service that operates between Lantz to the Halifax Stanfield International Airport, using parts of Highway 102 and Trunk 2. A 19-24 passenger mini-bus will operate on an hourly service and stop at fixed locations along the proposed route (shown on Figure 1 and Appendix A). For details on the proposed service, including schedule, route description, vehicle acquisition, and fare options, see Section.

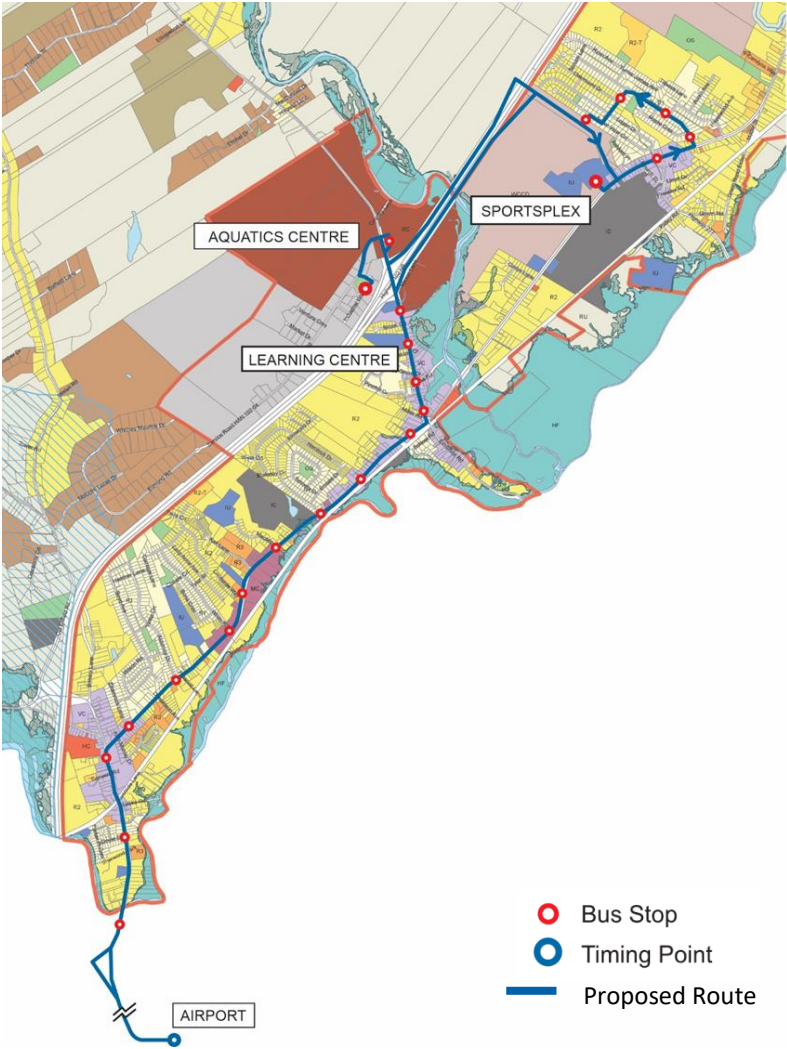


Figure 1: Proposed Fixed Route Transit Service

THE FINANCIALS

Table 1 summarizes the anticipated capital and operating costs and estimated revenues over a 3-year Pilot Study period. Details about the calculations and financial analysis can be found in Section 5.

Table 1: Service Cost Summary (3-year Outlook)

| | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Capital Costs | | | |
| Vehicles | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Bus Stops (23) | \$11,500 | \$0 | \$0 |
| SuperStore Curb and Sidewalk Cost | \$8,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Bus Equipment | \$3,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total Capital Costs | \$21,500 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Operating Costs | | | |
| Staffing | \$49,500 | \$19,800 | \$20,100 |
| Municipal Operational Responsibilities | \$30,500 | \$26,000 | \$28,100 |
| Capital Reserve Payment | \$25,000 | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| Operating Payment to Community Rider | \$208,420 | \$211,538 | \$214,718 |
| Total Operating Costs | \$313,420 | \$282,338 | \$287,918 |
| Total Costs (Operating + Capital) | \$334,920 | \$282,338 | \$287,918 |
| Revenue | | | |
| Fare Revenue | \$47,420 | \$55,323 | \$63,226 |
| Total Revenue | \$47,420 | \$55,323 | \$63,226 |
| Net Investment Required from the Municipality | \$287,500 | \$227,015 | \$224,692 |

THE RECOMMENDATION

The primary recommendation from this report to staff and to Council is to *approve this Transit Service Operating and Business Plan in principle*, set a target date for service implementation, and to begin initiating next steps for service start up.

NEXT STEPS

The following steps should be taken once this Transit Service Operating and Business Plan is approved in principle by Council. We are suggesting a launch date for the transit service to be soon after the completion of the Highway 102/Lantz interchange which is expected to be sometime in 2022 (within 18-24 months). More information about each of these Implementation Steps is provided in Section 6.

Table 2: Steps for Transit Service Implementation, Timeframes, and Associated Costs

| IMPLEMENTATION | TIMEFRAME | COST* TO BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION |
|--|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Enter in a Memorandum of Understanding with Community Rider to operate fixed route transit service. | 0-6 months | \$0 |
| 2. Make an Offer to Halifax Harbour Bridges to Purchase one of their Used Shuttle Buses. | 0-6 months | \$0 |
| 3. Negotiate a capital grant with Halifax Stanfield Airport authority for purchase of vehicle. | 0-6 months | \$0 |
| 4. Enter into an agreement with Halifax Stanfield Airport authority to use the airport bus stops. | 0-12 months | \$0 |
| 5. Enter into an agreement with Elmsdale Superstore for the use of their property for a bus stop and added infrastructure. | 12-18months | \$0 |
| 6. Set a boundary for a transit tax and determine a taxation rate. | 12-18months | \$0 |
| 7. Approach local merchants as sales agents for monthly transit passes and route maps. | 12-18months | \$0 |
| 8. Issue an Expression of Interest for vehicle maintenance. | 12-18months | \$0 |
| 9. Acquire staffing resources. | 0-6 months | \$0 |
| 10. Confirm placement of bus stop locations with NSTIR. | 12-18months | \$0 |
| 11. Negotiate an agreement for inter-agency transfers with Halifax Transit. | 12-18months | \$0 |

*It should be noted that the costs shown do not include staffing resources. Although these steps will require staff time, we anticipate no additional cost will be required from the Municipality to begin implementation planning for the transit service.

1 INTRODUCTION

This Transit Service Operating and Business Plan presents a means to implement a fixed route service along the Highway 102 region that connects the highest density communities to the most frequented destinations in (and just beyond) the Elmsdale-Lantz area of East Hants. It builds on two key studies: a *Corridor Feasibility Study* (2012) and the *Transit Services Business Plan for East Hants* (2015) along with other work over the past decade or more.

The *East Hants Strategic Plan* (2013) emphasized the importance of diverse and accessible transportation options to community sustainability and economic development. Transportation is one of the *Strategic Plan*'s seven key areas of strategic focus, and an associated goal is the "consideration of options related to public transportation within East Hants and between East Hants and Halifax Regional Municipality".

The *East Hants Municipal Planning Strategy* (2016) sets the goals, priorities and direction for growth and community building for the municipality. As one of the eight Community Priorities, Council has identified the need to *develop healthy transportation networks* to relieve congestion and stress on existing transportation networks. In addition to building a walking and bicycling network throughout the community, the Municipal Plan also guides Council to consider developing a transit program to complement the desired active transportation network throughout the community.

The *Municipal Planning Strategy* prioritizes and commits to building healthy neighbourhoods. Policy directions to achieve this goal include recognizing five pillars of healthy community design, one of which include:

Policy HR1 b) Healthy Transportation Networks. Safe and accessible transportation systems that incorporate a diversity of transportation ...

The *Municipal Planning Strategy* has also identified that *a transit service could enable the public to travel within East Hants as well as provide a service to the Halifax Stanfield International Airport.*

Council decided to not move forward with a transit service in 2015 because of competing municipal priorities at the time. Since this decision however, there has been continued steady growth along the Trunk 2 corridor including two new large-scale developments in Lantz (currently in planning stages), which expect to bring 2,000+ new residential units to the community. There has also been significant infrastructure investments including the new Highway 102/Lantz interchange which is anticipated for completion in 2022. Finally, there has been recent direction from Council to explore the provision of a fixed route transit service to East Hants in partnership with an experienced community transportation organization. Given these advancements, there is a precedent for the Municipality to reevaluate the implementation of public transit service in East Hants.

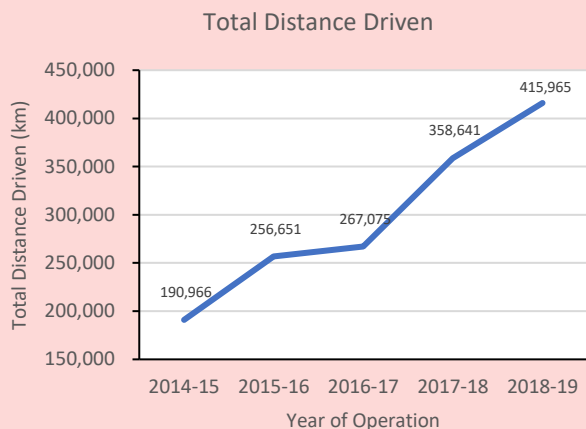
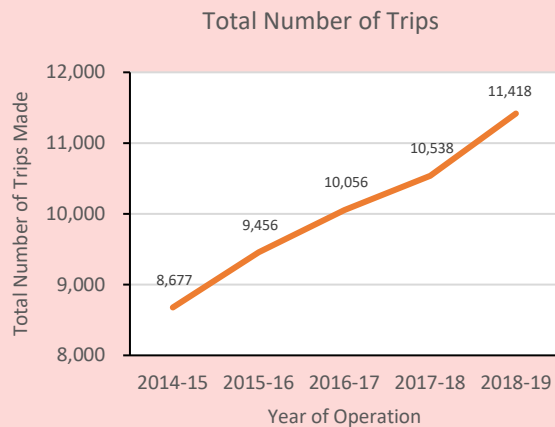
The two transit studies noted above from 2012 and 2015 both recommend partnering with a private carrier for transit operations and maintenance. This report builds on those recommendations and is guided by Council's mandate to explore partnership options with an existing transportation service provider currently operating in East Hants; the East Hants & Area Community Rider.

THE EAST HANTS & AREA COMMUNITY RIDER

The East Hants Community Learning Association is a non-profit organization that operates in East Hants to provide educational services to adult residents of the community. As a subsidiary branch of the Learning Association, the East Hants & Area Community Rider (Community Rider) offers dial-a-ride transportation services to residents throughout the community.

OPERATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Community Rider has been providing transportation services to the residents of East Hants since 2006. The organization currently operates 5 vehicles, three of which are wheelchair accessible. In 2018 and 2019, Community Rider made over 11,000 trips (per year), and demand for their services have continued to be present (and growing) for the first quarter of 2020.



Daily operations involve a staff member to collect ride requests (via telephone and email), and to coordinate driver’s schedules that efficiently accommodate clients. Community Rider operates Monday – Friday, 6:30 a.m. – 7 p.m., and services communities across East Hants as well as some rural communities in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

Community Rider offers a door-to-door service and charges clients \$0.70/ kilometre with a minimum charge of \$8.40/ride. Typically, clients are those living in East Hants, (as well as nearby HRM communities such as Wellington and Fall River), and destinations are within Elmsdale/ Enfield/ Lantz area or to popular places in HRM (such as the airport, hospitals, or medical centres). Community Rider is also willing to make out-of-the-ordinary and longer distance trips (e.g. Truro, Cape Breton), so long as clients are able to pay the set rates.

The organization employs two administrative staff (whose time is also shared with the operations of the East Hants Community Learning Association) and six paid drivers. Drivers are paid hourly with rates ranging from \$13/hr. - \$16/hr. Rates for drivers are set based on experience and seniority. The service also heavily relies on volunteer drivers. Volunteers are expected to utilize their own personal vehicle for trips and are reimbursed for fuel at \$0.42/km.

Although volunteer drivers are relied upon to keep their service operating to meet the transportation demand within the community, there are significant challenges to attracting and retaining them. Volunteer drivers must come with their own liability insurance and must have coverage for up to \$2,000,000. Community Rider does provide a stipend for volunteers at \$100/year, but this does not cover the full amount of the required coverage needed. Because of this, it was indicated by Community Rider that having the ability to pay more to drivers to make the required trips necessary to meet demand would be preferable.

Community Rider has been providing their dial-a-ride service for 13 years. Over this time, the organization has acquired experience and expertise in the following areas:

- Service management, dispatch, scheduling, and trip coordination;
- Client invoicing and revenue collection;
- Vehicle servicing, maintenance, and management needs (through external community partnerships);
- Driver experience and relationships with clients;
- Handling Provincial requirements for motor vehicle licences, insurance, and liabilities; and
- Applying for funding and grant applications from all levels of government.

The following is a summary of cash flow for the East Hants & Area Community Rider. It should be noted that these numbers are for the operations of Community Rider and are separate from the East Hants Learning Association’s financial statements.

CURRENT FUNDING

For the 2019-2020 fiscal year, Community Rider has budgeted for just under \$390,000 of funding and revenue sources. The following is a summary of the highest anticipated sources of revenue for the current year:

- Revenues collected from fares (39% of revenue);
- Provincial funding (37% of budgeted revenue);
- Municipal grants from HRM (10% of revenue) and the Municipality of East Hants (4% of revenue).

CURRENT OPERATING EXPENSES

Operating expenses budgeted for the 2019-2020 year are within the range of \$360,000. The following is a summary of the more significant operating expenses projected for Community Rider:

- Salaries and benefits for administrative staff and drivers (56% of operating expenses);
- Fuel for vehicles (11% of operating expenses);
- Vehicle Repairs (7% of operating expenses).

Against this background, the specific objectives of this Transit Service Operation and Business Plan are to:

- Review and validate findings and recommendations from the previously completed Transit Service Business Plan in 2015;
- Develop and present a detailed service plan, delivery plan and financial plan for the recommended transit service, including: routes, stops and assets; partnership opportunities and responsibilities with Community Rider; service contracting with Community Rider and third party maintenance providers; and an update to operating and capital costs; and
- Provide an implementation plan for the service, with timelines and next steps for East Hants to pursue.

This Transit Service Operation and Business Plan is set out in the following sections:

- **Section 2** reviews information collected from Stakeholder Interviews as well as a summary of the recommendations made by the 2015 report and the deviations of those recommendations within this Plan;
- **Section 3** presents the service plan, including the route, schedule, fares, and recommended stops;
- **Section 4** describes the roles and responsibilities of service delivery between the Municipality and Community Rider should a partnership agreement move forward for transit service delivery;
- **Section 5** identifies the costs, revenue sources and a three-year financial plan for the transit service;
- **Section 6** provides recommendations, an implementation plan, and items for further consideration for East Hants.

It should be noted that this Transit Service Operation and Business Plan has been performed to validate, amend and in some instances supplement the report created by the MMM Group in 2015. Many of the recommendations provided and information presented are still very much valid and worth consideration. This Plan works to build on the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan and provides additional insight and detail, given new information available as well as having Community Rider as a viable partner and part of the discussion.

2 TRANSIT SERVICE RESEARCH AND REVIEW

This section reviews the findings from preliminary stakeholder interviews. It also reviews and updates the recommendations made by the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan report given the new information available to the project.

2.1 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

As part of this Transit Service Operation and Business Plan, interviews were held with Municipal staff and external stakeholders/informants related to this project. A list of those who were interviewed are shown below.

- East Hants & Area Community Rider
- Community Planning (Municipal Staff)
- Infrastructure Operations (Municipal Staff)
- Economic Development (Municipal Staff)
- Senior Administrative Staff (Municipal Staff)
- Nova Scotia Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal (NSTIR) Regional Manager
- Halifax Airport Planning and Development
- Halifax Transit
- Bridgewater Transit
- Kings Transit
- Halifax Harbour Bridges
- Crestline Coach
- Brannen’s Service Centre
- Elmsdale Service Centre

Senior members of Municipal departments were interviewed, as was senior staff of Community Rider (who were identified as likely partners in the original tender for this report). Staff and members of Community Rider were asked questions related to the perceived need for a transit service in the community. Opportunities and concerns of a potential partnership were also discussed during each interview. Highlights of these interviews are provided below.

1. COMMUNITY RIDER

- There is a significant need for a transit service in the community. Community Rider started in 2006 because there was a need for safe, affordable, and accessible travel for residents. Demand and need for this service has steadily increased ever since.
- Although many residents in East Hants do have their own car, there are clients that rely on Community Rider who either cannot afford a personal motor vehicle or are not able to drive for a variety of reasons. These conditions result in poverty, the inability to work or get to and from appointments, and overall social isolation.
- As the community continues to grow, it seems obvious that the need for transit will also continue to grow. If a fixed route were implemented along the Trunk 2 corridor within the community (from YHZ to Lantz), Community Rider could focus on feeding residents into that loop, not make as many corridor pick ups, and free up drivers to serve the periphery of the community and the longer trips in to HRM for medical appointments.
- The true benefit of having public transit in the community is for residents to be able to travel to and from work. The companies who offer minimum wage jobs need employees, however employees need to be able to get to their work and not have to rely on owning a vehicle.
- For the future transit provision, Community Rider would be interested in operating the service however appropriate funding will be needed.

- Community Rider has a brand-new bus (12-15 seats) which could be the spare vehicle for the service. A change in licenses would be needed however for the fixed route service. It currently operates as a commercial vehicle license and would need to have a Motor Carrier one.
- Public Transit is a public service. Many residents will rely on it being in existence. Public transit services are not expected to be profitable. The Municipality has to be onboard and willing to “take a loss”, however through good management, the cost of providing the service can be maintained at a predictable level.

2. MUNICIPALITY OF EAST HANTS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- In 2014/2015 (when the 2015 Business Plan was presented to Council), the need for transit wasn’t as great as it is now. There were also some competing interests at the time, and the financial model and Plan presented was not pursued.
- Now however, there have been significant changes to the community. There has been large growth along the Trunk 2 corridor and more is currently being planned. There is also the new interchange being built which will connect Lantz directly with Highway 102.
- There is a need in the community for transit, particularly for employees to be able to get to and from work. Employers in the area have voiced that they can’t find the employees they need because they can’t get to their office/work locations. Some companies have left East Hants to go to Burnside so that they can be on transit lines for their employees to get to them.
- Key employment destinations include the Airport, the industrial park, and the Superstore and Sobeys’ complexes.
- Transit is a public good that offers multiple community and economic benefits. It’s a public service that operates at a deficit, but creates opportunities for communities that go well beyond the immediate service.

3. MUNICIPALITY OF EAST HANTS - COMMUNITY PLANNING

- There are two significant developments planned for the community: Armco Lands and Clayton Lands (both will bring over 1000 new housing units to Lantz).
 - The Armco Development is designed to accommodate transit service and connections through the neighbourhood.
 - Both have roughly a 25-year build-out.
- East Hants is growing – there have been 100+ new housing starts/year along the corridor. This growth is in addition to the two Lantz developments.
 - As the corridor population increases, the rural area population has been decreasing.
- Many of the residents along the corridor work locally or at the Airport.
- The community needs affordable housing, and then also affordable transportation options that connect the housing to employment opportunities.
 - Currently low-income families don’t have access to either of these, so it makes it difficult for them to stay in the community.
- Popular destination points within the community: new pool, grocery stores/commercial hubs, medical clinics (e.g. hearing facility), Airport (employment).
- Discussion was held around the possibility of exploring EVs as the bus.
- There will likely be a need to discuss transit along NSTIR roads.
 - The Municipality would like to see more commercial development along Rte 214, but NSTIR do not. TIR claims there is too much truck traffic and it would slow/congest the road.

4. MUNICIPALITY OF EAST HANTS – INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

- Believes there could be a need for transit service in the community. Certainly, once the Clayton and Armco developments are built out there will be.
 - East Hants has a commuter population which typically requires a personal vehicle to travel in. Having a transit service would offer residents with more options (and diverse travel means) to live in the area.
- Currently the Municipality outsources all heavy equipment and operations for public works. There are no in-house mechanic services that could maintain a new transit vehicle. Also has no option for vehicle storage space.
 - The Municipality has contracts with Elmsdale Landscaping. This company has a sister company called Elmsdale Truck Centre. This could be an interesting partnership for maintaining transit vehicles and possibly even storing them.
- On NSTIR roads, the province owns the rights-of-way and permits the Municipality to build and maintain sidewalks. Having a transit service on the road seems like a reasonable request.
- Transit stops: “Flag stop” that was originally proposed as part of the original proposal doesn’t seem realistic. Designated stops seem more reasonable.
 - The level of service at bus stops was discussed including items such as snow clearing and general maintenance. Staff indicated that if benches and shelters were provided, this would cost more to keep the stop maintained.
- Flaws with the previous report identified bringing on “half a resource”. It called for a part-time staff to help coordinate the service. If staff spent half their time on the transit provision, what would the impact be on the other areas of operation in the municipality and other roles they should be doing.

5. MUNICIPALITY OF EAST HANTS – SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Community Need:

- The need for transit in the community is there. East Hants is growing and the need for a public transit service has begun.
- There is a need to be able to connect through the community (especially along the Trunk 2 corridor) and to connect into major employment areas (e.g. the Halifax Airport) as well as other established transit lines (such as Halifax Transit).
- The Clayton and Armco developments will bring more need for public transit in to the area. These are big developments and they need to be planned for.
- The current community is quite vehicle-reliant. There is certainly a question on whether there will be uptake for the service. It will be a challenge to convince residents to not use their private vehicles.
- One of the benefits of having a public transit service is the option for residents to choose alternative travel patterns. If the community can take more cars off the road it is a bonus.
- Discussion was had around the challenges and possibilities of how all residents could access the transit service (including those in a more rural setting).

Partnering and Operation:

- The general sentiment and perceived consensus around this project is that an independent Service Provider from within the community (such as Community Rider) should be operating the service. Municipal staff do not have the capacity or expertise to be running a transit service.
 - The Municipality is looking for a more hands-off partnership in the day-to-day operations.
- Council does recognize that public transit is not a “profit generating” service and that it will cost the Municipality capital and operating budget to provide the service.

- Council also recognizes that the level of service provided in the day-to-day operations will have direct correlation to how much money they are willing to put in.
- Other areas discussed with senior administrative staff included the potential impact to the tax payer, how to ensure Community Rider could fulfill their contractual obligations, and roles and responsibilities of the service.

Other stakeholders and informants were also consulted as part of this Transit Service Operation and Business Plan. A summary of what was heard from Halifax Stanfield International Airport Authority, Halifax Transit, NSTIR's District Engineer, Bridgewater Transit, Kings Transit, Halifax Harbour Bridges, Crestline Coach, Brannen's Service Centre, and Elmsdale Service Centre is presented below:

6. HALIFAX STANFIELD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY (YHZ)

- Encourage transit connections to the airport as a means of reducing parking demand and making the facility a more attractive workplace.
 - Provided a \$500,000 grant to Halifax Transit when MetroX service began and would consider a funding request from East Hants.
 - Would require a pro-rated pay-back on any grants if service was terminated before an agreed-to period.
- Willing to allow East Hants transit service to use the transit stop on the lower loading level at the terminal building and on Barnes Drive shared with MetroX.
 - The Airport Authority normally levies a fee for any service being offered on their property but they waive this for public transit.
 - In exchange, however, the Municipality will need to enter into a usage agreement.

7. NOVA SCOTIA TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL (NSTIR)

Discussion with NSTIR was primarily on how the transit service's bus stops or flagged bus stop areas would operate within the Trunk 2 and Rte 214's rights-of-way.

- NSTIR didn't see the need for flag stops along the transit route. Discussion held questioned safety and overall effectiveness.
- Consideration for how the pedestrian travels and waits for the bus (regardless of the direction they're going in) needs to be done.
- Designated stops seem to be the way to go however sight lines and stopping distances need to be appropriate.
- Much of Trunk 2 west bound lane is curbed so the bus would obstruct the travel lane. This is likely expected behavior in an urban setting but there were questions on if it was appropriate for a rural setting. Frequent stops may cause some driver frustration, inappropriate passing etc.

8. HALIFAX TRANSIT

- Halifax Transit indicated that there would likely be opportunities for donating a decommissioned MetroX bus in the near future (within 18 months).
- It was presented that the East Hants Transit service and Halifax Transit would likely share a stop or platform at the YHZ destination. This would be an ideal place for transferring from one line to another. Although Halifax Transit acknowledged the logic behind this, they identified that they did have some concerns as the two lines at the same stop could lead to passenger confusion.
- A staff report is currently being written by Halifax Transit to consider a reciprocal free or discounted transfer system between the two services. It was indicated by Halifax Transit that the recommendation from staff was likely to not be in favour of this.
- Halifax Transit did not see any issues with the East Hants Transit servicing stops from Elmsdale to the Airport (some of which is within HRM's boundary line).

9. BRIDGEWATER TRANSIT

- Acquired two decommissioned MetroX buses at no cost (one for spare) and, while appreciative of the cost saving, find that there is a lot of maintenance required.
 - Buses are stored outdoors.
- Occasionally the capacity of the bus is exceeded with school or daycare groups, although it is also a concern that a big bus appears to be too empty.
- Flag stopping is used although the route includes “no-flagging” zones with fixed stops.
- Offers a HotSpot for fares, but this is rarely used. It continues to be no cost to the system regardless of level of use.
- Tickets and monthly passes are sold at local businesses (a list is on their website) and no commission is paid.

10. KINGS TRANSIT

- Tickets and monthly passes are sold at local businesses (a list is on their website) and a 2% commission is paid.
- Two buses are stored indoors in Digby and the remainder are stored outside.

11. HALIFAX HARBOUR BRIDGES

- Have two shuttle buses remaining from the shuttle service they provided during the Big Lift project that they have been attempting to dispose of.
- Buses are Crestline low-floor diesel buses with approximately 200,000 km, a wheelchair ramp, air conditioning, front bike rack and interior/exterior video cameras.

12. CRESTLINE COACH

- Their 24-floor low floor bus costs about \$150,000 or \$100,000 for high-floor.
- Crestline has a service representative based in Atlantic Canada.

13. BRANNEN'S SERVICE CENTRE

- Have a number of commercial agreements for scheduled vehicle servicing which would be applicable to a transit service.
- Bays are amply sized for servicing a 24-foot bus.
- Can provide emergency on-site servicing and arrange for towing.
- Normally at least one bay is vacant overnight or on weekends and an arrangement for storage of a bus could be made. If bays are full, secure on-site outdoor storage is available.

14. ELMSDALE SERVICE CENTRE

- Have a number of commercial agreements for scheduled vehicle servicing which would be applicable to a transit service.
- Bays are amply sized for servicing a 24-foot bus.
- Can provide emergency on-site servicing and arrange for towing.
- Normally at least one bay is vacant overnight or on weekends and an arrangement for storage of a bus could be made.

2.2 TRANSIT SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN (2015) REVIEW

Given the findings from stakeholder interviews as well as taking in to consideration the anticipated new developments, current and future community growth and new infrastructure projects, the recommendations from the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan were reviewed and either validated or amended to reflect current needs. The following table summarizes the recommendations made by the 2015 Transit Services Business Plan under service variables, as well as this Plan's consideration and approach.

Table 3: Comparison of 2015 Transit Service Business Plan and this Transit Service Operating and Business Plan

| ITEM | TRANSIT SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN (2015) | TRANSIT SERVICE OPERATING AND BUSINESS PLAN (2020) | COMMENTS |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Route and Scheduling | Initial route operating between the Airport and the Sportsplex in Lantz, using Highway 102 from the Airport to Enfield and Trunk 2 from Enfield to the Sportsplex. Route 214 used to connect the route between Trunk 2 and the Sobeys and Superstore facilities at the Highway 102 interchange. | Redesign route utilizing the new upcoming opening of the Lantz Interchange. This creates a new opportunity to serve the same destinations proposed in the 2015 Business Plan with a more typical "reverse path" route. | Two optional routing plans were considered and evaluated for average customer trip times. See Section 3 for more information on the new route. |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Vehicles Used | A low-floor bus with a passenger capacity of 19 to 24 passengers. | A low-floor bus with a passenger capacity of 19 to 24 passengers. | No change. |
| Vehicle Acquisition | For Municipality to purchase a new or used bus for the service. Service Provider is expected to provide the spare bus. | Municipality to consider an agreement with YHZ to purchase a bus from the Halifax Bridge Commission. Community Rider is expected to provide the spare bus. | See Section 3.6 for more discussion. |
| Transit Operator | Enter into an operating agreement with a private partner through tendering process. | Enter into an operating agreement with a private partner through a negotiated agreement with specified party. | Community Rider is currently very active and experienced in transportation provision within the community and have vocalized interest in exploring a partnership with the Municipality to operate the service. |
| Fares | \$3.00 for adult single ride \$70/month for adult monthly pass \$60/month for seniors monthly pass \$60/month for students (14-19) monthly pass \$40/month for children (6-13) monthly pass | \$3.00 for adult single ride \$70/month for adult monthly pass \$50/month for seniors/student/child | This Plan provides two monthly pass types. This was done to keep transit service implementation simplified. |
| Bus Stops | Mixture of fixed stops and flag stop areas. | Fixed stops only. | Flag stop regions have been removed from the proposed plan due to operational and scheduling uncertainty. |
| Airport Fare Premium and Transfers to Halifax Transit (See Appendix B for more detail) | The \$1.00 fare premium for trips to/from the Airport recommended in the Corridor Feasibility Study was dropped. While justified for the longer trip, it acts as an additional disincentive for transferring to Halifax Transit and paying a second full fare. | Reinstate the \$1.00 (or similar) premium on trips to/from the airport if this can be a mechanism to reaching an inter-agency transferring agreement with Halifax Transit. | Charging double fare to travel the two services is a disincentive for the passenger, however expecting a free transfer between the two services is a difficult arrangement to agree upon between the two Municipalities. See Appendix B for more discussion. |

3 SERVICE PLAN

3.1 OPERATING STRUCTURE

To define a service plan, we have assumed that the Municipality will own the service and the assets and contract with Community Rider to operate the service. For discussion on these assumptions as well as detail on partnership roles and responsibilities refer to Section 4.

3.2 ROUTE CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

A routing scheme was proposed in the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan to provide hourly service to stops along Trunk 2 as far as the Sportsplex and Route 214 to the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre (see “Route Options 1” in Figure 3 on the next page). The 2015 Transit Service Business Plan acknowledged that operating two “route branches” resulted in the connections between these two branches could only occur in one direction. For this reason, the plan reversed the order the branches would be served in the morning and the afternoon in an attempt to optimize for the predominant trip demands. This plan was developed before there was any notion of a new Lantz Interchange and Highway Connector.

The upcoming opening of the Highway 102/Lantz Interchange (see Figure 2) creates a new opportunity to serve the same destinations proposed in the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan with a more standard “reverse path” route. Two such routes were developed and investigated in this study. These routes, along with the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan routing are shown schematically in Figure 3. The timing for the new roadway becoming operational, (currently scheduled for 2022) is imminent enough that implementation of the East Hants Transit Service can be co-ordinated to occur without need for interim routing.



Figure 2 New Lantz Interchange and Highway Connector

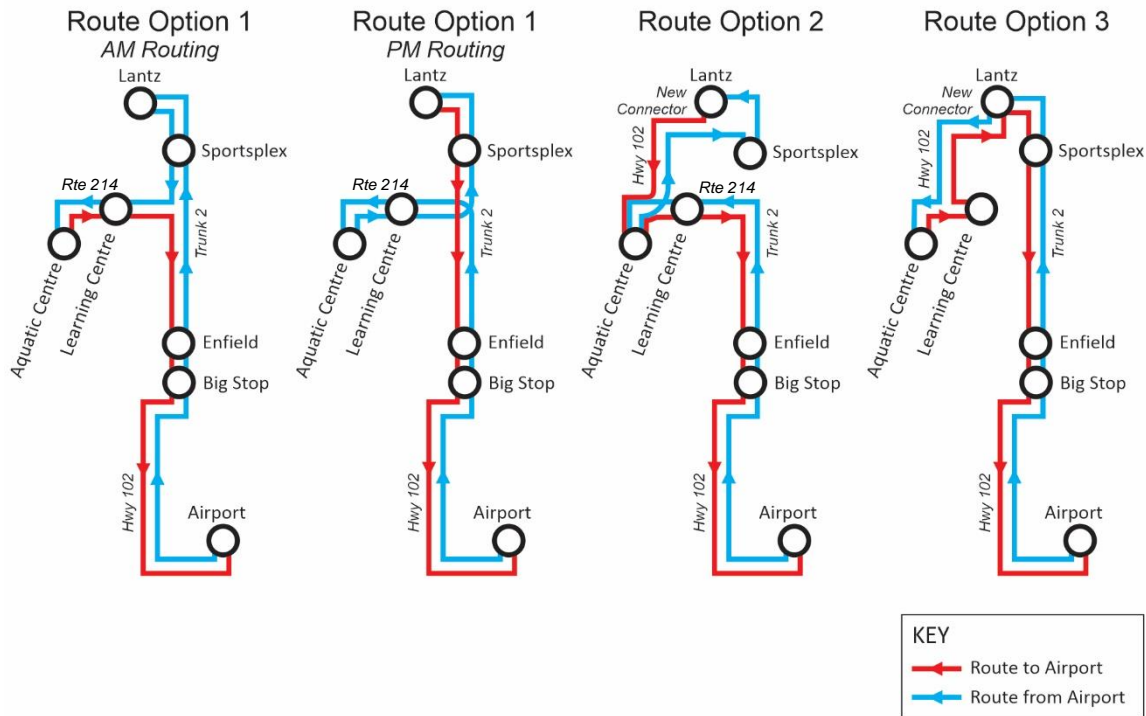


Figure 3 Route Option Schematics

The goal of selecting a preferred route is to ensure all key destinations are reached and that travel time for the users is minimized. Although each of the routing schemes presented in Figure 3 provides connections to the key destinations shown above, a simulation modeling exercise was undertaken to determine which provided the shortest travel times. A set of twenty-seven return trips was developed to replicate the expected type of trips in the study area. The route timings for each option were applied to each of these trips and summed. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Route Options Assessment

| AVERAGE TRIP TIME | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Route Option #1 | 16.4 minutes |
| Route Option #2 | 10.0 minutes |
| Route Option #3 | 11.9 minutes |

From this analysis, **Route Option #2** provides the best overall service (quickest time) and will be used in further analysis of this Update. This preferred route is shown in Figure 4 and a more detailed Route Layout Diagram is provided in Appendix A.

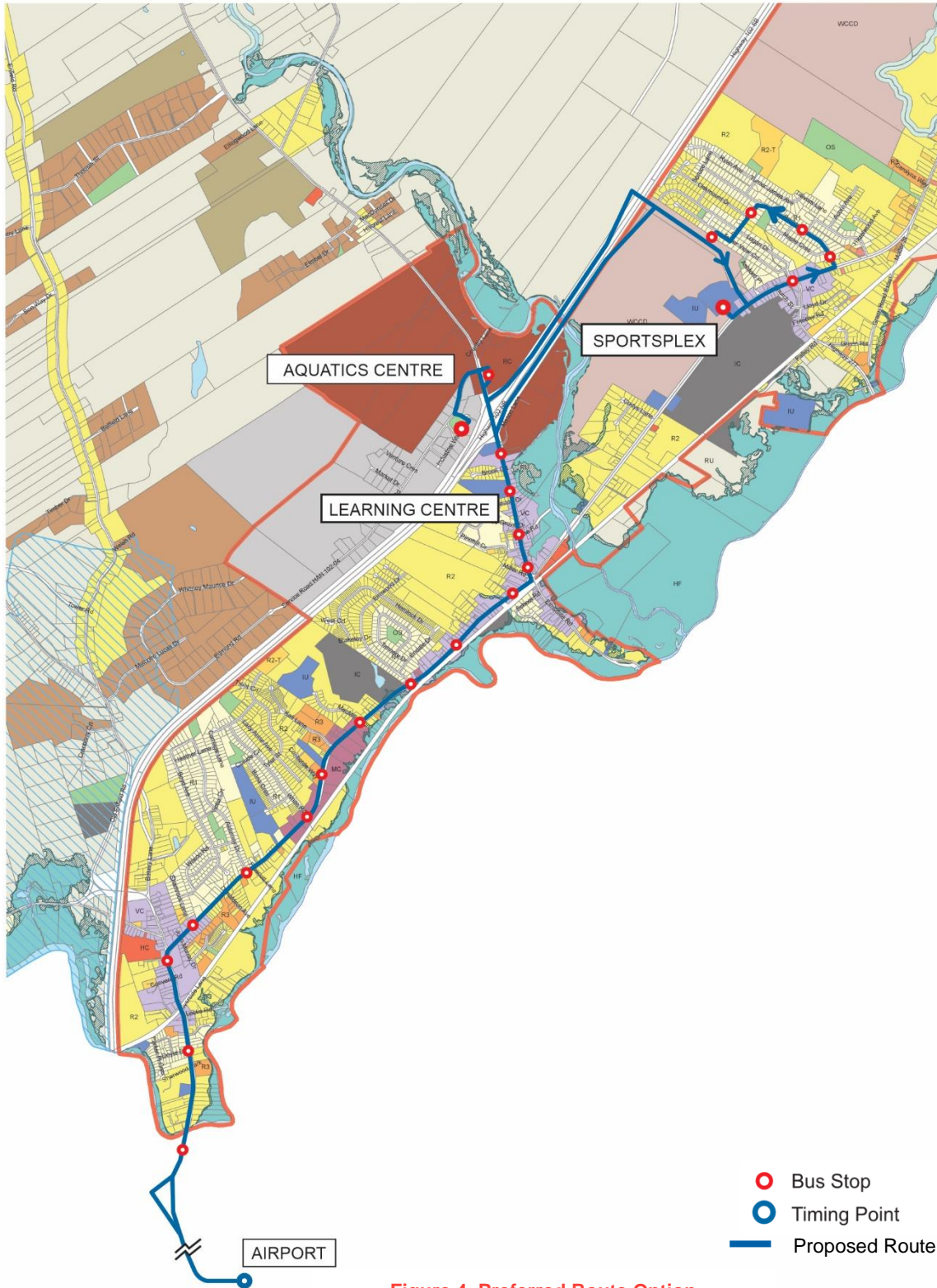


Figure 4 Preferred Route Option

IT SHOULD BE NOTED...

It should be noted that the Preferred Route Option uses a roadway connection and interchange that are not yet operational. We believe that the scheduled opening of this facility could match closely with the expected implementation of the transit service. It should also be noted that this routing assumes a road connection between the new Highway Connector and Towerview Court. We have been advised that an agreement on this connection has not yet been reached between the Municipality and NSTIR. Through our analysis and simulations of route timing and scheduling, we believe that serving the current residential part of Lantz is not feasible without this connection. Having the bus take the Highway Connector to Trunk 2, then loop into the residential area would simply take too much additional time and would not allow for the bus to keep its hourly service schedule.

If full road access is not implemented, a bus-only access road should be considered as part of the agreement. Bus-only facilities like this are a positive, visible indication of a commitment to transit and its effectiveness. Since this roadway is only to be used by infrequent buses, it could be a single-lane road that also doubles as a multi-use pathway. In this configuration, it may be eligible for Provincial funding through Connect2 grants.

Should no connector to Towerview Court be built at all and the Municipality still wants to provide service to the residential area around Lantz, two contingency routing options have been developed in efforts to shorten the drive time while still routing the bus within this general area. See Figure 5 for a description of contingency routing options and Appendix C for a more detailed description.

3.3 TRANSIT STOPS

To service the route, the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan recommended a combination of fixed stops and “flag stopping”. Flag stopping is where a customer can stand at any point along the route and flag down the bus as it passes. Similarly, a passenger can request that the driver stop to let the off at any location along the route. Flag stopping is beneficial in that it reduces the amount of walking that a customer needs to do. The down side of flag stopping is that the customer may try to flag down a bus in a location with limited sight distance on the roadway or in a location where there are traffic conflicts. Fixed bus stops, on the other hand, can be planned and located where there are fewest traffic concerns.

Flag stopping was discussed with the District Engineer for NSTIR. While he expressed some concern with the issues of flag stopping, he felt that if flag stops were something that the Municipality would want to implement, it likely wouldn't have any significant consequences to traffic. Due to clarity and familiarity of fixed transit stops with the general public however, this Plan recommends fixed stops only along the route. Fixed stops not only to mitigate safety concerns, but they are also what most people expect and understand with a transit service.

The 2015 Transit Service Business Plan provided a sketch of proposed fixed stop locations as an alternative to the hybrid stops recommendation that was made. Having reviewed this sketch, we believe the fixed stop locations make logical sense, and have reproduced bus stop locations on the Route Layout Diagram shown in Figure 4 and provided in Appendix A. For on-street bus stops, it is our recommendation that buses stay in the travel lane even if this means blocking traffic behind them as it picks up or drops off passengers. This reduces delays for buses trying to re-enter traffic, saves the cost of constructing pull-out bays for the buses, and gives customers ample room to wait when they are on sections of the highway with shoulder only.

In addition to the on-road stops, we expect that there will be off-street pull-over locations at major destinations where the bus can both load and unload as well as wait until it gets in-synch with its schedule (called a timing point). The proposed locations for this are the Halifax Stanfield Airport, the Sportsplex and the Aquatic Centre.

3.4 SERVICE SCHEDULE AND ROUTE OPTIONS

Halifax Transit Route 320 currently provides service between Halifax, Dartmouth and Halifax Stanfield Airport. This route uses a platform on Silver Dart Drive opposite the Alt Hotel at the lower level of the terminal building. This route operates on a 60-minute frequency daily, arriving at the airport at nine minutes past the hour (eight minutes past on weekends) and departing for Halifax at 15 minutes past the hour. The service frequency is increased to 30 minutes during weekday peak periods (6:00-9:00 AM and 4:00-7:00 PM); additional buses during these times arrive at and depart from the airport at 39 and 45 past the hour, respectively.

It is recommended that the departure of the East Hants transit service from the Airport be aligned with Halifax Transit Route 320 to depart at 15 minutes past the hour. Aligning the departure times will ensure that passengers using both services have an opportunity to transfer to the other, and the consistent and regular clock face departure time will be easy for regular users to remember. Working from this baseline point, the scheduled times (relative to each hour) at key locations along the route is provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Proposed Route Schedule

| Stop | From Airport | Stop | To Airport |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Airport (depart) | 0:15 | Sportsplex (depart) | 0:43 |
| Big Stop | 0:22 | Logan/Brookside | 0:45 |
| Enfield | 0:24 | Superstore | 0:50 |
| Trunk 2/Rte 214 | 0:30 | Aquatic Centre (arrive) | 0:51 |
| Learning Centre | 0:31 | Aquatic Centre (depart) | 0:52 |
| Superstore | 0:33 | Learning Centre | 0:54 |
| Aquatic Centre (arrive) | 0:34 | Trunk 2/Rte 214 | 0:55 |
| Aquatic Centre (depart) | 0:35 | Enfield | 0:01 |
| Sportsplex (arrive) | 0:42 | Big Stop | 0:03 |
| | | Airport (arrive) | 0:10 |

Note: Buses run every hour during service hours and times given are minutes past each hour

The scheduled runs should begin each day and end each evening at the Sportsplex. This would mean a first departure at 6:43 a.m. to arrive at the airport at 7:10. The final run of the day would arrive at the Sportsplex at 19:42, having departed the airport at 19:15.

Three “timing points” are provided in the schedule: the Airport, the Aquatic Centre and the SportsPlex. At these timing points, the buses arrive then wait (if necessary) until their scheduled departure time arrives. Five minutes of waiting time is scheduled for the Airport and one minute for the other two timing points. These timing points also allow the bus driver to take a short relief break.

Routing has assumed that a connection would be constructed between Towerview Court and the new Highway Connector. If that connection is not made, the ability to loop through the residential neighbourhood is limited. Figure 5 shows how a dramatic shortening of the residential loop and abandonment of the loop into the Sportsplex site may be required to keep the same travel time as the proposed routing.

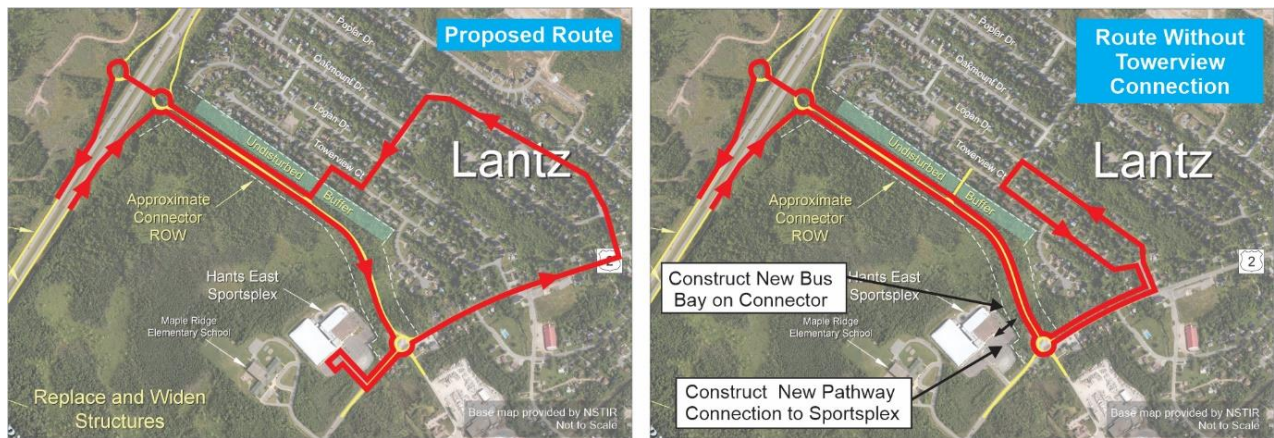


Figure 5 Route Adjustment with No Connection to Towerview Court

We have conducted a number of field simulation runs and projections of travel time on the new Lantz Interchange and Connector to verify the soundness of the route timing proposed. Nonetheless, some contingency plans are provided in Appendix C which might require consideration if route timings are unable to be kept consistently.

3.5 ANNUAL SERVICE HOURS

The recommended schedule involves 13.25 hours of service per day, 256 days per year, for a total of 3,392 annual service hours. The service will run:

- 6:35 a.m. to 7:50 p.m.,
- Monday to Friday,
- 12 months a year*

*Service is not recommended on Statutory Holidays: New Year’s Day, Good Friday, Canada Day, Labour Day and Christmas Day.

3.6 VEHICLE ACQUISITION OPTIONS

To initiate service, a single in-service bus is required plus one spare. We have identified several options below for acquiring an in-service bus and expect that Community Rider can provide a spare bus as needed. Our scan of the transit industry indicated that owning a bus outright or chartering a bus for special events are the only options realistically available. Leasing a bus or leasing to own is not something that is commonly available.

The 2015 Transit Service Business Plan recommended a low-floor bus with a passenger capacity of 19 to 24 passengers. This is typically a bus in the range of 24 feet in length. The low-floor design allows for passengers with ambulatory challenges to board the bus easily without the need to climb stairs. By adding an extendable ramp, the vehicle can be made fully accessible without the need for a lift. Other features that will be beneficial, but not mandatory, are a front bumper two-bike rack, air conditioning and interior/exterior video cameras.

This Plan has not investigated, nor does it intend to recommend alternative fuel technologies for the pilot implementation. Although electric-powered buses are seeing greater use, they are still an emerging technology. The current battery charge range would require the vehicle to be recharged at least once mid-day which, in a single-bus network, would impact schedule delivery. When the Municipality is in position to replace its initial bus, consideration could be given then to alternative fuels, which will have become more mature and probably more reliable options.

1. NEW LOW-FLOOR BUS

There are several manufacturers of this style of recommended bus in Canada. Efforts were made to contact each of the manufacturers however information received back was only from only one – Crestline Coach. In our experience, we would judge Crestline to be the premier provider of new buses (and ambulances) in Canada as they have a strong reputation for service and support. Crestline is based in Saskatoon but has a regional support person in Atlantic Canada.

The vehicle from their roster that best matches the recommended vehicle is the Champion – LF Transport. This vehicle can be manufactured in a variety of lengths from 24.5 to 31 feet providing capacity from 16 to 27 passengers. Equipped with a ramp, we expect this vehicle to cost \$160,000 new. Without the low-floor design, a bus like this would cost about \$120,000 new.



Photo 1 Crestline Coach - Champion LF Transport

2. DECOMMISSIONED HALIFAX TRANSIT BUSES

Halifax Transit has, in the past, provided decommissioned Access-a-bus and MetroX vehicles to other transit systems. Both vehicles are fully accessible, although there is likely to be insufficient seating capacity in the Access-a-Bus.

It is important to recognize that these buses have been decommissioned because their operator has determined they are at the end of their effective life. Even though there is no cost to acquire a vehicle of this type, it is likely to experience frequent breakdowns resulting in significant maintenance costs and issues with passengers regarding the reliability of the service. Bridgewater Transit, who recently acquired two decommissioned MetroX buses at no cost report that breakdowns have been frequent, but that the buses have provided great opportunity to launch the service with a reduced start-up investment.

3. DECOMMISSIONED HALIFAX STANFIELD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BUSES

Halifax Stanfield Airport has indicated that they are willing to provide a decommissioned Park-and-Fly shuttle bus at no cost. These buses are not accessible and would require some reconfiguration of the interior for adequate passenger seating.

Again, these buses have been decommissioned due to a determination of their inability to continue to provide effective service. Even though there is no cost to acquire a vehicle of this type, it is likely to experience frequent breakdowns resulting in significant maintenance costs and issues with passengers regarding the reliability of the service. This could be a factor if the spare bus is required on a frequent basis.

4. HALIFAX HARBOUR BRIDGES SHUTTLE BUS

During the Big Lift Project, Halifax Harbour Bridges (HHB) operated three shuttle buses. These buses operated somewhat steadily for two years but are no longer needed as the bridge closures have ended. HHB is now attempting to sell two of the buses.

We have inspected these buses and can report the following features:

- Odometers read approximately 200,000 kilometers
- Low-floor Crestline bus with automated ramp
- Air conditioned
- Interior and exterior video cameras
- Front bumper two-bike rack

At two years of use and 200,000 kilometers, these vehicles are at approximately half of the normal expected life for vehicles like this. The Municipality can expect to get another two to three years of service out of these buses.



Photo 2 Used Crestline Buses (Halifax Harbour Bridges Shuttle)

3.7 VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

There are several opportunities for vehicle maintenance in the Elmsdale area. The Elmsdale Service Centre (813 Highway 2) and Brannen's Service Centre (43 Market Drive) are two sites in close proximity to the route terminus at the Sportsplex and the capability to service a 24-foot bus. The preferred approach to vehicle maintenance is to negotiate (or issue an Expression of Interest) a schedule of inspection and routine maintenance.

We have confirmed with both Elmsdale Service Centre and Brannen's Service Centre that they have several such corporate agreements in place currently and would be eager to work with East Hants to maintain their buses. Both companies would be able to fulfill agreements that could include emergency on-site response and towing for that size a vehicle can be arranged locally.

3.8 VEHICLE STORAGE

While there is widespread acceptance that storing a vehicle in a heated indoor space when not in use helps protect the exterior of the vehicle and retains better lubricant viscosity reducing engine wear, we could find no quantitative data on the value of that measure in terms of extending vehicle life.

Transit properties in winter climates like ours have no consistent practice related to bus storage. Halifax Transit and Kings Transit store most buses outdoors with a select few stored indoors. Bridgewater Transit also stores their buses outside. We believe that outdoor storage, likely at the site of Community Rider, is the simplest approach at least for pilot stage of the service.

If indoor storage is strongly desired, there are three options that might be pursued.

OPTION 1: LEASE TRUCK BAYS FROM A LOCAL SUPPLIER

We have observed several buildings along the proposed route that have multiple truck bays, some of which may be unused or under-utilized. By issuing a public tender, or by working with a commercial real estate agent it may be possible to identify an inexpensive option for overnight vehicle storage.

OPTION 2: LEASE STORAGE SPACE FROM MAINTENANCE PROVIDER

To negotiate an arrangement with the vehicle maintenance provider to use one of their service bays for overnight vehicle storage. Service bays at a mechanic garages are sometimes filled overnight, and space to store a bus may not be guaranteed - however, storing a bus indoors “most nights” may be preferable to none at all. Our discussions with Elmsdale and Brannen’s Service Centres indicated that even if space is not available every night and weekend, they have secure outdoor parking space for those occasions.

OPTION 3: PURPOSE BUILT STORAGE FACILITY

A two-vehicle purpose-built storage garage on the East Hants Learning Centre could be constructed. A steel building sized 30 feet by 30 feet, on a concrete slab with two overhead doors would be adequate for this purpose. Sources indicate that US\$70 per square foot is a good indicator¹ of approximate turn-key construction costs, putting the cost of this building at about CDN\$90,000.

3.9 FARE MEDIA OPTIONS

There are a number of ways that passengers can pay their fare when boarding a transit bus. A number of fare payment options are described below.

CASH

Cash has, historically, been the primary means of payment for transit. Although there are other payment methods that are more secure and more easily administered, cash will continue to need to be accepted for single fare payment. Accepting cash fares will require at least the primary bus to have a secure fare box. It is now commonly accepted that transit buses will accept exact fare only and will not dispense change.

TICKETS

Selling packages of single-fare tickets can reduce the security issues of carrying cash and can reward frequent users by providing a discounted fare for purchasing in bulk. The challenge comes in finding vendors who will sell tickets to the public in convenient locations throughout the community.

MONTHLY PASSES

Like tickets, monthly passes remove the need for accepting cash-on-board and reward customers for frequent use. Also, like tickets, they require vendors for sales within the community. Monthly passes are superior, however, to tickets because passengers pay for the entire month, regardless of how many trips they make, thereby encouraging regular use. Normally, vendors are paid a commission of between three and five percent for their sale of tickets and passes. We have found, however, that many of the smaller systems in Nova Scotia are able to get merchants to sell for them at no cost as part of their community support.

¹ Sourced from angieslist.com; thespruce.com; and renoassist.ca

DAILY PASSES

Many systems will offer daily transit passes or three-day passes. We find that this type of fare is tailored more to tourists or visitors to the community who can then use transit to explore the area. We do not see this as a particularly useful fare mechanism in the single-route network initially planned for East Hants.

U-PASS

U-Pass is the semi-annual transit pass that is issued by post-secondary institutions. Normally, every registered student is required to pay for a U-Pass regardless of whether they use it or not. The fee for U-Pass at schools within the HRM is calculated by Halifax Transit to cover what they calculate as the cost of transporting students within their system. It may be possible for the Municipality to negotiate an arrangement with each of the schools offering U-Passes that has them increase the student fee for U-Pass by a small amount. This amount would transfer that increased fee to the Municipality in exchange for accepting U-Pass on the East Hants' transit service. This may be a complicated process and we recommend that the Municipality accept U-Passes with no agreement in place for a twelve-month test period, understanding that this represents lost revenue to the system. Necessary data can be collected through the course of this trial period to form the basis for a negotiation of U-Pass fees.

SMARTPHONE APPS

Using smartphones as payment mechanisms is becoming more evident and is certain to increase and improve in the future. HotSpot, the current provider of smartphone parking payment in HRM and a number of other urban areas in Atlantic Canada, provides such an app. To purchase a fare payment on their phone, the customer pays the fare from the HotSpot account and an animated image is transmitted to their phone for a limited period of time. When the customer boards the bus, the driver verifies the image. The fares collected by HotSpot are transferred to the Municipality monthly. There is little downside to this fare mechanism and it has the benefit of eliminating the exchange of cash and the procurement of sales vendors in the community. The Bridgewater transit system, which we believe is the only property currently using HotSpot for this purpose, reports that usage of the app is very low amongst their customer base.

RECOMMENDED FARE OPTIONS

While it is important to offer passengers a range of options to improve convenience of the service, too many mechanisms for fare payment could burden the administration of the system. For transit service start-up, we recommend implementing cash and monthly passes as the means of payment. U-Passes could also be accepted; however the Municipality should decide on a rate agreement with Halifax-based University/College Institutions.

3.10 SERVICE FARES

The 2015 Transit Service Business Plan included a listing of recommended fares and media. We believe that these fare recommendations remain valid with a few adjustments (see Table 6). A comparison of these fares to other transit services in Nova Scotia has been provided in Appendix D.

Table 6: Transit Fares Comparison from 2015 Transit Service Business Plan and this Transit Service Operating and Business Plan

| PASSENGER | EAST HANTS | |
|----------------------|------------|-----------|
| | 2015 PLAN | 2020 PLAN |
| Adult Cash | \$3.00 | |
| Senior Cash | \$3.00 | |
| Youth/Student Cash | \$3.00 | |
| Child Cash (6-13) | \$3.00 | |
| Child (5 & under) | free | |
| Adult Tickets (10) | \$25.50 | None |
| Senior Tickets (10) | \$21.50 | None |
| Student Tickets (10) | \$21.50 | None |
| Adult Month Pass | \$70.00 | |
| Senior Month Pass | \$60.00 | \$50.00 |
| Student Month Pass | \$60.00 | \$50.00 |
| Child Monthly Pass | \$40.00 | \$50.00 |

In discussion with stakeholders, we believe that tickets as a fare medium can be left out, at least during a pilot implementation. This will help to simplify the printing and vending tasks. We also question the need for four different monthly passes and the burden that places on printing and vending of passes. We recommend combining the child, student, and senior pass into a single pass as most of the agencies we surveyed do. We recommend a \$50 cost for this pass.

TRANSFERS TO HALIFAX TRANSIT SERVICE

Transferring between two distinct transit systems without paying a double fare would be of benefit for the East Hants Transit service. While having a transfer plan in place is a strong incentive for users, it can be a difficult arrangement to navigate between the two service providers. Detail on a potential service transfer fee with Halifax Transit has been provided in Appendix B.

4 PARTNERSHIP MODEL PROPSAL

As was recommended in the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan and directed by Municipal Staff, this Transit Service Operating and Business Plan continues to recommend that the Municipality seeks a partner to operate the transit service. Unlike the 2012 Corridor Feasibility Study and the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan however, this report includes collaboration with Community Rider (a transportation service provider currently operating within the community) who could serves as a very likely partner with the Municipality (see Section 1 for an overview of Community Rider).

Following interviews with staff and stakeholders (as discussed earlier in Section 2), a Roundtable Discussion was held with senior Municipal staff and Community Rider representatives. On February 20, 2020 at the Lloyd E. Matheson Centre. Discussion was focused around partnership development as well as roles and responsibilities for Community Rider and the Municipality.

Table 7 was used as the basis of discussion. Each ‘Transit Service Responsibility’ was discussed as an item that would be assigned to one of the two organizations during partnership development. As participants went through each Responsibility, a consensus of whose role it was to fulfill the item was decided by the group.

Table 7: Transit Service Responsibilities for the Municipality and Community Rider

| # | TRANSIT SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY | MUNICIPALITY | COMMUNITY RIDER |
|-----|---|--|--|
| 1. | Owns the Service (General oversight and management. Oversees scheduling, level of service, hours of operation adjustments, etc.). | ✓ | Reports back to Municipality on performance/issues |
| 2. | Owns the Bus (Agreement required with third party bus provider, responsible for liabilities, payments, etc.) | ✓ | |
| 3. | Operates the Service | | ✓ |
| 4. | Maintaining the Bus | Pays invoice from third party service provider | Schedules and organizes vehicle drop off and pick up |
| 5. | Storing the Bus | | ✓ |
| 6. | Insures the Bus | | ✓ |
| 7. | Insures the Service | ✓ | |
| 8. | Ensures drivers are properly licensed | | ✓ |
| 9. | Bus Stop set up and maintenance | ✓ | |
| 10. | Receives the revenue from cash onboard fares | Municipality receives revenues from riders. | Collects the fares. |

| | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 11. | Receives the revenue from monthly passes sales | Municipality receives revenues from pass sales. | |
| 12. | Co-ordinates the sale of monthly passes | | Produces and delivers monthly passes to vendor locations. |
| 13. | Collects and monitors Q/A or concerns from the public | ✓ - secondary contact (long range and management) | ✓ - primary contact (first and best knowledge of daily service) |
| 14. | Marketing and Communications | ✓ | |

TRANSIT SERVICE RESPONSIBILITY TABLE

The following is a summary of discussion points that were held during the review of each Responsibility item.

1. OWNERSHIP OF THE SERVICE

Although Community Rider is expected to operate the fixed route service, it was agreed upon that the Municipality should take ownership of it. As part of the contract agreement, Community Rider will be expected to report on a certain set of Key Performance Indicators (e.g. ridership uptake, day-to-day operations, scheduling/service challenges and solutions). On the Municipality’s side, staff will be required to set key performance standards, oversee the service, and coordinate with Community Rider regularly.

2. OWNERSHIP OF THE BUS

It was agreed upon that since the Municipality should own the service, it should also own the transit vehicle. It was noted by the group that receiving funding and/or donations to purchase (or help purchase) the vehicle is also easier for local governments to acquire than it is for non-government service providers. See discussion on vehicle purchase options in Section 3.6 of this report.

3. OPERATING THE SERVICE

Community Rider should operate the transit service delivery. The transit service will be operated according to certain performance standards as stipulated by the Municipality and agreed upon by Community Rider in the Terms and Conditions of their contract. Routine reports should be provided back to the Municipality at a regular and specified interval agreed upon by the two parties.

4. MAINTAINING THE BUS

Ensuring that the bus is maintained and serviced at regular intervals will fall on both parties. Since the Municipality owns both the service and the bus, it is in their best interest to ensure the vehicle is well-taken care of. While the Municipality will be responsible for ensuring routine maintenance is conducted, Community Rider would be responsible for coordinating and scheduling regular appointments as well as bringing the vehicle in for additional as required. The Municipality will be responsible for paying the invoices from a third party for maintenance and servicing.

5. STORING THE BUS

As discussed in Section 3.8, it is recommended that bus storage remain outside. There is little quantitative evidence that storing buses indoors dramatically increase the life span of the vehicles and it is common practice locally in Nova Scotia to store public transit busses outdoors. The responsibility for daily storage should fall onto Community Rider.

6. INSURES THE BUS AND THE DRIVERS

Although the Municipality owns the motor vehicle, Community Rider will operate it. As such, it is expected that Community Rider will provide the insurance for drivers and all vehicle-related incidents.

7. INSURES THE SERVICE

While the bus and all vehicle-related incidents are insured by Community Rider, it is advised that the Municipality have the transit service itself insured to cover all non-vehicle related incidents (e.g. passenger slips while waiting for a bus at a bus stop due to poor maintenance or snow clearing). This additional insurance can likely be incorporated on to the Municipality's existing insurance policies for other contracted work (e.g. public works).

8. ENSURES DRIVERS ARE PROPERLY TRAINED AND LICENSED

Community Rider is expected to operate the bus and provide qualified drivers that hold the appropriate operator licenses

9. BUS STOP SET UP AND MAINTENANCE

Fixed bus stops will be utilized for the transit route with the majority of stops being within the public right-of-way on Trunk 2 and Rte 214, on Municipal property, or on commercial destinations. Since many of the stops will be on municipally-owned sidewalks or on municipal property, and the municipality has contracting agreements for public works sidewalk clearance, the responsibility for bus stop location, set up, and maintenance should be on the responsibility of the local government.

10. RECEIVES THE REVENUE FROM CASH ONBOARD FARES

It is expected that Community Rider will be responsible for collecting cash onboard from riders. As cash is collected, it will be important for Community Rider to have the necessary collecting controls in place to keep track of all onboard revenue. In addition to onboard controls, proper financial reporting will also be expected of Community Rider so that the Municipality can clearly track revenues coming in on a regular basis.

11. RECEIVES THE REVENUE FROM CASH ONBOARD FARES

Similar to collecting fares onboard, Community Rider would also be expected to receive and report on all revenue collected from monthly sales. Proper financial reporting will be expected of Community Rider so that the Municipality can clearly track revenues generated from the transit service.

12. CO-ORDINATES THE SALE OF MONTHLY PASSES

It was discussed amongst the group that monthly passes should be convenient and easy for transit riders to acquire. Suggestions on how and where to sell the monthly passes included partnering with local commercial/retail stores (e.g. corner/convenience stores, grocery stores), municipal buildings (e.g. recreation centre, municipal office and library), as well as the East Hants Learning Association's office. Online order and mailouts were also suggested by the group. Regardless of how the passes are sold, there will be additional manpower required to produce the physical passes, deliver them to the various sale locations, then return to collect cash/revenue from the retail vendor. If online sale was pursued, appropriate online infrastructure would be required as well as manpower to send the passes out the mail.

It was decided amongst the group that this responsibility and coordination of pass sales would be on Community Rider.

13. COLLECTS AND MONITORS COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Providing a contact for the public will be an important component of the service provision. During the Roundtable Discussion, attendees felt that both Community Rider and the Municipality would have a role to play for public communication. It was agreed that Community Rider would have the first and best knowledge of the day-to-day operations and therefore should be the organization that the public reaches out to first. For long-range planning and general oversight management, the public would be directed (by Community Rider) to a representative within the Municipality.

14. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

As the local government owns the service, the marketing and communications related to promoting and informing the public should fall on to the Municipality. More effort and resources will be required at service start up, however once the service is established, ongoing marketing and communications will primarily be addressed as follows:

- **Communication Regarding Service Changes:** Municipality and Community Rider work together to determine what those changes are, then Municipality issues the public notice through its communication media protocols;
- **Responses to Customer Inquiries:** Similar to item #12, Community Rider would respond to day-to-day questions while the Municipality will collect questions and feedback on the long-term planning and overall management;
- **Recruitment of New Riders:** The Municipality is expected to carry on regular marketing activities for the service, with insight on messaging, communication, and service delivery needs from Community Rider.

5 FINANCIAL PLAN

5.1 COST SUMMARY

The cost to the Municipality of operating fixed route transit service and projection of revenue for the first three years is summarized in Table 8. The details of this analysis are described more fully in the following sections.

Table 8 Service Cost Summary

| | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Capital Costs | | | |
| Vehicles* | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Bus Stops (23) | \$11,500 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Superstore Curb and Sidewalk Cost | \$8,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Bus Fare Boxes (2) and AVL | \$3,000 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total Capital Costs | \$21,500 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Operating Costs | | | |
| Staffing | \$49,500 | \$19,800 | \$20,100 |
| Municipal Operational Responsibilities | \$30,500 | \$26,000 | \$28,100 |
| Capital Reserve Payment | \$25,000 | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| Operating Payment to Community Rider | \$208,420 | \$211,538 | \$214,718 |
| Total Operating Costs | \$313,420 | \$282,338 | \$287,918 |
| Total Costs (Operating + Capital) | \$334,920 | \$282,338 | \$287,918 |
| Revenue | | | |
| Fare Revenue | \$47,420 | \$55,323 | \$63,226 |
| Total Revenue | \$47,420 | \$55,323 | \$63,226 |
| Net Investment Required from the Municipality | \$287,500 | \$227,015 | \$224,692 |

* Assumes a grant will cover the cost of vehicle acquisition

5.2 CAPITAL COSTS

VEHICLES

We recommend that a low-floor cut-away 24-foot bus with capacity for a minimum of 16 passengers be purchased. Crestline Coaches sells a bus of this description new for between \$150,000 and \$200,000. The bus should have an access ramp and a front bumper bike rack. Other desirable features are video cameras and air conditioning.

A better alternative, we believe, to purchasing a new bus is to make an offer to Halifax Harbour Bridges for one of the shuttle buses that they no longer use. These vehicles are a perfect fit for what is needed for the East Hants service and include a bike rack, air conditioning, cameras and a wheelchair ramp. We believe these buses would have two to three years of life remaining and could likely be purchased for a reasonable amount. This is a unique opportunity, but the Municipality would have to act quickly, as Halifax Harbour Bridges is anxious to dispose of the vehicles.

The East Hants & Area Community Rider has indicated that they currently have a bus in their inventory that is suited as a backup bus. As an alternative, a decommissioned Access-a-Bus from Halifax Transit or a decommissioned Park-and-Fly shuttle bus from Halifax Stanfield Airport could be acquired at no cost.

We are confident that an opportunity exists to purchase a used bus at no cost (or a new bus at a substantially reduced cost) using a combination of Provincial funding and a grant from Halifax Stanfield International Airport and have therefore not included that cost in our financial plan.

BUS STOPS

Proposed bus stop locations, 23 in total, are shown in Appendix A. These locations should be reviewed with the Engineering Department and with N.S. Transportation Infrastructure & Public Works. Once confirmed, it is recommended that bus stop signs be installed at each of the stops identified. The estimated capital cost of each bus stop is \$500, for a total cost of \$11,500.

The 2015 Transit Service Business Plan recommended \$8,000 for a curb and concrete sidewalk (with a curb ramp for mobility devices and strollers) at the Superstore stop. We recommend this feature be retained, but because this is no longer a timing point for the route, we do not believe the bus bay recommended in the Business Plan is required.

For the Sportsplex stop, East Hants should confirm that the bus can use the existing bus bay or an adjacent location and develop a Memorandum of Understanding to this effect. We have confirmed with Halifax Stanfield Airport that sharing the use of the existing transit stops at the terminal building and on Barnes Drive may be shared with Halifax Transit, although a Memorandum of Understanding would need to be entered into.

FARE BOXES

It is recommended that East Hants purchase a manual fare box for the transit vehicle it owns. Manual fare boxes (rather than electronic registering fare boxes) can be purchased for approximately \$1,000 from vendors such as Coach & Equipment Manufacturing. Brands include “Main” fare box, a division of Euclid, and Diamond Manufacturing. Halifax Transit is in the process of replacing its current fare boxes and may present an opportunity to acquire a used one.

For the vehicle on stand-by, the Community Rider would be asked either to provide a temporary, but secure, means of collecting fares.

There should be a minimum of three secure cash cartridges that fit into the farebox. We recommend that at the end of the morning shift, the morning shift driver will remove the cartridge from the fare box (cartridge #1) and replace it with any empty cylinder that he picked up from the Transit office the day previous (cartridge #2). The driver would then drop off the full cartridge at the Transit office and pick up an empty cartridge (cartridge #3) that was dropped off the day previous. The driver would keep that empty cartridge and bring it with him for his shift the next morning. A person responsible for receiving and emptying the cartridges at the Transit office would need to be designated and a protocol developed to ensure the cash is counted and deposited at the bank properly.

AUTOMATED VEHICLE LOCATION

For the first contract term, a basic Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) system should be provided by Community Rider. Models used by the trucking industry are relatively inexpensive (estimated at \$1,000) and will allow East Hants and the contractor to monitor exactly what service was operated and when. This system is included in the estimated operating costs for service delivery. AVL also allows third party apps to provide real-time vehicle tracking information to customers using their home computers or smart phones. A screen shot of the Bridgewater Transit network and the location of its bus is shown in Figure 6 (numbers are bus stops; the circle shows the bus location in real time).

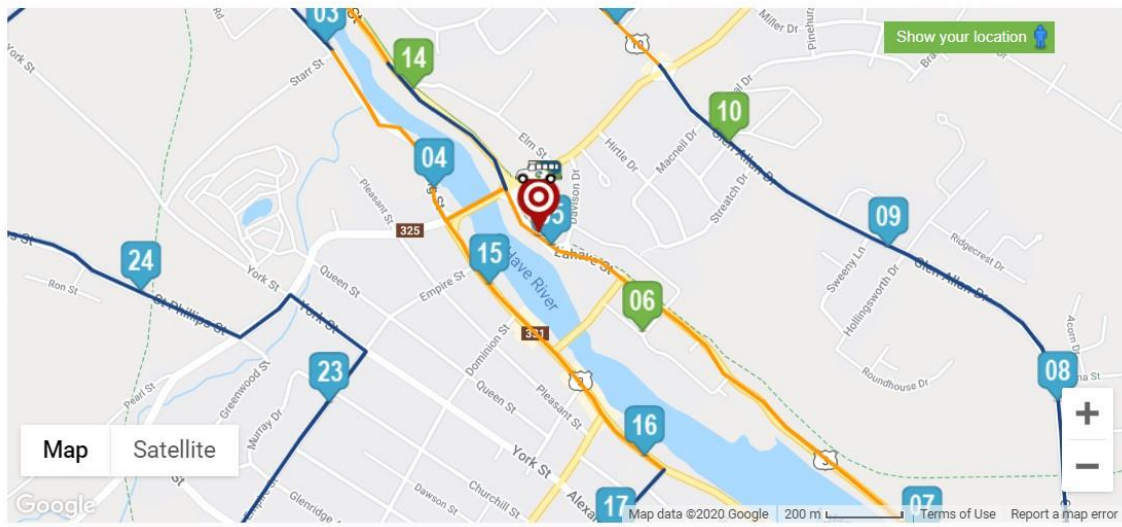


Figure 6 Bridgewater On-line Bus Tracker

5.3 MUNICIPAL OPERATING COSTS

1. STAFFING REQUIREMENT

Staffing resources from the Municipality will be required to manage the service and be a point of contact for Community Rider and members of the public. We feel the staffing requirements described in the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan are still accurate for the first 3 years and have been reflected in this Transit Service Operation and Business Plan.

Staffing Costs (from the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan)

Approximately 0.3 FTE will be required to manage the service on an ongoing basis. Additional staff time will be required during the first-year of operation, approximately twice the number of staff hours (or 0.6 FTE). This includes significant effort on the part of the Communications and Project Officer to develop marketing and communication materials. The estimated salary of \$65,000 per year accounts for the more senior Transit Coordinator position, the more junior Transit Clerk position and the Communications position. Again, a 2% rate of inflation was applied to salaries for the second and third years.

It is also recommended that East Hants seek external support for the preparation of the Request for Proposal and contract documents; the suggested budget of \$10,500 is based on 2 weeks (75) hours of external support at a rate of \$140 per hour.

2. MARKETING REQUIREMENT

Marketing resources will also be required annually from the Municipality to communicate and promote the transit service and to communicate scheduling and operating updates. Similar to staffing requirements (described above), we feel the “rules of thumb” for marketing requirements for the first 3 years as described in the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan are still accurate.

Marketing Costs (from the 2015 Transit Service Business Plan)

In most transit systems, marketing costs account for approximately 2% of total operating costs. The ongoing marketing and communication costs in years 1, 2 and 3 are estimated based on this rule of thumb.

However, in the first year of service, launch-related activities will require significant additional investment – estimated at an additional [2%], or 4% of [total] operating costs. This will cover the costs of designing and printing posters, brochures, decals and transit tickets and passes. (In small municipalities, transit tickets and passes are generally designed in-house and printed by an external company, with minimal security features.) This additional budget will also cover the costs of advertising with local media outlets, setting up booths at community events and any other launch-related activities or promotions.

Given the above “rules of thumb” marketing costs for year 1 (\$12,000), year 2 (\$5,500), and year 3 (\$5,600) have been applied to the operating budget shown in Table 14.

3. VEHICLE MAINTENANCE (SCHEDULED AND UNSCHEDULED)

The Municipality will be responsible for all preventative maintenance and vehicle repairs. We recommend that an annual service agreement be negotiated with a vehicle service centre near to the route (see Section 3.7). Based on our in-field research, we expect the cost of scheduled maintenance to be \$14,000 per year and unscheduled repair work to be \$4,000 in the first year, increasing by \$2,000 each year.

4. BUS STOP AND INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE

With most of the bus stops on-street there will be little additional maintenance beyond standard street and sidewalk snow clearing. Off-street stops at the Airport, Aquatic Centre, and Sportsplex are assumed to be cleared of snow by the facility operator. The off-street stop at the Superstore may require some additional snow clearing Municipal crews. Similar to what the 2015 Business Plan recommends, \$500 per year has been budgeted for additional snow clearing.

5. CAPITAL RESERVE CONTRIBUTION

Given the estimated 5 to 7-year lifespan of a new vehicle, it is recommended that East Hants allocate \$25,000 (one sixth of the vehicle cost) to a capital reserve fund in years 2, 3 and thereafter. This will enable East Hants to replace the vehicle at the end of its lifespan. If a used bus is purchased to initiate the service, an additional capital outlay will be required when the used bus is retired.

5.4 COMMUNITY RIDER OPERATING COSTS

1. SERVICE DELIVERY (DRIVER SALARIES AND FUEL)

The proposed routing would result in the daily vehicle usage shown in Table 9.

Table 9 Daily Bus Usage

| | DAILY HOURS | DAILY KILOMETERS |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|
| In-Service | 13.0 | 507 |
| Dead-heading (start/end of daily operations) | 0.5 | 10 |

Two driving shifts will be required each service day with an additional half-hour added to each shift for start-up, shut-down and shift overlap. This service will require experienced drivers and, (based on a desktop review of other

public transit bus driver salaries), we have assumed a gross pay of \$25 per hour per driver with 15% for benefits (total \$28.75/hr). With the inclusion of fuel, the total cost of operating the bus is estimated at \$570 per day (see Table 10).

Table 10 Daily and Annual Bus Operating Costs

| | ASSUMPTIONS | DAILY COST | ANNUAL COST (256 DAYS) |
|--------------|---|--------------|---------------------------|
| Driver #1 | 7 hours @ \$28.75 | \$201 | \$51,456 |
| Driver #2 | 7 hours @ \$28.75 | \$201 | \$51,456 |
| Fuel | 517 km @ 25 litres/100 km @ \$1.30/litre | \$168 | \$43,008 |
| Total | | \$570 | \$145,920 |

2. ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT COSTS

Community Rider will require additional administrative time to manage the operation, control the revenue, administer the production and distribution of monthly passes, and interact with the public.

The office space and personnel time required will be shared with other duties of Community Rider and the East Hants Learning Centre. We have budgeted for 0.25 Full Time Employees (FTE) for management and 0.75 FTE for support services. Using current data, we have assumed (including benefits) \$62,000 per year for a management position and \$50,000 per year for a support position.

3. OTHER COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH FIXED ROUTE OPERATION

Other costs associated with operating the Fixed Route Service are presented in Table 11. Estimated costs have been assumed based on the current data provided by Community Rider.

Table 11: Other Operating Costs Associated with Fixed Route Service

| COST | ANNUAL COST ESTIMATE |
|--|-------------------------|
| Monthly Pass Production and Distribution | \$1,500 |
| Insurance Cost | \$2,500 |
| Rent (as a percentage of the Community Rider service) | \$3,000 |
| Office Expenses (as a percentage of the Community Rider service) | \$2,500 |

5.5 FARES AND REVENUE

RECOMMENDED FARES

The financial analysis uses the fare recommendations from Section 3.10 of this report. To simplify administration during the pilot phase of the project, we recommend only the acceptance of cash (\$3.00/trip) and monthly passes (\$70 for adults). We have also combined senior, student and child monthly passes into a single pass (\$50 per month). Once the pilot implementation is completed, consideration may be given to stratifying the fare table and offering tickets as an additional fare medium.

Although the inclusion of a premium fare for the Airport as a mechanism to offering transfers to Halifax Transit buses is discussed extensively in Section 3.10, its adoption is uncertain and has not been included in the financial analysis. Similarly, acceptance of U-Pass, which was suggest in Section 3.9 is not considered in the analysis.

RIDERSHIP AND REVENUE PROJECTIONS

Ridership projections from the 2015 Business Plan were developed based on observed ridership levels in peer transit systems in Canada. The 2015 Business Plan projected 6 to 8 trips per revenue-service hour in the first three years of transit service. With the scheduled 3,392 annual service hours, year 1 ridership is projected to be approximately 20,000. Year 2 ridership is projected to be 24,000, increasing to 27,000 in year 3.

Fare revenue projections were developed based on the ridership within each fare class and shown in Table 12.

Table 12 Ridership and Fare Revenue Projections

| RIDERSHIP AND FARE REVENUE | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Revenue service hours | 3,392 | 3,392 | 3,392 |
| Trips per revenue service hour | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Total trips | 20,352 | 23,744 | 27,136 |
| Average fare ² | \$2.33 | \$2.33 | \$2.33 |
| Total Fare Revenue | \$47,420 | \$55,323 | \$63,226 |
| Trips per capita | 2.3 | 2.7 | 3.1 |

² The average fare price was calculated based on anticipated percentage of riders who were adult single-trip fare (20%), adult monthly passholders (20%), senior/student single-trip fare (30%), and senior/student monthly passholders (30%).

5.6 THREE-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN

The three-year financial plan is summarized in Table 14 which has been summarized in Sections 5.2 – 5.5. It should be noted that costs for all personnel involved in the service include wages and 15% for benefits and have been increased by 2.0% annually.

To simplify payment for the service, we recommend that a *per service hour rate* be agreed to by the Municipality and Community Rider for the operation of the service. This would be tracked and invoiced by Community Rider monthly. This rate should be reviewed and renegotiated each year.

Table 13 shows a recommended rate for year one of the service and suggests a range of fees based on the average price of fuel over that period. This approach lessens the risk for Community Rider related to fluctuating fuel prices.

Table 13 Suggested Service Provision Payment

**OPERATING CHARGE PER
SERVICE HOUR**

| | |
|---|---------|
| Fuel cost > \$1.35 per litre | \$63.61 |
| Fuel cost between \$1.25 and \$1.35 per litre | \$62.62 |
| Fuel cost between \$1.15 and \$1.25 per litre | \$60.63 |
| Fuel cost < \$1.15 per litre | \$59.64 |

Table 14 Three-Year Financial Plan

| | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Capital Costs | | | |
| Vehicles | \$0 | - | - |
| Fare Boxes (2) and AVL software | \$3,000 | - | - |
| Bus Stop Signs (23) | \$11,500 | - | - |
| Sidewalk and Curb at Superstore | \$8,000 | - | - |
| Total Capital Costs | \$21,500 | - | - |
| Community Rider – Additional Direct Operating Costs for Fixed Route Service (256 operating days) | | | |
| Driver Salaries | \$102,912 | \$104,970 | \$107,069 |
| Fuel | \$43,008 | \$43,008 | \$43,008 |
| Monthly Pass Production and Distribution | \$1,500 | \$1,500 | \$1,500 |
| Vehicle Insurance | \$2,500 | \$2,500 | \$2,500 |
| Community Rider – Additional Incremental Costs Attributable to Fixed Route Service | | | |
| Administration Management (0.25 FTE) | \$15,500 | \$15,810 | \$16,126 |
| Administration Support (0.75 FTE) | \$37,500 | \$38,250 | \$39,015 |
| Office Space Rental | \$3,000 | \$3,000 | \$3,000 |
| Office Expenses | \$2,500 | \$2,500 | \$2,500 |
| Total Learning Centre Operating Costs | \$208,420 | \$211,538 | \$214,718 |
| Municipality Operating Costs | | | |
| Staffing (refer to 2015 Business Plan) | \$49,500 | \$19,800 | \$20,100 |
| Marketing | \$12,000 | \$5,500 | \$5,600 |
| Stop/Shelter Maintenance | \$500 | \$500 | \$500 |
| Scheduled Vehicle Maintenance (tires, oil, inspection, etc.) | \$14,000 | \$14,000 | \$14,000 |
| Other Vehicle Maintenance | \$4,000 | \$6,000 | \$8,000 |
| Capital Reserve Contribution | \$25,000 | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| Payment for Service (see section above) | \$208,420 | \$211,538 | \$214,718 |
| Total Municipality Operating Cost | \$313,420 | \$282,338 | \$287,918 |
| Total Cost (All Capital and Operating) | \$334,920 | \$282,338 | \$287,918 |
| Total Revenues (Fares) | \$47,420 | \$55,323 | \$63,226 |
| Net Investment Required from the Municipality | \$287,500 | \$227,015 | \$224,692 |

6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. APPROVE THE TRANSIT SERVICE OPERATING AND BUSINESS PLAN IN PRINCIPLE AND SET AN IMPLEMENTATION TARGET DATE

As a framework for further planning, the items recommended in this Transit Service Operating and Business Plan should be approved in principle. We recommend establishing a target date for implementation. A date that seems to make sense is to plan for service start-up once the new Highway102/Lantz interchange is complete which as we understand it, is 2022. To align with beginning of year budget timeframes, an appropriate start date could be the beginning of fiscal year 2022-23. Presently, no budget commitments are required to approve this Plan in principle.

2. PURSUE IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AS LISTED IN SECTION 6.2

Once approved in principle, it is recommended that the Municipality follow the steps outlined in section 6.2 of this report.

6.2 IMPLEMENTATION (NEXT STEPS)

Should Council approve this Transit Service Operating and Business Plan in principle, the following is a list of items that will be required during the planning stages prior to the launch of the pilot project. Timeframes for each step have also been provided.

1. ENTER INTO A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH COMMUNITY RIDER TO OPERATE FIXED ROUTE TRANSIT SERVICE

TIMEFRAME: 0-6 months

Utilize this report to create a Memorandum of Understanding with Community Rider to operate a fixed route service in exchange for a per-service-hour rate should be signed by both parties. Terms in the MOU should be clear on roles and responsibilities of each party, financial reporting and aid/contribution processes, and service evaluation measures. It should be noted that servicing details and a payment fees can be negotiated at a later date, however establishing an MOU early will allow both parties to begin planning for future implementation.

2. MAKE AN OFFER TO HALIFAX HARBOUR BRIDGES TO PURCHASE ONE OF THEIR USED SHUTTLE BUSES

TIMEFRAME: 0-6 months

We believe that the used Crestline buses that Halifax Harbour Bridges (HHB) is currently looking to sell are ideally suited to the service proposed for East Hants and that one of these buses will provide good service for a minimum of three years. It is our expectation that HHB will issue a tender for disposal of these buses within the next few months and the Municipality should monitor that on the provincial procurement website and be in position to make a bid. Although the purchase of a vehicle so far in advance of the implementation date seems excessive, we believe it is warranted given the unique opportunity it presents.

3. NEGOTIATE A CAPITAL GRANT WITH HALIFAX STANFIELD AIRPORT AUTHORITY FOR PURCHASE OF VEHICLE

TIMEFRAME: 0-6 months

The Halifax Stanfield Airport Authority has indicated their support for public transit providing service to the airport. Several years ago, they committed a one-time capital grant to Halifax Transit which launched MetroX service to the airport. We recommend that the Authority be asked to provide the Municipality with a grant to purchase a used bus from Halifax Harbour Bridges (see step above). The Municipality should be aware that such a grant from the Airport Authority will be accompanied by an agreement which will require a pro-rated repayment of the grant should the transit service discontinue operation within a stated period of time (likely three to four years).

4. ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH HALIFAX STANFIELD AIRPORT AUTHORITY TO USE THE AIRPORT BUS STOPS

TIMEFRAME: 0-12 months

The use of the existing bus stops at the terminal curbside and on Barnes Drive will be a critical component to the East Hants service. Entering into an agreement with the Airport Authority will establish a commitment from both parties to ensure that these stops will be used in accordance with the needs of each party. An overview of the terms of such an agreement are provided in Appendix E.

5. ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH ELMSDALE SUPERSTORE FOR THE USE OF THEIR PROPERTY FOR A BUS STOP AND ADDED INFRASTRUCTURE

TIMEFRAME: 12-18 months

The routing plan uses a service road on the Superstore property for a bus stop and recommends the addition of a curb and sidewalk to aid in boarding of wheelchairs. This agreement will commit the Municipality to maintenance of and liability at the stop.

6. SET A BOUNDARY FOR A TRANSIT TAX AND DETERMINE A TAXATION RATE

TIMEFRAME: 12-18 months

The proposed East Hants transit service will provide an important new municipal service to many area residents but will provide little or no value to residents who are outside of reasonable walking distance to the route. A transit service boundary should be established and residential properties within that boundary should have a transit rate added to their assessed tax bill based on the added operating cost to the municipality. Although the existing service area boundary, or other already-defined municipal boundaries, may be suitably applied for this purpose, HRM has found that a separate boundary needed to be drawn to ensure that only those within a specified distance of a bus stop (one kilometer in HRM's case) would pay the transit tax. East Hants should consider what makes the most sense in their circumstances and set the tax rate boundary as appropriate.

7. APPROACH LOCAL MERCHANTS AS SALES AGENTS FOR MONTHLY TRANSIT PASSES AND ROUTE MAPS

TIMEFRAME: 12-18 months

Identify and approach local commercial merchants within the community to serve as sales agents for monthly transit pass purchasing and route map distribution locations. In addition to municipal buildings (e.g. Sportsplex, Aquatic Centre, Library/Municipal Building), the location of where monthly passes are to be sold should be at popular destination points and distributed across the designated route.

It should be noted that it is typical for merchants to be paid a level of commission for pass sales however other service providers in the province (e.g. Bridgewater), have had local merchants waive those fees. It will be up to the Municipality to make arrangements with appropriate vendors and encourage a zero-fee/zero commission agreement for the sale of monthly passes.

8. ISSUE AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

TIMEFRAME: 12-18 months

Once a vehicle is acquired, the Municipality should issue a tender for annual servicing of the bus. This service should include monthly vehicle inspections and other scheduled maintenance such as tire replacement. Options for vehicle storage could also be explored in this call. The agreement should also ensure that the service provider will meet all of the inspection requirements of the Motor Carrier Act. This could be an open call, although it is not unreasonable for the Municipality to invite submissions only from Brannen's Service Centre and Elmsdale Service Centre as they are both capable of performing the work and are optimally situated along the route.

9. ACQUIRE STAFFING RESOURCES

TIMEFRAME: 0-6 months

The 2015 Transit Service Business Plan identifies some start-up and ongoing operational duties for Municipal staff along with the estimated FTE's for those duties. These duties require only a portion of the time allocated to a full-time employee(s). As the departmental structures and staffing with the Municipality evolve as the target implementation approaches, consideration should be given to incorporating these duties into existing or new job descriptions.

10. CONFIRM PLACEMENT OF BUS STOP LOCATIONS WITH NSTIR

TIMEFRAME: 12-18 months

Using the recommendations on bus stop placement in this report, the Municipality should work with Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (NSTIR)'s regional manager to confirm bus stop locations. Locations will likely be evaluated based on vehicle on safety sight lines and driver ability to pull into and out of traffic easily.

11. NEGOTIATE AN AGREEMENT FOR INTER-AGENCY TRANSFERS WITH HALIFAX TRANSIT

TIMEFRAME: 12-18 months

Section 3.10 of this report described an approach to creating a fee structure for transferring between East Hants Transit and Halifax Transit that achieves a middle ground between paying a full double fare and free transferring. The Municipality should contact Halifax Transit to initiate discussion on this approach prior to service implementation.

6.3 OTHER ITEMS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

The following are items that will likely need further exploration by the Municipality as pre-implementation planning phases become more advanced.

1. FINALIZE TAXATION BOUNDARY AND TAXATION RATE

TIMEFRAME: 12-18 months

Staff should consider the final taxation boundary and rate for the transit service and have it incorporated into future budget reports to Council. In addition to boundary and assessed value rates, consideration for types of land uses should also be taken into account – specifically how (or if) commercial/employment area properties should be taxed to help contribute to the service for their employees and customers.

2. IDENTIFY ANY ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR BUS STOP MAINTENANCE

TIMEFRAME: 12-18 months

Additional maintenance and sidewalk clearing around bus stops may be required by public works. The level of expected service at bus stops should be established and communicated by the Municipality to public works employees/contractors.

3. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM AND CONTENT (PRE AND POST-IMPLEMENTATION)

TIMEFRAME: 0-18months

A level of marketing and communications with the community needs to be done to ensure residents and businesses know that the service is being planned for during pre-implementation phases, as well as when it launches and all information regarding the service itself.

4. APPROACH POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS WITH A PROPOSAL FOR ACCEPTING U-PASS

TIMEFRAME: 12+months

Section 3.9 of this report discusses the potential of receiving revenue from post-secondary institutions that issue UPasses to their students in exchange for accepting UPass on East Hants Transit buses. Agreements would be required with each institution. To start, we recommend that the Municipality accept U-Passes with no agreement in place for a twelve-month test period, understanding that this represents lost revenue to the system. Necessary data can be collected through the course of this trial period to form the basis for a negotiation of U-Pass fees.