



## REGULAR BUSINESS

### MEETING OF THE ST. JOHN'S TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

A regular business meeting of the St. John's Transportation Commission was held on Thursday, February 27, 2020 commencing at Noon at the Metrobus Transit Centre, 25 Messenger Drive.

Present at the meeting were:

Ian Froude	Chair/Councillor
Shawn Skinner	Vice Chair
Dave Lane	Commissioner/City Councillor
Hope Jamieson	Commissioner/City Councillor
Colleen Galgay	Commissioner
Paul Walsh	Commissioner
Kirsten Morry	Commissioner
Kevin Breen	City Manager
Judy Powell	General Manager
Linda Ryan	Administrative Assistant

Absent: Derek Coffey Deputy City Manager, Financial Management

#### I. PROCEDURAL

- The Chair called the meeting to order.
- L. Ryan, recorded the minutes of the meeting.

#### II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

- It was moved by Vice Chair Skinner and seconded by Commissioner Jamieson that the agenda for this meeting date be approved.
- It was moved by Commissioner Lane and seconded by Vice Chair Skinner that the minutes of the Commission meeting dated January 30, 2020 be adopted as distributed.

#### III. BUSINESS ARISING

##### 1. Pass for Income Support Recipients

- On Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, the province's Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour announced at City Hall its new pilot project that will provide free transit to approximately 10,000 people in the metro region (including St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise) receiving income support.
- Previously, people on income support would only receive a free bus pass if they attended a minimum of eight (8) scheduled and verified medical appointments per month.
- The new program is intended to eliminate a policy that created a strain on the province's medical system through unneeded appointments, significant paperwork and misuse of medical resources.
- All eligible income support recipients will now qualify for a free Metrobus or GoBus pass without restrictions.
- The intent of the program to remove barriers through transit for those who are most vulnerable in our society in providing people greater access to health care, employment opportunities, and other government and community services for an improved quality of life.
- The province worked in collaboration with the City of St. John's and Metrobus to develop the pilot program to be delivered by the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour in collaboration with Metrobus.
- Through this partnership, the negotiated cost of the program is \$2.1 million annually.
- The bus passes are expected to be available in early April. Eligible clients will be mailed a bus pass together with an information package containing program details and instructions to activate the pass. Passes will be automatically reloaded by Metrobus at the end of every month until the pass is cancelled by the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

**1. Pass for Income Support Recipients (Continued)**

- Passes will be smart cards and look the same as every other bus pass. Ridership numbers will be tracked and based on aggregate data (based on a series of numbers for usage) for privacy purposes. Customer information will be accounted for on the province's end.
- The General Manager informed that the passes are manufactured in China and the factory there was closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The factory has recently re-opened and delivery is expected by mid to late March.
- Metrobus staff members are continuing to work with the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour in collaboration on the delivery details. The Department is working on the communication piece and meeting with their staff with respect to administering the program through their Department.
- The project will run up to December 31, 2021, after which time the province will evaluate its investment and inform future program delivery.
- Individuals in receipt of Income Support living in the Metro St. John's area can call 709-729-7888 if they have any questions related to the program.

**2. GoBus Eligibility Assessments**

- Scheduling appointments during January for eligibility assessments has been challenging, as noted below. Several were interrupted due to the weather and the SOE and will be rescheduled.

<b>GOBUS ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS</b>	<b>JANUARY 2020</b>	<b>TOTALS TO DATE</b>
Assessments completed	15	34
• New applicants	2	7
• Existing customers	13	27
Approved	14	32
Denied	0	0
Conditional	1	2
Accounts closed	3	3

- The Manager of Accessible Transit discussed with Horizon Health Solutions the option of conducting off-site assessments for locations/organizations frequented by GoBus customers. Horizon is open to the idea and working towards making this a viable option for customers.
- Chair Froude stated that he recognizes that having to participate in an assessment may unfortunately create stress and uncertainty for some customers. He hopes no one is choosing to not make an application for GoBus services, to avoid having to participate in the eligibility assessment process. The General Manager assured that if this happened to be the case, that D. Power, Manager of Accessible Transit, would follow up on any instances of which she might be aware.

**3. Free-Ride Program (Free Fares January 25, 2020—February 7, 2020)**

- Following the City's State of Emergency (SOE), Metrobus ridership was up approximately 38% between Saturday, January 25<sup>th</sup> and Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup>.
- During the free-ride period, ride counts are estimates recorded by transit operators pressing the 'star key' on the onboard farebox each time someone boarded the bus in order to capture ridership data during this time.
- There were approximately 172,560 rides compared to an average of 125,012 for the same time period in 2019.
- During this time, Metrobus provided:
  - 8,972 rides on Saturdays, up 44.7% from 2019 average ridership
  - 4,056 rides on Sundays, up 21% from 2019 average ridership
  - 14,650 rides during weekdays, up 38.3% from 2019 average ridership
- In total, the two (2)-week free ride program cost the City of St. John's an additional \$250,000.
- The free-ride program resulted in a reduced number of vehicles and pedestrians on city streets during the intense clean-up operations following the storm and resultant SOE.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

**1. GoBus Work Proposal**

- The General Manager and Manager, Accessible Transit Services followed up with Lou Carpentier, Carpentier's Consulting to request a proposal for services related to the review and preparation of an RFP document, in cooperation with the City's Legal Department, for the provision of GoBus services upon expiry of the current contract with MVT expiring December 31, 2021. An RFP is desired by the end of 2020 in preparation.
- The General Manager tabled a memo dated February 11, 2020 from Mr. Carpentier outlining a proposal for the work pertaining to GoBus that will be required in the coming months.
- The 2020 hourly rate for the services to be provided is quoted at a rate of \$170 per hour.
- Other expenses such as travel, if on-site work is required, is to be payable on actual invoice only with no travel time expenses.
- Work is to be invoiced on a frequency as directed by Metrobus staff and to be filled for actual time spent to the quarter hour.
- The estimated work is outlined as follows:

WORK ITEM	ESTIMATED # HOURS	COST/UPSET LIMIT
Memo/report/research: •Brief outline of existing models of governance/service delivery for specialized transit In Canada. •Info to be used in determining best GoBus model going forward	5.5	\$935
•Draft a preliminary RFP for service delivery/contract GoBus	7	\$119
•Other work on an hourly basis—actual time worked		

**ACTION:** It was moved by Vice Chair Skinner, seconded by Commissioner Walsh and carried unanimously that the work proposal submitted by Carpentier Consulting be approved as recommended by the General Manager.

**2. Tender for Replacement Van**

- A tender was issued for the supply of a seven (7) passenger electric/hybrid vehicle; it closed on February 7, 2020. No bids were received.
- The tender for an electric/hybrid vehicle was cancelled and a new tender was issued for the supply of an all-wheel drive minivan for a 36-month lease period. It will close at noon on Friday, February 28th.
- Once bids are received, an e-poll of members will be conducted.

**3. Shelter at Convention Centre**

- Conversation with Sheena last year, Commission didn't close the discussion, There are a number of issues surrounding the shelter at the Mile One location including:
  - easement
  - proximity/placement to the intersection
  - snowclearing
  - security (tucked in from street view)
  - unwanted activity (surveillance cameras are not a deterrent to the illicit behavior)
- There was some discussion of a potential compromise by way of a design solution that could potentially include lighting, etc.
- The Chair expressed that he is personally unmotivated to remove or close the shelter.

**ACTION:** The General Manager was asked to further discuss with Sheena McCrate at Mile One and explore alternatives.



**4. Executive Summary (Regular)—January, 2020**

➤ The monthly Executive Summary for January, 2020 was tabled and reviewed. The following items were among those noted:

**• Service Animals**

- The Manager of Accessible Transit attended a webinar called “The ABCs of Service Dogs” hosted by the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) and The Canadian Foundation for Animal Assisted Support Services (CFAASS).
- Both GoBus and Metrobus have policies that allow service animals on board transit, as per the provincial Service Animal Act. However, it sometimes can be difficult for transit operators to identify a legitimate service animal from a pet.
- There are no formal standards or regulations related to service animals and/or service animal trainers. CFAASS is advocating for such regulation across Canada.

**• Status of Route Numbers on Bus Stop Signs**

- Bus stop sign replacement continues throughout the system.
- Commissioner Morry inquired regarding the status of route numbers to be placed on bus stop signs.
- Commissioner Lane informed that the Marketing Committee met and reviewed several sign options pertaining to this item, and a prototype is being prepared for evaluation by the Committee.
- Contemplating the new Frequent Transit Network, branding is also being considered.

**ACTION:** It was requested that this item be added to the agenda for the next regular March business meeting of the Commission.

**• Refund/Credit—SOE**

- Communications were distributed to customers regarding resumption of service after the SOE and the two-(2) week free-ride promotion.
- Work was completed on a website to allow eligible customers to extend their dated passes by two (2) weeks as a result of the promotion.
- Over 3,000 cards were identified as being eligible for the extension and about half (1/2) of those have claimed the extension to date.
- Positive feedback has been received pertaining to the extension program.

**• GoBus Cancellations**

- Customers are expressing frustration with having their trip requests denied due to capacity and/or having long waits for their pickups. Of the customers who call to voice their concerns, most are doing so when the trip is related to a medical appointment. They all believe that GoBus should prioritize medical trips over others.
- Data pertaining to GoBus cancellations was requested by Commissioner Walsh at the January 30<sup>th</sup> business meeting.

<b>GOBUS CANCELLED TRIPS (All Funding Sources)</b>								
<b>2019</b>	<b>In Advance</b>	<b>Same Day</b>	<b>Other*</b>		<b>2020</b>	<b>In Advance</b>	<b>Same Day</b>	<b>Other*</b>
January	4666	2418	327		January	5978	2159	1805
February	3696	2016	70		February			
March	4141	2105	100		March			
April	4371	1920	96		April			
May	4641	1971	40		May			
June	3952	2018	51		June			
July	4441	2229	43		July			
August	4205	2521	96		August			
September	4088	2245	72		September			
October	4797	2509	58		October			
November	4496	2513	64		November			
December	6351	2584	86		December			
	53845	27049	1103			5978	2159	1805
* Booking error, site closure, client inactive					* Booking error, site closure, client inactive			

## St. John's Transportation Commission

February 27, 2020  
REGULAR BUSINESS  
Page 5



### 4. Executive Summary (Regular)—January, 2020 (Continued)

#### • Transit Advertising

This item is being monitored and will be reviewed within the next several months.

#### • Ridership

**ACTION:** Given the SOE in January, the Chair requested that the ridership report for this month be modified for the Commission's information to more clearly see the ridership trend compared to the same time last year.

### 5. Review Implementation Subcommittee—Update

- A meeting of the Metrobus/GoBus Review Implementation Sub-Committee was held on February 19<sup>th</sup> to prioritize recommendations of the Dillon Report and discuss possible next steps. A subsequent meeting of the Committee will be held in early March to review service standards. Members are: Chair Froude, Commissioners Jamieson and Morry and the General Manager.
- At the March meeting of the Commission, the Chair will shared with the Commission the Committee's deliberations. To ensure alignment of the priorities of the organization and the service, the Chair urged members to attend prepared to discuss their view of what top priorities should be in the next five years.
- Using the goals put forward by the full Commission, the Committee will follow-up with a proposal of strategic projects, together with a comprehensive capital plan and recommended service standards, for the Commission's review.

### 6. Financial Statements—January, 2020

- The monthly financial statements for the period ending December 31, 2020 were tabled and reviewed.

### 7. Cell Phone Provider – Request for Proposals

- The current wife/cellular model is too expensive given we are now using upwards of 700GB per month, and we are requiring an unlimited data package to better manage our speeds and data volumes.
- Additionally, when the Transit Signal Priority project is finally live, it will add another level of data usage to existing monthly totals.
- Vice Chair Skinner suggested the issues with the kiosks first be resolved before any consideration is given to accepting a proposal from Bell Mobility.
- The General Manager informed that the contract for the kiosks is with a different division of Bell; and based on experience to date, it is not expected to be resolved in a timely manner. However, every effort will be made to resolve the kiosk issues.
- It was noted that the 24-month proof-of- concept period expires in August, 2020 for two (2) kiosks and in November, 2020 for the remaining two (2), at which time the contract with Bell can be terminated.
- In the meantime, there is some urgency to establishing a new contract with a wifi/cellular provider, or we'll continue to pay an additional \$2,600 per month under our current contract with Bell Mobility.
- Upon receipt of offers, members will be asked to indicate their decision on acceptance of a recommended proposal for a new wifi/cellular service contract via an e-poll.

## V. OTHER (Information/Community)

### 1. Military/First Responders Appreciation Night

- The City of St. John's had requested Metrobus to operate free shuttles to and from the Military and First Responders' Appreciation Night on Saturday, February 1, 2020 at Club One.
- It was noted that no one took advantage of the free shuttle service.
- Consequently, only a single bus was provided at the end of the evening in case anyone required a ride home following the event.

## St. John's Transportation Commission

February 27, 2020

**REGULAR BUSINESS**

Page 6



### VI. ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further regular business to discuss at this time, the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 PM, immediately followed by an in-camera business meeting of the Commission.
- Regular business meetings of the Commission are normally held on the last Thursday of each month. Special meetings are called as needed.
- The next regular business meeting of the Commission will be held on Thursday, March 26, 2020 commencing at Noon at the Metrobus offices located at 25 Messenger Drive.

Respectfully submitted,

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Ian Froude  
Chair

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Linda Ryan  
Administrative Assistant