



MEETING OF THE ST. JOHN'S TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

REGULAR BUSINESS

A meeting of the St. John's Transportation was held on Thursday, September 24, 2020 at Noon at the Metrobus Transit Centre, 25 Messenger Drive, St. John's. The meeting was streamed live via Webex.

Present at the meeting were:

Paul Walsh	Acting Chair
Colleen Galgay	Commissioner
Kirsten Morry	Commissioner
Dave Lane	Commissioner/City Councillor
Judy Powell	General Manager
Linda Ryan	Administrative Assistant

Present via phone:

Debbie Hanlon	Commissioner/City Councillor
Kevin Breen	City Manager
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 Commissioner Galgay and seconded by D. Coffey that the agenda for this meeting date be approved.
- It was moved by Commissioner Galgay and seconded by D. Coffey that the minutes of the Commission meeting of August 28, 2020 be adopted pending a change to the motion for adjournment.

III. BUSINESS ARISING

1. COVID-19—Update

➤ RIDERSHIP/MAXIMUM PASSENGER LOADS

- Ridership is down approximately 50% at normal levels (49.3% from the same month in 2019 (315,538) and down 50.6% from budget (324,043)).
- A fall service schedule (with the exception of express runs) was implemented on September 14th. Since its implementation, there have been no reports of customers left at bus stops due to restricted capacity issues and health and safety guidelines relevant to the pandemic.
- GoBus ridership is currently approaching 50% of pre-COVID-19 ridership levels.
- Ridership levels will continue to be closely monitored throughout the fall in order to determine if any adjustments are needed for the winter service.
- In the coming weeks, it is expected that Memorial University will communicate whether or not full in-person, on-campus courses will resume in January, 2021, or remote and online learning will continue into the winter/spring semester.

➤ MASKS/PHYSICAL DISTANCING ON TRANSIT

- COVID-19-related changes, including changes to our on-board capacity and the requirement to wear face masks, were communicated to customers in August. Compliance with the mandatory mask policy remains high.

2. Provincial Buss Pass Program for Income Support Recipients

- Initially, the pilot program had been slated to launch in April but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. An update from the Province indicates 8,500 bus passes were recently mailed to clients; to date, 2,500 have been activated.
- Shortly after the mail-out by the Province, passes were for sale on online classifieds and marketplace sites. The Province was notified and they have been communicating to the public, cautioning anyone who might consider buying the passes, they are non-transferable and won't be of any use to them. Some passes have been deactivated and others are being investigated to determine if tips from the public have merit, which could result in the pass being cancelled.
- Commissioner Galgay commented that Immigration, Skills and Labour Minister Gerry Byrne clearly explained the situation in the media recently.
- Minister Byrne expressed his concern publicly that all eligible clients have been made aware that the passes are non-transferable, electronic and can easily be cancelled. He cautioned anyone who might purchase a pass in this way, that they would have no recourse from the government to recoup their money. Minister Byrne also stated that the vast majority of eligible program participants are abiding by the spirit of the program and appreciate its value to their circumstances. The merits of the program outweigh the instances of alleged infractions by a few and he hopes this will not damage the program and become a rallying cry to make generalizations about those on income support.
- It was noted that J. Hussey, Manager of Finance contacted Kijiji who has agreed to monitor the fraudulent ads and remove them.
- Commissioner Galgay further noted that the Liberal logo had been tagged across social media posts about the new program.
- The General Manager informed that discussions with the Province, to finalize the contract pertaining to this item, have been successful. An updated agreement has been received from the Province that includes:
 - Overage: Maximum 25% on 10,000 with protection up to 12,500 passes
 - Replacement: The province remains hesitant to charge clients a replacement fee for lost passes. They have agreed, however, to monitor this piece and, if it becomes a problem, the issue will be addressed by the province.

ACTION:

- It was agreed that the contract be forwarded to the City for the Mayor's signature.
- The impact on ridership is unknown at this point; the General Manager was asked to share non-identifying statistics regarding the program's uptake at an upcoming meeting.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. New Bus Stop Design

- The General Manager presented a visual for this item.
- The Marketing Committee (comprised of former Chair Ian Froude, Commissioner Lane, M. Chancey and J. Powell) met and considered various options for its design.
- The intent is to give more information on the routes serviced by a specific stop. New stop design features include:
 - Stop I.D. number for texting and Google search, etc. for trip planning
 - Brief route description
 - Accessibility symbols
 - Reflectivity at night for increased visibility
- The total cost of this item at approximately \$25,000 (800-900 signs @ \$26/double-sided sign) is an unbudgeted expense for 2020. If the project were to commence in the current fiscal year, it is expected that the physical installation of all signage would continue well into 2021.

ACTION:

- Commissioner Morry moved that the project proceed, as part of the Commission's ongoing strategy, in the current fiscal year, if possible, utilizing funds from the \$1.1 million surplus (i.e. that materials be ordered in 2020 and the installation of the new signage, as the Maintenance Department's work schedule will accommodate, commence with the main checkpoints on the Frequent Transit Network (FTN).)
- Commissioner Galgay seconded the motion. All were in favour, and the motion was carried.

2. Financial Statements

- The financial statements for the month of August, 2020 were tabled and reviewed.

3. Executive Summary (Regular)

- The Executive Summary for the month of August, 2020 was tabled for members' information. The following items were noted:

DOWNTOWN PEDESTRIAN MALL

- K. Breen inquired whether the geo-targeted marketing campaign intended to create awareness about transit service to the Pedestrian Mall (from east and west-end neighbourhoods using route 3) was successful, and if there are plans to expand the campaign for 2021.
- The General Manager noted that the click-through rates were above average and ridership on route 3 was up 3.5% in August compared to July. Although the roll-out was limited because of restrictions surrounding seating capacity due to the pandemic, the response was encouraging. The campaign concluded on September 7th.

GOBUS—COVID-19, RFP

- Demand has slowly increased throughout August; although it remains quite reduced (approximately 53% compared to August, 2019; average 310/weekday trips).
- The high number of trip cancellations throughout August are possibly COVID related.
- The Manager of Accessible Transit is continuing to develop an RFP for paratransit service; consultations are anticipated to occur in September/October with a draft RFP ready before year-end.
- A meeting of the Paratransit Sub-committee (Acting Chair Walsh, Commissioner Morry, D. Power and J. Powell) will be scheduled within the following week.
- The General Manager noted that it is important to consider all options and non-traditional models in effort to lower costs while maintaining service.

V. ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further regular business to discuss the meeting be adjourned at approximately 12:25 PM.
- Live streaming ended followed by an in-camera business meeting of the Commission.
- The next regular business meeting of the Commission will be held on Thursday, October 29, 2020 commencing at Noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Walsh
Acting Chair

Linda Ryan
Administrative Assistant