

Shifting to Sustainable Transportation
Notes - Task Force Meeting #1 - July 13, 2010

Attendees

Brian MacDonald (Chamber), Pam Cooley (CarShare), Jennifer Watts (Councillor), Scott MacPhee (Clean Nova Scotia), Lauralee Sim (Halifax Cycling Coalition), Fred Wendt (HRM), Marcus Garnet (HRM; President of Transport Action Atlantic), Bernard Smith (Spring Garden Business Association), Jim Frost (Consultant, CPCS Transcom), Rochelle Owen (Director, Dalhousie Office of Sustainability), Mark Poirier (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations; Chair of Halifax Urban Greenway), Merrell Moorhead (Chair, Chamber Transportation Committee), Mark Nener (Cities & Environment Unit), Frank Palermo (Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Cities & Environment Unit), Ali Shaver (Cities & Environment Unit), Lynn Roxburgh (Cities & Environment Unit), Murray Metherall (CREST)

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Overview of SST partnership and workshop
3. Key findings of the SST report
4. Goals of the Task Force
5. Sustainable Transportation Context
6. Task Force Participation
7. Discussion
8. Next steps

Notes

Mark Nener welcomed participants and explained that the Task Force is being launched as an initiative of the Planning and Design Centre (PDC). The PDC is an idea the Cities & Environment Unit has been working to advance for several years. The PDC's mandate and core functions fit well with the goals of the Task Force. A one-page PDC "2010 Report to Collaborators" was distributed to Task Force participants.

Mark reviewed *Shifting to Sustainable Transportation* partnership, workshop and resulting report.

From *Shifting to Sustainable Transportation: A Sustainable Transportation Framework for HRM*:

Big Ideas

- Land use
- Accessibility
- High Quality - Building the Best
- Environmental Imperative
- New Attitudes
- Design
- Innovation
- Integration

Multi-Modal Transportation Network Concept: 4 Key Components

1. Dedicated rights-of-way
2. Transportation nodes and terminals as significant places in the landscape
3. Land use patterns that are integrated with the transportation system
4. Local feeder systems serving the nodes

Frank Palermo described the importance of the Task Force.

- We can't farm out thinking of what we want as a community in the future. It is the responsibility of all citizens.
- We need to establish a common direction that we can all work toward. We have done enough studies. It's time for action and change.
- Infrastructure is built to create the kind of place we want to live in. It's about investing in the future.
- Task force is about a group of people getting together and discussing where we want to go and how we want to get there. The Task Force will work to engage our community in discussing this.
- Transportation defines the very form of a place. The transportation system we have now is the result of the industrial revolution - separating uses, manufacturing cars, producing oil, etc.
- The transportation system we build defines us as a community and creates community identity.
- Innovation and creativity with transportation systems is not happening at the federal or provincial level, but at the municipal level.
- It's time for a group to lead a discussion, to think through thorny issues, and then find a way to inspire the whole city.
- City building requires risk taking. You have to think beyond where we are now in order to overcome the status quo.
- This group and others could work together to develop ideas about developing a sustainable transportation system and take the ideas to the larger community to have an enlightened discussion.
 - What is it that makes Halifax unique?
 - Where do we want to be in the future?
 - What ideas should be fed into the review of the Regional Plan?
 - How can the province support sustainable transportation ideas?
- Being on the side of innovation and creativity will actually fuel economic development in the area - more people will want to invest here, more people will want to make Halifax their home.
- Need to establish long term view in terms of what we really want and then determine very short term actions that will get us there.

Discussion

- Marcus - the media loves conflict and often times people won't report on something when there isn't conflict. We need to think about how the media will work with us.
- Fred - there are different visions out there and that's where the conflict arises. We need to articulate our vision and draw out other visions. We need to be able to have a debate about this to find some common ground.

- Rochelle - questions 2nd point regarding Task Force being inclusive body that will present to governments and private sector. There is the AT plan, etc. What makes this Task Force and our work different? What are the challenges that we have now to advance this forward?
- Bernie - re.: sustainable transportation system - should be easier here than in Toronto. We need to think about density. I used to take the bus home until I had to stand outside at the West End Mall in the rain. We're not using what resources we have well and we're not looking at the problem. We need to ensure convenience in order to increase transit ridership. We need to figure out how to get people on the transit system without requiring personal heroics. We also need to think about commercial transportation as well.
- Jim - There is no shortage of vision or leadership in Halifax, but where we really fall down is executing on that vision. We need to fix downtown. Task force needs to focus on 2-3 priority areas in order to get something done. We need to focus on implementing 2-3 projects over the next 4-5 years.
- Mark - Chebucto Road issue is a classic conflict between people's lives and what the state wants. It's going to be an uphill battle to create a sustainable transportation system.
- Bernie - We are not infilling very well. HRM has a 60 year supply of building lots already approved. There was a comment at the last council meeting about "giving people choice". We are creating an unsustainable situation that we won't be able to afford in the future. We need to be concentrating our population. Someone needs to draw a map to illustrate what this city would look like if those 60 lots were developed.
- Fred - On the peninsula more than 40% walk to work.
- Pam - On average people will only walk 30 minutes to work. There is a lot of content to discuss today, but we also need to discuss process for the Task Force.
- Frank - what distinguishes this initiative from others is that it takes a view that land use, transportation, economic development initiatives/studies are interconnected. We need to find a way to speak about this elements in a simple way. The agenda for this group is to develop some bare bone ideas about how a sustainable transportation system will work, but it's not the end. We would then engage the community and lift the level of public discussion and engagement on making sustainable transportation decisions and investments.
- Jim - Need to establish concrete vision with measurable goals to work toward.

Mark Nener presented case studies of cities that have made a bold statement and decision about sustainable transportation.

- Portland - established bold vision for cycling in 1996. Ridership steadily increasing
- Copenhagen - for every mile cycled, Copenhagen saves \$1 in health care costs.
- Charlotte, North Carolina - Mayor championed the creation of a new light rail line.
- New York City High Line - community led initiative to convert rail corridor into trail and park space.
- Green Light for Midtown, NYC - sections of Broadway transformed to public space. Less right-of-way devoted to cars and more to people.

Discussion

Who else would you like to invite the Task Force?

- Greater Halifax Partnership
- Infrastructure owners (Metro Transit, Port Authority, CN Rail, Bridge Commission)
- Provincial: Health Promotion and Protection
- Federal government
- Waterfront Development
- Nova Scotia Business Inc.
- Hospitals
- Universities and colleges: SMU, NSCC
- Developers
- Suburban representations
- If Metro Transit does not join task force, we should definitely keep them informed on our activities and work
- A better transit system can provide a competitive advantage in terms of economic development.
- Transportation affects everyone's lives - the list of people to invite could grow and grow - we need to be careful to not invite too many people to sit on the Task Force.
- How do we get people around seamlessly with the least amount of cars? It's a social issue and an issue of accessibility. How do we make it accessible for everyone to get around and live healthy lives?
- Need to think about the public and ensure broad representation in discussions about transportation. There exist different challenges for people in relation to transportation and getting around.
- One of the primary tasks of the Task Force is to identify ways of reaching out to a broad cross section of the community to engage many in a conversation. In the end, this will create a strong public force behind the ideas.
- We can use existing initiatives to support our work (e.g., Active and Safe Routes to School, TRAX at EAC, CREST). This task force needs to pull these initiatives together so that the sum is greater than the parts. Each initiative will reinforce the other to inspire the public. Need to find early pilot project ("inspiration microcosm") to get us going.
- "If I had asked people what they wanted they would have said faster horses." - Henry Ford
- Sustainable transportation concepts and strategies need to reflect the complexities in people's lives.
- The 4 business associations are concerned with attracting more people to the downtown, so are supportive of a downtown shuttle because the present transit system mostly moves people in and out of the downtown, but does not move them around the downtown well. Need to establish shuttle services on either end of the trip - suburban areas and downtown circulators.
- The idea of a downtown circulator is a big idea for the transit system as a whole.
- Halifax Cycling Coalition has a larger idea of creating a "cross town connector" that connects the north end with the south end

Next steps

- Meeting #2 in two weeks (Tuesday July 27th) - next meeting will focus more on content, i.e., what work will the Task Force take on?