

Shifting to Sustainable Transportation
Notes from Task Force Meeting #3 - August 11, 2010

Attendees

Linda Mosher (Councillor, Purcell's Cove-Armdale)
Jennifer Watts (Councillor, Connaught-Quinpool)
Amy Shwartz (Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection)
Ross Soward (Cities & Environment Unit, Halifax Cycling Coalition)
Rachel Derrah (Breakhouse)
Ali Shaver (Cities & Environment Unit)
Mark Nener (Cities & Environment Unit)
Josh McLean (Conserve Nova Scotia)
Brian McDonald (Halifax Chamber of Commerce)
Bernard Smith (Spring Garden Road Business Association)
Graham Reid (Interested citizen)
Leonard Preyra (MLA Halifax Citadel-Sable Island)
Marcus Garnet (HRM)
Frank Palermo (Cities & Environment Unit, Faculty of Architecture and Planning)
Marie-Claude Gregoire (ADAPT, IWK)
Peter Lund (Councillor, Hammonds Plains - St. Margaret's)

Notes

MN reviewed consolidation of the group's Big Ideas from previous meeting. The group discussed additions & changes.

- Add that Halifax must take advantage of our existing infrastructure as well as our geography
- Need to include idea of safety as a pedestrian and cyclist. Feeling safe differs from feeling comfortable. HRM AT committee identifies "safety" as a key priority.
- Task force to think about the prioritization system that the City of Vancouver created for their streets. Adapt this concept to local situation in Halifax.
- Need to incorporate ideas of "permanence" and "predictability" in the transit system.

Revised Big Ideas toward a sustainable transportation vision for HRM:

- Freight and passenger transportation must be considered as part of the entire sustainable transportation system
- Holistic approach to sustainability: health, environment, economics, social
- Integrated decision-making, coordination, leadership, innovation, action
- Holistic and comprehensive planning and decision-making (connect transportation and land use)
- Halifax is unique and beautiful - we must take advantage of our existing infrastructure, geography and the mistakes we have not made
- Importance of creating and prioritizing a multi modal system:
 - Transit: system must be easy, accessible, comfortable, convenient, predictable and permanent; investing in transit is an important investment in public infrastructure

- Bike: help more people feel comfortable and safe; routes must be connected, prioritized, maintained
- Pedestrian: safe, fun, importance of streets, downtown
- Cars: create a system where user pays true costs of mode (parking, roads, etc.)

Ways to build momentum for SST

- Leverage different groups, organizations and committees already working on sustainable transportation
- Invite UDI and developers to the table
- Keep informing Metro Transit about the meetings (invite to meetings, keep in the loop)
- Develop curriculum around the bus system for elementary aged school children.
- Look at existing pilot projects, e.g., Urban Greenway, UPass, FRED
- Bike sharing system within Universities and Capital Health - extend to whole city.

Pilot Project

- Initiate a pilot project as a demonstration of the Big Ideas
- Engage the public - mobilize public spirit and sentiment

Pilot Project Proposals

- “Car Free Downtown for a Day” (i.e., area bounded by Spring Garden Rd., South Park St., Sackville St., Brunswick St., Duke St. and Lower Water St.)
- Opportunity to demonstrate a truly multi-modal downtown
- Coordinate with events such as Nocturne, street sales, an “Open Doors” type of architectural celebration, etc.
- Coordinate with Metro Transit to provide additional transit service downtown
- Coordinate with parking garages, lots, etc. on the outskirts to provide park-and-ride - Metro Transit could shuttle commuters into the downtown
- Think about ways to present the idea with what we will HAVE not what we won't have
- Think through what else we could accomplish and achieve through this event
- Make it a celebration that attracts many people downtown
- Montreal started similar project (now in it's eighth year: *In Town Without My Car!* <http://www.amt.qc.ca/promotion/intown/>) and initially there was concern, but now most people enjoy the day. People will explore new transportation modes to get to work and as a result may be more inclined to change their mode of choice.

Marcus forwarded the following project ideas:

“+” indicates an advantage

“-” indicates a challenge

DINGLE DORY - Wayne Groszko's concept for a seasonal human powered rowboat shuttle

+ Low cost + No impact + AT theme + shortcut + low fare

- Low speed - Low capacity - Non-wheelchair accessible - awkward for bikes - bad weather

BIKE BOAT - Roll-on/Roll-off motorboat shuttle between Fleming Park & South St.

- + Multimodal + Wheelchair accessible + AT theme + major shortcut + high capacity
- High cost - bad weather

ZIPPER TAXI - Seasonal on-demand water taxi between all points on NW Arm

- + Demand responsive + helps study trip patterns + major shortcuts
- Low capacity - High cost - May not be fuel efficient - Non-wheelchair accessible - high fare

COMMUTER CRUISE - Subscription charter of a water taxi between two strategic points on the Harbour, Bedford Basin or NW Arm.

- + Major shortcuts + all-weather + helps study potential demand + easy to organize
- Low capacity - High cost - Non-wheelchair accessible - high fare

TUESDAY TURNAROUND - Train excursion from Halifax to Truro or Wentworth in March Break.

- + Uses existing Via Rail equipment that sits idle on Tuesdays + media event
- One-time-only event - more tourism than transportation

BUSKER-FAST-TRACK - Charter a railcar shuttle from Rocky Lake to Halifax Boardwalk with stops at Mill Cove and Mumford to facilitate access to Buskerfest, with buskers performing on board.

- + Helps solve an access issue + demonstrates railway's relevance + high thematic profile
- High cost - Logistical negotiations - illegal pedestrian crossings

CONCERTTRAIN - Charter a railcar shuttle from parking lots in Burnside/Shannon Park to Alderney Landing for one of the outdoor concerts

- + & - same as above

WATERFRONT RAIL SHUTTLE - Charter a railcar shuttle between Woodside and Alderney ferry terminals for an outdoor concert or Community College Frosh Week

- + Promotion for Downtown Dartmouth + demonstrates railway's relevance + tourist attraction
- High cost - Logistical negotiations

CLAM HARBOUR CHARTER BUS - Charter a bus with bike racks and wheelchair access, to Clam Harbour from Halifax for the Sandcastle festival.

- + high profile event; + easy to organize
- low-profile transport mode

MUSQUODOBOIT HBR. SUBSCRIPTION BUS - Charter a subscription commuter bus from Musquodoboit Hbr. to Burnside and Halifax.

+ might demonstrate people are willing to pay a premium to get commuter bus now rather than waiting 'til 2014

- might discourage Metro Transit from providing a public-funded service in the more distant future.

Murray forwarded the following project ideas following our 1st meeting, and Marcus shared some thoughts in response to Murray's ideas (in *Italics*):

1. Reinstatement of FRED the bus as a downtown shuttle for a short period of time (Has it really been cancelled?) Metro Transit and Spring Garden merchants would cooperate on this.

I'm not sure why this was cancelled - I think it was a Regional Council budget saving decision, and when I raised it with my contact at Metro Transit, they told me there's going to be a new #8 bus route very soon, which will link the Halifax ferry terminal with Pier 21 and surrounding area. Ironically, Metro Transit has already taken delivery of a couple of hybrid articulated low-floor buses that were ordered for the downtown shuttle. These buses are being used on a couple of regular routes, and I believe they are well liked by passengers and drivers. If the SST Task Force were to push for the downtown circulator or FRED's re-instatement, I think it should be around the theme of integration, with stops at the Via/Adacian Lines station, Farmers Market, hospitals, ferry terminal and Scotia Square to tie everything together. I think these stops were all identified in a public workshop held a year or two ago to optimize the downtown circulator route. This idea also helps put the railway station "on the map" and makes it easier to argue for rail transit because it would help overcome the inconvenient location of the station.

2. Run a bicycle ferry across Arm from Dingle to Oakland Rd for a day or week and connect it to downtown with transit bus with bike racks -New Dawn Charters may do boat ride (voluntarily?)

HRM partnered with advocacy/interest groups for two pilot projects on this. I compiled ridership and user surveys and have them on file. Ridership response was encouraging, but dwindled after we had reliability problems due to inadequate protection from the wind at the wharves (winter came early!). More recently, one of my students did an in-depth analysis of potential ridership for such a service, as well as the optimum route, and I believe he concluded that the location is better suited to cyclists than to pedestrians. I can make that study available to you if you like. He suggested a different kind of vessel than we'd used before, which would involve a tender-style hull with roll-on-roll-off ramps at each end to enable bicycles, strollers, wheelchairs and dogs to be easily loaded on and off without a complicated dock or ladders. I think there'd be enough interest if SST could forge a partnership to try this kind of vessel, if one could be found or built somewhere. My hope is that it might be less susceptible to winds at the wharves, where the former Cape Islander style vessel required people to balance their bikes while descending a ladder off the dock! Also if we could take wheelchairs we'd more likely qualify for government funding from the province or maybe the feds. The HRM Regional Plan already has a policy encouraging privately operated small-boat

shuttles, and I think this one might work if we could only persuade people that it won't have the drawbacks that the last two pilot projects across the Arm had. I'd prefer to use South Street rather than Oakland Road, to avoid resistance from neighbours and facilitate wheelchair and bike access. A Northwest Arm ferry would also fit well with the proposed Halifax Urban Greenway and, in the long term, any potential rail transit through the rail cut. The rail cut itself could be a huge green showcase combining rail freight, rail transit, multi-modal trail, heritage (Intercolonial Railway) and fibre optics - a link to the future and the past, a link to nature, a link to the rest of Canada, a link between our campuses, and a link with each other. But I'm getting carried away...

3. Have a peninsula or from further afield Bike to Work or School Day- with enough advance PR to alert drivers for safety issues

We already have an annual Bike To Work Week and it's well supported. HRM partners with other groups on this. I suggest we leave this one to those who are already organizing it!

4. Run a one day demo commuter train from Windsor Junction to CN Station using dayliner available from Moncton IRS and with cooperation of CN. Perhaps also a stop at West End Mall.

CN currently has a reputation for being uncooperative, but chartering Via Rail might be a good alternative. They already know how to deal with CN. I think a stop at West End Mall would make a huge difference and would demonstrate interconnectivity with the bus system. I'd start it at Sunnyside Mall rather than Windsor Junction which is very obscure and hard to find, and I'd also include a highly visible stop at Mill Cove. Another alternative might be to try something on the Dartmouth side, say from Woodside to downtown Dartmouth so people can ride a triangle using the two existing ferries. Either Halifax or Dartmouth service would work best in conjunction with a special event such as the Multicultural Festival, Canada Day festivities or Natal Day celebrations.

5. Run a (slow) ferry charter boat demo from Bedford through Narrows to downtown maybe using Murphy's equipment - serve coffee and free newspaper

HRM already demonstrated a fast ferry borrowed from New England about three years ago, and it was very well received. I don't think a slow boat would help here. Perhaps chartering a fast small boat zipping between downtown Halifax and Purcells Cove might capture people's imagination for another route which is also supported in the Regional Plan.

Some links from Task Force participants:

HRM Active Transportation Advisory Committee:

<http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/ActiveTransportationAdvisoryCommittee.html>

Transportation Association of Canada national meeting in Halifax in September:

<http://www.tac-atc.ca/english/annualconference/>

<http://telegraphjournal.canadaeast.com/search/article/1177508>

<http://www.pathwaysforpeople.ca/files/docs/walkingandwheeling200403.pdf>

<http://www.metronews.ca/halifax/comment/article/316547--making-car-free-day-mean-something>

<http://www.halifax.ca/bikeweek/scheduleofevents.html>

<http://www.cnt.org/repository/TOD-Potential-GHG-Emissions-Growth.FINAL.pdf>

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/18/business/global/18bus.html?_r=2&ref=global-home

<http://sfpark.org/>

Next meeting

- Consider pilot project proposals before next meeting; bring recommendations & new ideas to next meeting
- Wednesday, August 25 (12pm - 2pm) 5410 Spring Garden Road, Room HB4
- During the month of August the Faculty keeps the doors locked. We will have a greeter at the door until 12:10pm to let you in. Please come on time to avoid being locked out. If you find yourself locked out, please call Ali at 402.4801 who will let you in.