

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE

Attendance

Mark Nener (Cities & Environment Unit)
Mark Poirier (Planner, SNSMR)
Ali Shaver (Cities & Environment Unit)
Kate Mackay (Cities & Environment Unit)
Bernie Smith (Spring Garden Road Business Commission)
Josh McLean (Conserve Nova Scotia)
Peter Williams (NS Bikeways Coalition)
Scott MacPhee (Clean Nova Scotia)
Ahsan Habib (Faculty of Architecture and Planning)
Marie-Claude Gregoire (ADAPT, IWK Active Transportation Committee)

Agenda

1. Welcome & introductions
2. Update on Ciclovía Working Group
3. Additional demonstration project(s)?
4. Review & refine the 3 goals of the Task Force and identify our next steps to achieve these goals

Discussion

- Lower turnout this meeting, need a strategy to encourage attendance, increase membership to better ensure a good cross section at each meeting, even if it's not always the same people

Ciclovía Update

- Celebration and community events - connect Ciclovía to these
- New people came to Ciclovía meeting, which is great
- Ciclovía is an opportunity to push agenda forward. The event's success is very important, huge number of committed and potential cyclists - we have to make this work right the first time.
- There are some key political people who we should invite; two names come to mind: Ross Landry (NS Minister of Justice), Chris d'Entremont (MLA, Argyle) - both are committed cyclists. Could support or bring money.
- NS Dairy Farmers contacted ADAPT to support their event as a sponsor, asked to be involved; gave chocolate milk to every participant who showed up. Also donated \$5,000. NS egg producers then stepped up and wanted to support the same event - they may be interested in supporting Ciclovía. Egg producers provided free breakfast.

- Heart and Stroke Foundation would like to be involved - have already expressed support.
- We should also contact/invite: Maureen MacDonald (MLA Halifax/Needham), Megan Leslie (MP Halifax), Jim Spatz (CEO, Southwest Properties), Danny Chedrawe (President, Westwood Developments) and Emergency Health Services (EHS - current medical director is a big fan of preventative approach to health)
- Good for them to be present and participate
- Are there timelines, deadlines for this? No target date for first Ciclovía event is set yet. Sub-committees are currently responsible for identifying their tasks to complete before next meeting.
- We should decide on a deadline - would help us get sponsorship

Proposals for Other Demonstration Projects

- There is still interest in pursuing a transit project. Bernie's idea: take one bus route and make it the best it can be!
- Metro Transit has fleet of new articulated buses (currently on routes #1, 10, 52; some of which are hybrid diesel/electric) that they might like to show off as part of a demonstration project. David Reage would be the contact: 490-5138
- Via Rail open to considering adding a stop along existing route (possibly near Mount Saint Vincent University) to support the Ciclovía event. Contact is: Ron Jackson, 463-0633, thetrainguy@hfx.eastlink.ca
- Demonstrate a glaring change in one route - tired of seeing empty buses go by during non-rush hour times.
- We can't keep doing what we are doing- we have to shift
- What comes first? Build new infrastructure first or do you wait for people to use poor infrastructure as proof you need to invest?
- Quebec's Route Verte an example of a bold investment in new infrastructure that attracted users
- Do people know what they are missing when they use transit, do they know they could have it better?
- Some people have no choice but to use transit. Those who do have a choice often complain - many go back to their cars

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- No customer service priority in Halifax - serving the public is trumped by routing, technical considerations.
- Bernie got an allocation at one point to implement the GoTime system for Metro Transit. It was done here for \$2.2 million. Timing of buses was tracked by counting the revolutions of bus wheels using magnets. This improved ridership. Ended talk of widening Chebucto Road to the Commons. Convenience helps!
- Too much parking, even if we provide better transit, ridership won't shift if parking doesn't change
- Bernie proposes an advertising campaign to explain true costs of driving a car vs. taking transit
- TTC in Toronto had a similar campaign
- All four things need to happen simultaneously: reduce how easy it is to drive, reduce quantity of free/cheap parking, advertise, make transit better
- Land used for parking could be put to better use.
- A shift could happen if you target commuters who get stuck at pinch points - if you could make bus a faster and more convenient option for them then you could attract new riders
- Most important incentive is cost
- Demo could be free
- Target for transit modal share by 2035 is 25% up from 12%, this target is much too low for such a time frame.
- Use sales techniques - be as great as car salesmen at "selling" transit
- Make people conscious of daily costs of driving
- Some routes work quite well, Sackville MetroLink works well, but effectiveness of bus priority measures (i.e., priority signals) is questionable - more lanes dedicated to buses would help. Moving transit through the five entry/exit points on the peninsula is challenging.
- Metro Transit would argue they are already providing optimized routes with MetroLink
- Bedford to downtown service is being studied - looking for optimal mode; comparing fast ferry, MetroLink and commuter rail.
- We could demonstrate the Bedford - Downtown routes
- Bernie suggests we should improve an existing route
- Hospitals aren't very well served by current transit routes - how can we improve this?
- When gas prices went up, transit ridership increased. When the prices dropped again some of the new ridership was retained, but some riders went back to their cars.
- Free bus day once a year could help
- HRM is studying possible transit corridors to connect Hwy 102 to Scotia Square, we can push this idea, but we shouldn't depend on it
- We can't work at other people's pace, we can't lose urgency, can't get slowed down
- Transit project working group, who is interested in this group? Josh, Bernie, Frank, Mark
- We should be a voice, is there some way we can use this momentum, e.g., write letter to editor, write about this new body? How can we get something started?

Review and Refine Task Force Goals

Task Force Goals:

1. Engage, inspire and inform the public and other stakeholders as part of an ongoing dialogue and debate on how best to implement our shared vision for a sustainable transportation system;
2. Oversee the development of a long-term Sustainable Transportation Strategy for consideration by governments and the private sector;
3. Identify the immediate and long-term actions required to implement the proposed Sustainable Transportation Strategy.

Discussion

- Suggestion that goals 1 & 2 could be combined.
- Opportunities to engage the broader public?
- EAC applied for funding to engage diverse populations in preparing a submission for Regional Plan review- they did not receive the funding, now idea is on hold, but perhaps task force can collaborate with the EAC on this
- Engage low-income community, primary consumers of public transportation. Has this happened? Not sure. Regional Plan process engaged public on a broad level.
- We shouldn't run a process that excludes anyone, we need to find a way to get equitable representation from all groups, including youth. There are many groups who rely on public transportation- let's engage them and find a way to be a voice.

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- Transportation can socially change communities
- Question regarding strategy described in Task Force's goals: would we develop this or the province? Task Force will further develop the strategy that came out of the Shifting to Sustainable Transportation workshop (http://ceu.architectureandplanning.dal.ca/files/Shifting_to_Sustainable_Transport_report_June2009_final.pdf)
- When the report refers to rights-of-way, does that include rail corridors (yes, not just buses, other modes as well)
- Planning students at Dal in Ahsan's class have completed a project looking at commuter rail. They are now going to think about the train station as a transit hub - looking into challenge of connecting this to the downtown core
- We should find a way to share student's ideas more broadly
- Student work could be displayed at our public engagement sessions, i.e., provide some background information, analysis and inspiration
- Marcus Garnet supported the student's work.
- We need to keep an open mind about what might be possible
- As an interim step we should think of peninsula not as a car storage area, but think about how you could store cars off the peninsula, before the five access points.
- Can we host some public sessions on our demonstration projects? We could get public support & feedback, and start a larger discussion; build awareness and momentum.
- Develop a series of public sessions connected to projects - build better support, be a voice
- We must engage cycling community
- Be careful to avoid a lot of competing voices
- Task force should have a public presence
- Mark will post a news item on CEU and PDC website, make notes available to download – first step in promoting Task Force to larger public
- When we use the term "Task Force" does it imply we are a government body? Usually that is the case (No, we are independent). The name might effect how we are viewed at public sessions, so we should think about this.
- The name came from the SST report, and has stuck
- There was an idea that it should be the Mayor's

Task Force on sustainable transportation, but three councillors suggested it might work better disconnected from City Hall

- More people should come to the task force, spread the word and invite people!
- Let's get a great cross-section
- Stress that people who attend are members, let's extend the task force!
- After our next meeting, we should write an article to promote the Task Force and advertise our first public sessions. The Task Force one pager can be the basis of an article.
- Is this Task Force open to anyone? (yes! You don't have to be an "official member" to show up and make a difference. Goal is to have a good cross-section at each meeting)
- Task Force could be supporting member of the NS Bikeways Coalition.
- We should work toward a web presence, provide a way to share notes and updates.

Next Steps

- Design our first public session to advance development of the sustainable transportation strategy (and gather input on Ciclovía project)
- Extend the invitation to join the Task Force to potential new participants
- Identify a Task Force member to coordinate a transit demonstration project working group
- Post information about the Task Force (and meeting notes) on the Cities & Environment Unit and Planning and Design Centre websites.

Next Task Force Meeting

DATE: Wednesday November 17, 2010

TIME: 12pm - 1:30 pm

WHERE: Cities & Environment Unit offices

ADDRESS: 5257 Morris Street

Next Ciclovía Working Group Meeting

DATE: Wednesday November 3, 2010

TIME: 12pm - 1:30 pm

WHERE: Cities & Environment Unit offices

ADDRESS: 5257 Morris Street