



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

REGULAR BUSINESS

A meeting of the St. John's Transportation was held on Thursday, May 28, 2020 at Noon virtually online and streamed live via Webex.

Present at the meeting were:

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

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

III. BUSINESS ARISING

1. COVID-19—Update

➤ **MAXIMUM NINE (9) PASSENGER LOAD**

- A conference call was held with Eastern Health earlier in the week to discuss the maximum nine (9)-passenger limit on board transit buses.
- At the beginning of the pandemic, ridership was at 18% of regular weekday levels. With increasingly relaxed restrictions, and as the number of COVID-19 cases lessens, more amenities open and the weather improves, ridership is slowly increasing and has currently climbed to 23% of normal levels.
- Consequently, there are more occasions where transit operators have no choice but to deny boarding at some stops; this is expected to become a bigger issue as the Province moves toward Level 3. Eastern Health has been asked, therefore, to consider raising the maximum passenger limit, or removing it altogether, and a response is awaited.
- In the meantime, every effort is being made to accommodate customers who cannot board due to the maximum load limits, as per the Department of Health guidelines, and a standby bus is being used each day in the morning and afternoon in various locations throughout the city where needed. Additionally, where customers need to get to appointments, or to work on time, and cannot wait for a second bus, transit supervisors are picking up passengers (one at a time when possible); taxis are also being used in some cases.

1. COVID-19—Update (Continued)

➤ **RELEASE OF PRIVATE INFORMATION—CONTACT TRACING REQUEST BY EASTERN HEALTH**

- On April 11th, Eastern Health informed Metrobus that a person with COVID-19 had used public transit two days prior, on April 9th.
- Consequently, two (2) transit operators of that bus were immediately informed, tested and required to self-isolate for 14 days for monitoring purposes. Both employees returned to work following the required isolation period as they had not contracted the virus.
- Medical testing is recommended for all close contacts (defined as any individual who was within six (6) feet of an infected person starting from two (2) days before illness onset of confirmed or probable COVID-19 patients). Individuals with laboratory-confirmed, or who are probable COVID-19 (symptomatic or asymptomatic) are evaluated and required to self-quarantine for 14 days from their last known exposure.
- Metrobus was, therefore, requested by Eastern Health to assist with contact tracing of anyone who may have travelled on the identified route.
- Concern was expressed by Vice Chair Skinner regarding the Commission's obligation to release the information in assisting Eastern Health and any potential liability relevant to privacy issues.
- The General Manager informed that she had been in contact with Kenessa Cutler, ATIPP Coordinator at the City. Ms. Cutler advised that the response by Metrobus was appropriate in that only the information requested was transmitted. While obtaining consent for disclosure of someone's information is the general rule, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 (ATIPPA) and Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) are not barriers to the appropriate sharing of personal information in an emergency where consent cannot be obtained.
- Both ATIPPA and PHIA have provisions that allow for disclosure in emergencies, or when the public interest trumps the protection of privacy; both are applicable in this situation. Section 9 of the ATIPPA requires disclosure of information about a risk of significant harm to the health or safety of the public.
- Both ATIPPA, 2015 and PHIA also contain sections that shield public bodies and custodians from lawsuits when they act in good faith under the Acts.
- Vice Chair Skinner stated that while he appreciates the position outlined and supports the action taken in releasing the information, he would like an overview of the parameters of this item, specifically surrounding how the information was released and a defined protocol established for any future requests.

ACTION: Vice Chair Skinner moved that the General Manager be directed to review policy and protocol surrounding release of personal information under the ATIPPA Act and report back to the Commission. The City Manager seconded the motion.

➤ **TRANSIT OPERATOR TRAINING**

- In-class and hands-on transit driver training, as well as Class 2 license road tests, is not possible under current COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions.
- The Driver Trainer has been assigned to road/dispatch duties to achieve mutually exclusive supervisor shifts as part of our COVID-19 business continuity plan.
- Under normal circumstances, training programs are generally conducted once or twice annually by Metrobus' Driver Trainer. Metrobus staff have been unable to run the transit operator recruitment process to conduct in-person interviews, and Motor Vehicle Registration (MVR) remains closed to obtain driver abstracts, write tests for permits to take road tests, etc.
- A request had been made to MVR to accommodate our driver trainees; a response has not been received up to this point.

➤ **VACATIONS—AVAILABILITY OF TRANSIT OPERATORS**

- Current staff shortages due to retirements, sickness, lack of new recruits and deferred in-house training programs for new replacement transit operators will make it tight for fall staffing.
- As the summer season approaches, the immediate need is for transit operators during the vacation period. Relief drivers are needed for vacation schedules and staffing will be tight.
- If a recruitment process were to begin at this time, it would take approximately four (4) weeks to advertise, arrange virtual interviews, make offers and allow time for trainees to obtain medicals, drivers abstracts, certificates of conduct (if it is possible to obtain these documents as most businesses are currently performing only critical services) and obtain class 02 & 09 permits to begin the program.

1. COVID-19—Update (Continued)

➤ **VACATIONS—AVAILABILITY OF TRANSIT OPERATORS** (Continued)

- The Transit Operator Training Program usually takes four (4) weeks to complete. Under normal circumstances, it may be possible to compress it to three (3) weeks. However, this may not be possible at this time due to COVID-19 and given the additional protocols required in order to limit contact (and achieve physical distancing) between trainees during the training program.
- This is assuming that MVR can accommodate our request. The entire process would take until the end of July for the trainees to be ready for service; at that time, we will already be several weeks into the summer service period.

➤ **MAINTENANCE, EMPLOYEE SHIFT SCHEDULES**

- Staffing schedules/levels necessitated by physical distancing is challenging in completing repairs and general maintenance work. Redundant shifts have been implemented in the Maintenance Department, such that if a shift is required to isolate due to an employee contracting the virus, the schedule enables the garage to remain operating.
- Staff members in other departments are working staggered hours as well to reduce employee interaction.
- The availability of maintenance parts for transit buses is becoming an issue due to the shutdown of many manufacturing plants which is severely impacting the supply chain.
- Delivery of the new Vicinity buses, originally scheduled for August, 2020, is delayed also because of manufacturing plant closures due to COVID-19.

➤ **GOBUS**

- Commissioner Walsh inquired with respect to recent applications for GoBus service, particularly in light of some pandemic restrictions being lifted, and the resumption of eligibility assessments.
- The General Manager informed that no new applications have been received in recent weeks.
- MVT staff are screening bookings to support public health directives (essential travel only) and asking anyone who is unwell to stay home and contact 811. Drivers are completing direct trips rather than shared rides to support distancing efforts.
- Eligibility assessments for existing customers will resume with the advancement to Level 3 and physiotherapy, dental offices, etc. re-open.

➤ **SUMMER, FALL SERVICE SCHEDULES**

- If government follows their plan through in easing restrictions through the various levels, it is likely that by September, the lower stages will be introduced (if no further outbreaks occur), which means many activities, except for major post-secondary institutions, will re-open. MUN and CNA have announced that classes will be online for the fall affecting about 30% of ridership. Indications are that many workplaces will remain at minimum staff onsite until at least later in the fall
- A recent survey of Canadians indicates that 25-30% feel uncomfortable about returning to crowded places (transit, malls, airplanes, cinemas, etc.) until there is a vaccine. On a call with other Canadian transit systems earlier in the week, several indicated that they expect ridership in the fall to be 50-70% of normal levels.
- In cautiously working toward a regular schedule in September, this, too, will bring some challenges.

➤ **SUMMER, FALL SERVICE**

- In consideration of these factors, three (3) separate decisions are to be made regarding upcoming service levels:
 - 1) whether or not to continue current (COVID-19) service levels throughout the summer, or shift to the regular summer schedule
 - 2) to implement a regular full fall schedule in September vs. another level of service (regular summer service, COVID-19 schedule, or other)
 - 3) if the planned enhancements to the Frequent Transit Network (FTN) will proceed

1. COVID-19—Update (Continued)

BACKGROUND: SUMMER SCHEDULE (June—September)

- The General Manager's previous email to the Commission summarizing Metrobus staff's recommendations pertaining to summer and fall service schedules, and the rationale behind the recommendations, was acknowledged, which members indicated they found to be very helpful.
- The main differences between the current COVID-19 schedule and summer schedule outlined in the email are:
 - Route 5: The summer schedule adds a route 5 at night to increase frequency on one section of the route 2 from 60 minutes to 30 minutes from east end to Avalon Mall.
 - Route 12: The current COVID-19 schedule is based on a 60-minute frequency; the summer service is based on a 30-minute frequency to 6:00 PM.
 - Route 15: The summer schedule has extra route 15 at peak time to provide 30-minute frequency; the COVID-19 schedule is a 60-minute frequency all day.
 - Route 19: The summer schedule has an extra route 19 at peak time to provide 30-minute frequency; COVID is 60-minute frequency all day.
 - Route 18/25: Route 18 is currently operating on the COVID-19 schedule and route 25 is currently not in service. During the summer schedule, this route is in service to provide 30-minute service at peak times.
 - Route 26: This route is currently not in service on the COVID-19 schedule; it does a single run in the morning to service MUN on a summer schedule.

DISCUSSION

- The General Manager recommended continuing the current COVID-19 schedule throughout the summer until the end of August. The original intent was to move to the regular summer schedule; staffing requirements for transit operators, however, will be tight moving into the vacation period.
- The current COVID-19 schedule allows for two (2) less transit operator shifts than the regular summer schedule. This provides more flexibility for relief if a transit operator happens to go off work for medical reasons, contracts the virus, or is in contact with someone who has contracted the virus and has to self-isolate for 14 days.
- Based on the factors noted above, and those previously covered (*under Transit Operator Training, Vacations-Availability of Transit Operators. etc.*), the recommendation by staff is to remain on the current COVID-19 schedule for the remainder of the summer period.
- Commissioner Morry supported keeping the COVID-19 schedule as from an operational viewpoint, it makes sense to do so.
- Commissioner Lane agreed with Commissioner Morry's comments.
- Commissioner Jamieson suggested that the current schedule be referred to by a different name other than COVID-19. She questioned should the Commission decide to keep the current schedule and, when the province moves forward to the next level of restrictions, ridership increases significantly, would the Commission be "married" to the current schedule.
- The General Manager advised that should demand be higher than anticipated, an additional standby bus could be used to accommodate ridership levels in specific areas. Some additional shifts could potentially be supplemented with overtime or taxis dispatched, if needed and depending on the situation, without having to commit to the full summer with extra shifts and a higher level of service.
- Vice Chair Skinner questioned if (based on the supplementary background documentation provided by the General Manager) there was analyses of the routes relative to the ridership currently carried, and if staff are comfortable in accommodating any unanticipated ridership volumes based on the recommendations provided.

1. COVID-19—Update (Continued)

DISCUSSION

(Continued)

- The General Manager advised that based on current ridership, accommodations can be made. The biggest issue is the impact Level 3 will have on ridership if the 9-passenger limit remains in place. In order to maintain that limit, we can respond with overtime shifts in the short term until the patterns are more accurately determined and, even then, there will still be 30-minute wait times for the 10th person for the next bus.
- The Chair clarified that a stand-by bus will still be needed in any case, whether at 30- or 60-minute frequency.
- He further noted that we are only one of two provinces in the country with the 9-passenger limit; this information was shared with Eastern Health during the discussion surrounding passenger load limits.
- Vice Chair Skinner assumed that when moving to the next level, where the numbers permitted for gatherings is increased, an increase in the passenger limit would be automatic.
- It was noted that this question has been asked of Eastern Health and a response is awaited.
- The 9-passenger limit on transit buses will be challenging as a bus is a constrained space with little room for physical distancing.

ACTION:

- After some discussion, it was moved by the City Manager, seconded by Commission Walsh and carried unanimously that the recommendation by staff to maintain the COVID-19 schedule be accepted and maintained throughout the summer, with the caveat that adaptations, in terms of additional buses, etc., be made as necessary.

BACKGROUND: FALL SCHEDULE (September—April)

- Key differences between the regular fall service vs summer service include:
 - The fall regular schedule offers 15-minute peak-time service on core routes 1, 2, 3 and 10 with 30-minute service to 8:00 PM, and 60-minute service after 8:00 PM.
 - The summer schedule is 30-minute service all day to 6:00 PM, and 60-minute service after 6:00 PM.
 - Express routes 13, 24 and 26 do not operate in summer; these routes provides direct service to MUN and CNA.
 - During the fall, routes 15 and 19 have 30-minute frequency all day to 6:00 PM, and 60-minute frequency after.
 - The summer schedule is 30-minute service during peak time only, and 60-minute frequency at all other times.

DISCUSSION

- The City Manager expressed that he was uncomfortable in making a decision at this time regarding fall service since many things could change between now and then in light of COVID-19. He asked the reason a decision is needed now with respect to service levels in the fall.
- The General Manager explained that both schedules are normally prepared and picked by transit operators simultaneously to avoid duplication of work. To prepare a fall schedule separately, much work is to be done over the summer, and it is challenging during summertime to achieve the shift pick while transit operators are on vacation.
- The City Manager suggested that the Union be approached for their cooperation in picking work schedules outside of the normal timelines.
- The General Manager further noted that post-secondary institutions will be closed for the fall session, with less traffic to those areas. Additionally, workplaces and some businesses will likely not be operating at 100% capacity in the fall. Nationally, transit systems are expecting 50-70% of normal ridership levels in the fall.
- Commissioner Jamieson indicated her hesitation in making a decision at this time as the situation remains fluid in terms of relaxing restrictions and opening more businesses and services; and once permitted, current restrictions imposed on transit will need to be relaxed as well to accommodate those areas.
- The Chair asked the repercussions of not making a decision at this time regarding the fall schedule.

1. COVID-19—Update (Continued)

DISCUSSION (Continued)

- Chair Froude expressed that he would personally like the flexibility to:
 - maintain a full fall schedule, if the situation merits and allows for it, and not pare back on the core service because post-secondary institutions are closed; people are still relying on transit to get to work, appointments, etc.
 - potentially add frequency on routes 1, 2, 3 and 10, closer to the regular schedule
 - not do the Express routes in September
 - add frequency on routes 15 and 19, depending on what we know to that point.
- Commissioner Lane asked that the subject of the fall schedule be revisited in August.
- Commissioners Galgay and Walsh agreed that a decision regarding the fall schedule be deferred.
- The General Manager indicated that operationally, staff will continue forward with preparation of a work schedule and arrange for transit operators to pick both a summer schedule and a COVID-19 schedule for fall work, with the understanding that if a decision is made for the fall in terms of service levels, and there is a need to build upon that service schedule, then the gaps will need to be filled with overtime, or otherwise, in order to get the service on the street; and a new shift pick will start in September.
- The City Manager asked for clarification as to how overtime would play into this scenario. The General Manager explained that a schedule will be built based on a regular work week for transit operators. If it becomes necessary to add to service levels, then any gaps could potentially be filled with temporary transit operators on a call-back basis. If this is not possible, then permanent transit operators may need to be called back to fill in as a short-term solution until a new work schedule can be picked.
- The City Manager expressed that depending on when the decision is made, and how quickly a new work schedule can be prepared, the Union be asked to provide some relaxation on the timeframes for picking their fall work schedules,

ACTION:

- It was agreed that a decision regarding the fall schedule be deferred until later in the summer.

2. Tire Tender

- At the April 30th business meeting, Commissioner Walsh had requested the number of inquiries received about the recent tire tender that closed on April 24, 2020 and confirmation of the companies that had picked up the tender.
- The General Manager confirmed that a single inquiry was received and that the company that made the inquiry, GCR, was the successful bidder.

3. Kiosk Update

- As a follow-up to the last meeting, in reviewing the contract schedule, the General Manager informed that the two-year proof-of-concept period will expire for two (2) of the kiosks at the end of August, 2020, and two (2) at the end of the current calendar year.
- Continuous discussions with Bell, and those regarding cameras, with which difficulties have been experienced, have proven unsuccessful. A key Bell staff member who worked on this project and was involved in the original discussions, is no longer with Bell; and there has been no success in having the issues with this item addressed.
- It is anticipated that upon expiry of the two-year proof of contract, this will also end the contract with Bell in its entirety.
- Vice Chair Skinner expressed that, in his opinion, Bell had over promised and under delivered its product and service, and he will be glad to see the arrangement finally come to end.
- Commissioner Walsh agreed with the clarity and content of Vice Chair Skinner's comments.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Financial Statements—April, 2020

➤ The monthly financial statements for the period ending April 30, 2020 were tabled and reviewed.

2. Executive Summaries: (Regular)

➤ The Executive Summary for the month of April, 2020 was tabled and reviewed.

3. Governance Training—Commission Members

➤ A Governance Training Session will be offered to members of the St. John's Sports and Entertainment Board and the St. John's Transportation Commission. The cost of the session will be cost-shared between the two groups.

➤ The session is expected to be approximately one (1) hour in duration and held at the St. John's Convention Centre. The training will be in person (accommodating physical distancing), and the facilitator will be Dennis Mahoney of McGinnis Cooper.

➤ Orientation/governance training is felt to be advantageous to the Commission in its entirety, and particularly every few years as new members are appointed.

➤ Commission members are asked to contact Linda Ryan if they wished to participate in this opportunity.

V. OTHER (Information/Community

➤ There was no business under this category to discuss.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

➤ There being no further regular business to discuss at this time, the meeting adjourned and live streaming ended at approximately 1:00 PM, immediately followed by an in-camera business meeting of the Commission.

➤ The next regular business meeting of the Commission will be held virtually on Thursday, June 25, 2020 commencing at Noon.

➤ Meeting access information will be provided to members prior to the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Ian Froude
Chair

Linda Ryan
Administrative Assistant