



DISCUSSION PAPER

AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY FOR THE HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

PREPARED BY:

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An Integrated Transportation Strategy for the Halifax Regional Municipality

BACKGROUND

During the summer of 2000, the Road Sub-Committee of the Transportation Committee of the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce heard from its members that traffic problems were negatively impacting business in the Halifax Regional Municipality. There was a concern that these road transportation issues could impede the development of Metropolitan Halifax and constrain the economic boom that Halifax is currently enjoying.

As a result the Road Sub-Committee established a Strategic Road Transportation Plan Task Force (the Task Force) to “facilitate the resolution of critical road transportation needs so that the long-term commercial viability of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) would not be constrained by road transportation problems”. The Task Force, which had representation from many different Chamber committees as well as from traffic experts in HRM and the Province of Nova Scotia, met biweekly from October 2000 to January 2001 and completed the Strategic Road Transportation Report in January 2001. This discussion paper is a summary of that report.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

The existing arterial road transportation network within the Halifax Regional Municipality is in critical condition. Commercial and residential property development is being delayed, business owners and managers are becoming frustrated, and the quality of life that attracts business to the region is deteriorating due to the negative impact of road transportation problems.

The commercial and industrial centres of commerce within HRM are choking under the strain of transportation problems:

- **Burnside Industrial Park** has severe traffic congestion at all key points into and out of the park. The lack of decisions on new major roadways has all but eliminated available serviceable land for immediate development in Burnside. Public transit does not meet the needs of people who work in Burnside.
- **Bayers Lake Park** is experiencing traffic delays and significant traffic congestion, particularly at the end of each week. Public transit (outside of peak weekday hours) does not serve the needs of this park.
- The **downtown core of Halifax** is constrained by the difficulties of people commuting to work each day. The problem is exacerbated by truck traffic from the Halifax South End Ocean Terminal, which must travel through the downtown core.
- **Retail Communities** such as those along the Bedford Highway in Bedford are suffering because customers avoid retailers where high through traffic volumes and congestion occurs.

The Task Force discovered from the traffic experts that there is limited integrated transportation planning between the two levels of government. Furthermore, it was

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revealed during the process that there is limited planning coordination between Metro Transit and HRM Traffic Services (Roads). It also appears that the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission has limited opportunity to be included in the HRM transportation planning process.

From a public transit perspective:

- The requirement for 70 % cost recovery for Metro Transit:
 - ✓ Is substantially higher than many other municipalities
 - ✓ Impedes the ability to grow the service
- No funds in the HRM 2001 budget have been allocated to expand the bus system
- HRM is maintaining a status quo operation with budget funds only to replace old buses in the existing fleet

The Sub-Committee's assessment of current road conditions and traffic congestion in HRM after taking into account expected population growth indicates that:

- \$155 million is required for roadway improvements over the next 5 years to solve the immediate problems that we face today;
- At least an additional \$150 million will be needed between years 2005 and 2010 to handle increased traffic due to anticipated population growth;

Of this total of \$305 million, approximately two thirds relates to roads under the jurisdiction of the Province and one third is the responsibility of HRM.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If our transportation issues are to be resolved in a logical and timely fashion, the Chamber's Task Force believes there is a need to:

- **Set Clear Objectives for an Integrated Transportation Strategy.**

The objectives for this strategy should:

- ✓ Promote an integrated intermodal transportation network;
- ✓ Support the movement of people, goods and services throughout HRM;
- ✓ Encourage the use of public transit;
- ✓ Serve as a catalyst for economic growth;
- ✓ Support our existing businesses;
- ✓ Promote Halifax International Airport as a transportation hub;
- ✓ Provide a logical process for property development in HRM.

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- **Integrate Transportation Planning.**

The integration of Transportation Planning within HRM is critical for a well functioning system. Important elements of planning should include:

- ✓ An Integrated Transportation Planning Authority for HRM that has planning responsibility for:
 - HRM Roads
 - Metro Transit
 - HRM Taxi Commission
 - Coordination with
 - NS Department of Transportation and Public Works (Highways)
 - Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission
 - Halifax International Airport Authority
- ✓ Long Range Integrated Planning
- ✓ Stable funding
- ✓ Involvement of the business community and the public in the planning process

- **Find Sources of Funding**

Sources of funding to support an integrated intermodal transportation network are crucial. Therefore the strategy should include:

- ✓ A funding source review process to determine appropriate allocation of existing Provincial and Municipal transportation taxes, fees and fines to fund the capital expenditures required for this network;
- ✓ A process to develop innovative ways to obtain the funds that are needed to meet the objectives of the strategy. Innovative solutions that:
 - Are more cost effective.
 - Potentially involve the private sector.
 - Seek new sources of revenue.

CONCLUSION

The Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce submits that the economic well being and growth of the Halifax Regional Municipality are intimately linked to a well functioning road transportation network. In turn the success of this region drives the economic engine of the Province.

An Integrated Transportation Strategy is needed for the Halifax Regional Municipality. To be successful, this strategy should involve *setting clear objectives, integrating transportation planning, and identifying sources of funding.*

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The Halifax Regional Municipality should establish a Transportation Authority with responsibility that includes Metro Transit, HRM Taxi Commission and planning for road construction and repair. This Authority should also have responsibility for the coordination of transportation planning activities with other departments of HRM and with the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Public Works and the Halifax Dartmouth Bridge Commission.

The Halifax Chamber hereby offers to work with both levels of government to facilitate solutions to the crisis we face. The Chamber is prepared to take a leadership role by expanding our Strategic Road Transportation Task Force to include all interested parties who wish to assist in developing an Integrated Transportation Strategy for HRM and/or those people who may have innovative ideas on how to fund our major capital requirements for an integrated urban transportation network.