

**City of Niagara Falls  
Transportation Services  
Inter-Department Memorandum**

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**TO:** Mayor James M. Diodati  
and Members of the Municipal Council  
City of Niagara Falls, Ontario

**DATE:** May 16, 2011

**FROM:** Karl Dren, Director of Transportation Services

**RE: Update from Ad Hoc Transit Route Advisory Committee**

For the information of Council, outlined below is a summary of the first two Ad Hoc Transit Route Advisory Committee meetings. Both meetings were well attended. To date, the committee is on target to meet the milestones outlined on the attached Work Plan. In addition, a summary of the transit operators/maintenance/office staff workshop and the minutes from the first meeting are attached.

The initial Ad Hoc Transit Route Advisory Committee meeting held on Wednesday April 6<sup>th</sup> included the following items:

- 1) **Introductions** – which included representation from members of the Mayor’s Youth and Accessibility Advisory Committees, Senior’s Community, Niagara Falls Transit customers, Transit Bus Operators, and Planning, Transit and Transportation Engineering staff.
- 2) **Governance & Terms of Reference** – The governance structure and purpose of the Committee was conveyed to the members.
- 3) **Background Information** – The Final Report – ‘Strategic Plan Study’ as presented to Council in the Spring of 2009 by IBI Consultants was shared with the group to provide them with a solid foundation of the current services provided.
- 4) **Draft Route & Ridership Generators** – The route structure developed by the consultant was shared with the group and a list of high traffic ‘generators’ were reviewed to ensure the revised route structure serviced these popular destinations.
- 5) **Review Materials** – Multiple hand-outs were distributed to the Committee to ensure the members have an understanding of the inclusive process, variety of stakeholders, and various avenues to collect and review resident comments.
- 6) **Work Plan** – The project Work Plan was shared with the Committee, including meeting dates, to ensure all members were aware of the various tasks required to successfully achieve the Committee’s mandate by August.

The second Ad Hoc Transit Route Advisory Committee meeting held on Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> included the following items:

- 1) **Review of April 6<sup>th</sup> Mtg. Minutes** – Committee members reviewed the minutes and approved them as presented. There were no amendments or omissions.
  
- 2) **Business Arising From Minutes:**
  - The committee was informed that surveys were conducted on the Fort Erie, Niagara College, and Brock Inter Municipal services. There were approximately 200 collected and when the information was inputted and analyzed, it would be shared with the members.
  - The list of high traffic fare generators was reviewed and updated.
  - The inability to access the website questionnaire was shared with the members and discussion raised the issue of lack of visibility of the Transit questionnaire on the City home page. *The questionnaire is now active and IS will be working to enhance the visibility of the Transit questionnaire.*
  - The Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee shared their efforts within the Secondary Schools to raise the awareness of Transit initiatives and the work of the Transit Routing Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. Considerable discussion centered around the employment of social media to further connect and inform the students of Transit programs. The students also requested Transit bulletin boards be employed within the schools to further market the service.
  
- 3) **Key Opinion Leaders Update** – Although the turnout of the thirty five plus invited Key Opinion Leaders was not as strong as anticipated, these individuals have been contacted again via email to direct their comments to the Transit questionnaire on the city website.
  
- 4) **Outstanding Public Outreach Required** – Utilizing the Parent Council meetings and liaising with School Board Staff to make Transit presentations was discussed as a positive initiative to pursue. In addition, the summary of comments presented by Transit staff, which met on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011 will be circulated among City Council and the Committee members for review.
  
- 5) **Routing Presentation of Version #1** – An initial routing was shared with committee members and considerable discussion was noted to further amend the structure to better meet the needs of all sectors of our community.

*The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> in Committee Room 2.*



**Adhoc Transit Routing Advisory Committee  
Stakeholder Meeting - Niagara Falls Transit Staff  
March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011, 10:00am to 12 noon – MacBain Centre**

**Summary Notes**

**MAJOR TRAFFIC GENERATORS**

Several areas are not serviced or underserved

- McLeod Montrose area
- Future Boys and Girls Club
- Fallsview Casino area
- Niagara Square at night (theatre patrons)
- Clifton Hill area for employees working late at night

Several major traffic generators have posed transit challenges

- Walmart
- Brock University/Niagara College
- Connections to Inter Municipal carriers late night

**SERVICE PROVISION CHALLENGES**

- There is no cushion for any potential time loss due to; traffic, passengers ie. Disabled, trains, weather etc.
- There are safety concerns as Operators push to maintain the schedules
- A change in one route affects most others through the system (whatever is implemented needs to be designed with a cushion)

Walmart Routes

- Should be run through Walmart, Oakwood, Macbain, Minacs, Niagara Square to connect with other routes.
- Quick fix is to modify #3 Westlane route. Should go to Main Street, not downtown and serve Walmart Niagara Square area, as most people get off at Main Street. Help eliminate redundancy travelling downtown.
- Walmart route suggestion - take #10 every second trip, 1 trip would go to Niagara Square, 1 trip to Walmart.
- #15 Chippawa route has plenty of time - instead of #4 use #15 to service Stanley-Dunn-Alainthus and meet #4 at Drummond/Mcleod.
- Add new route to service new south end facilities (MacBain Centre, Boys and Girl's Club, Walmart, Niagara Square etc.) and return #2, #4, and #15 to previous routes.

Falls Shuttle

- There are 4 buses operating on a ½ hour system between late June - Labour Day, which converts to a 1 hour service through the Spring and Fall.
- Falls Shuttle ridership has declined for past several years, due to; 911, SARS, passport, Cdn dollar, Fallsview development, as well as private hotel shuttles taking away potential passengers.

- Too far to walk from the bus stops to the Falls for Senior Citizens
- Shuttles run until 1:30 a.m., but there are employees that work until 2a.m., and thus, customers can travel to work, but not home - so they take speedy cab.
- Should operate 365 days a year, 24 hours per day
- Should be 1 fare for everyone – create simpler fare structure.
- There are plenty of buses to take GO passengers from the Bus Terminal to tourist areas, but not enough to bring them back. Thus, put on more buses during the evening.
- Green line has changed and now serves the Bus Terminal and Marineland, very confusing to tourists especially those that cannot speak or understand english.
- change the Chippawa portion of the green line back to the Blue Line.

### **Would like to;**

- Eliminate or restrict the use of private shuttles.
- Consider implementing a restriction for out-of-town tour operators as to where they can go ie. Similar to Orlando and Atlantic City
- Do not allow tour operators and private shuttles to stop on road to load/unload - this should only occur on private property.

### **Inter Municipal Service**

(Brock University Student's Union, Niagara College Student's Administrative Council, Town of Fort Erie)

- The service levels operating between Niagara Falls and Brock, Niagara College Campuses, and the Town of Fort Erie are not adequate.
- If more service were provided, better connection times would be possible and these post secondary students would not have to wait at Walmart for 1 hour to make a connection.
- The reductions in service caused by the cutbacks have created gaps in service connections - eg. The Glendale Campus bus leaves the college at 9:30 p.m. and the last bus leaves Stamford Centre at 9:30 p.m.
- Most of the scheduling/connection issues occur during the evening.
- BUSU, NCSAC, and Town of Fort Erie Inter Municipal services could be augmented by providing additional service through the Niagara Falls taxbase.
- Service changed this year. There are more trips between Niagara College Welland Campus and Glendale Campus and fewer trips between Niagara Falls and Glendale Campus.
- There is no advertising regarding these Inter-Municipal routes and the residents are not aware that they can use it - good opportunity to generate revenue.
- Brock run should have more trips with less stops, it could run from the old Walmart or Stamford Centre.
- Adjust the arrival and departure times to address the morning and afternoon class times ie 5 min. before class starts in a.m. and 5 min. after finish times in the p.m.

## ***SERVICE LEVELS REQUIRED***

Too many buses serve the downtown area.

- New routes should include a central hub - one bus north end, one bus south, one bus east, one bus west and all meet in the middle at the hub.
- Provide ½ hour service throughout the day & evening. Additional buses needed at night to maintain schedules and to serve generators ie. Niagara Square (movies)
- Better service retail, medical, educational, and recreational facilities.
- Amalgamate some routes
- Should be “grid system” – E/W and N/S with timed transfers
- One hour transfers too long Set transfers at ½ hour

### **General comments**

- Regional system - not enough time to go to Brock. Thus, the Regional buses will be swamped with college kids.
- The Regional system will require that they pay separately - their U passes will not be accepted as a fare.
- Every job we do is customer service, but we are not serving the customers well.
- If all buses are going downtown, at least have them use other streets instead of all going on Queen Street
- Inter-City Bus Terminal is locked after 10pm. Thus, if connections are missed, these patrons have to wait outside until their bus arrives. Also, there is concern about the safety of the Operator's downtown at night as there is nowhere to stop and it was noted that peoples luggage has been locked in terminal overnight. Would like to see the Terminal stay open longer.
- Lack of dedicated amenities for the Operators - have to stop and use public washroom facilities while on route. Dislike unpaid layover arrangements away from Operations Facility - have too much time to wait at Niagara Square etc.
- Unsafe for Operators to ‘switch seats’ on Drummond Rd.
- Better market the service to seniors.
- Lack of dependability costs ridership.
- Better service required year round through Tourism sectors.
- Earlier starts and later finish times would benefit workers.
- Routes have been stretched too far over the years and have confusing routes/schedules.
- Is service into Metro Plaza required?
- Offer Seniors an “Annual Pass” like in Hamilton
- Rail Road tracks cause many delays



**Transit Routing Ad-hoc Advisory Committee  
 Launch Meeting – April 6, 2011  
 City Hall – Committee Room 2 – 4:30 to 6:30**



**Present:**

Carolynn Ioannoni, Chair	City Councilor
Karl Dren, Director of Transportation Services	City of Niagara Falls
Dave Stuart, General Manager of NF Transit	City of Niagara Falls
Bob Goody, Manager of Transit Operations, NF Transit	City of Niagara Falls
John Barnsely, Planner	City of Niagara Falls
Selene Tudini, Executive Secretary of Municipal Works (steno)	City of Niagara Falls

Tom Bilotta, Member of Amalgamated Transit Union  
 Chris Woolnough, Member of Amalgamated Transit Union  
 Jim Maves, Member of Amalgamated Transit Union

Aaron Bailey, St. Michael High School	Mayor's Youth Advisory
Yashvi Shah, Westlane High School	Mayor's Youth Advisory
Connor Bitter, Stamford High School	Mayor's Youth Advisory

George Mackinnon	Mayor's Accessibility Advisory Committee
Sylvana Sgro (Public at large)	Mayor's Accessibility Advisory Committee
Sandy Bird	Mayor's Accessibility Advisory Committee

Marlene Pierce	Member from the Public at Large
Shane Cooper	Member from the Public at Large
Eleanor MacVeigh	Member from the Public at Large

## **Meeting commenced at 4:30 pm**

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

This committee has a shared purpose to provide input on improving transit routes. To work from the bottom and rebuild the transit route system such as accessibility, frequency, functionality and enhanced routes.

### **2. Governance – Terms of Reference**

- In February 2011 Council approved that the Transit Routing Ad-hoc Advisory Committee be formed. Shortly thereafter Councilor Carolyn Ioannoni was appointed as Chair.
- The purpose of this committee is to outreach to the community and to improve the transit service presently offered by the City of Niagara Falls.
- The focus will be on the conventional route system. How to enhance it and pick up new traffic generators.
- There will be a total of five monthly meetings. April 6, 2011 is the launch meeting.
- Target is to make a recommendation to Council by the end of August 2011.
- Terms of Reference include:
  - Route Design
  - Hours of Service
  - Frequency of routes (Headways – level of service)
  - Transfers
  - Inter-municipal connections

**Action:** Dave Stuart to provide an update on the status of participants from Brock University and Niagara College.

### **3. Presentation – Final Report**

Dave Stuart presented the Niagara Transit Strategic Plan Study - Final Report which was also provided to all in attendance.

Background:

- The Greater Niagara Transit Commission was formed in 1960. It was an independent body however it was funded by the City of Niagara Falls for 47 years. In 2007 the Commission was amalgamated with the City of Niagara Falls.
- Commencing in 2008 the City undertook a major study carried out by IBI Group which consisted of a strategic review of ways to enhance all transit services.
- The final report was presented to Council on March 23, 2009.
- The Study Work Plan consists of five phases:
  - Data Collection/Public Outreach
  - Needs and Opportunities
  - Vision/Policy Direction
  - Long Term Strategy (10 Year)
  - Short Term Business Plan (5 Year)

Needed Action:

- Re-structure route network/increase service levels.
- Falls Shuttle is run seasonally from May long weekend through to Thanksgiving. This may be integrated into the Transit service.

- Inter-Municipal Services: Runs between Fort Erie and Niagara Falls, Niagara College Welland and NOTL campuses and Brock University.
  - With the exception of Fort Erie, services are purchased from NF Transit by the student bodies not through the college or university administration.
- Replace/expand Transit Centre/Garage
- Enhance/improve transit terminals/hubs
- Additional staff resources needed
- Enhance marketing program

#### Long Term Strategic Plan for Transit:

- Presently run about 66,000 hours of service in a year and it is projected to run at 105,000 hours in 2018.
- Ridership is 1.1 million to go up to 1.8 million
- Niagara captures a modal split of 1.9% of every trip that occur in our municipality and would like to see it go up to 3.2%.
- Chair-a-Van:
  - Service is run independently by St. John Ambulance.
  - The Municipality owns, maintains and fuels the equipment.
  - Operators are hired by St. John Ambulance and they schedule the trips.
  - Service may be in-house in the future.
- Transcab is a private taxi sub-contracted by the municipality to support our conventional service in isolated/low density areas of our city.
- Transcab also serves as an initial level of service into an area and if the ridership grows to a level, which warrants a conventional bus, a route will be enhanced or added to capture this ridership eg. Service into Montrose Rd. South (Minacs).
- Infrastructure plan will change as the review unfolds, depending on route changes and headways.
  - NF Transit needs to purchase 7 or 8 buses. NFT buses are older and spares are needed.
  - Through the review, Transit staff need to determine what Transit services can be provided with the current bus fleet.
  - Terminals/Garage/Bus Stops and Shelters need to be refurbished and upgraded with added inventory as well as accessibility enhancements.
- Accessibility enhancements/stop announcement system have been budgeted for in the 2011 Capital Budget. Stop announcement is mandatory as per OHRC position. Stop announcement will be automated, not provided manually by drivers. This is for safety reasons.
  - NF Transit is 70% accessible.
- ITS – Intelligent Transportation Systems will allow better decisions in route design. Google Trip Planner is being funded by the Region starting in the Fall of this year.
  - The Director of Transportation advised that the study identified the need to go to an ITS system and these services will be looked at to determine what provides the most value for the money.

#### Marketing:

- New, enhanced bus stop signs have been budgeted for in 2011.
- More education is needed in schools to attract additional, younger riders.
- Customer service hours need to be enhanced.

#### Fare structure:

- A new five year fare structure was passed at the April 4, 2011 Council meeting.
- The new fare structure will generate another \$150,000 in revenue and brings Niagara Falls Transit fares in-line with other communities of similar size.

- Fare increases will be effective May 1<sup>st</sup> for the Falls Shuttle service and July 1, 2011 for municipal.

Transit Demand Management:

- Smart cards are being introduced now on the new fare boxes. Cards can be reloaded and collect information for staff to review and respond.

#### 4. Draft Route & Ridership Generators Maps

- The committee was presented with the existing routes versus the IBI recommended routes. However, new developments have taken place since the study completion and it will need to be reviewed.
- The committee discussed the Transit Fare Generators and all those present were provided with the list.
  - Fare Generators are all those sites within our community, which attract large ridership due to the need/appeal for their products/services.
  - These fare generators also include busy and evolving residential and commercial/retail areas.

**Action:** All to review the Transit Fare Generator list and provide suggestions at the next meeting.

#### Comments arising from the presentation of all materials:

- Although the Falls shuttle runs later than the current transit service it does not provide city wide service. The shuttle was historically designed for tourists and not residents.
- There's a need to enhance the current Evening/Sunday/Holiday service levels to improve consistency for the customer.
- Current schedule adherence is difficult due to the long, 'loopy' routes.
- Desire to enhance or redirect the Main and Ferry hub/transfer area. Improvements to the Main and Ferry Street area are presently being implemented in consultation with Transit staff.
- Privately operated shuttle services are detracting from NFT ridership.
- Additional amenities are required at the bus stops such as; benches, accessibility features, and schedule/marketing information.
- More creative transit ads would attract greater attention and response to transit initiatives.
- Chair-a-Van needs to have someone working in the office on Saturday and Sunday.
- Need a phone number to call to see when the next bus will come
  - The General Manager advised this is being considered for the ITS budget.
- Routes:
  - Routes need to bring riders home the same way they came - not round about circles.
  - Often more convenient to walk as the wait and the ride time is longer.
  - Review encouraging School Board's Niagara Student Transportation Service (NSTS) to better utilize public transit to avoid duplication of services and thus, reduce pollution.
  - NF is a 24 hour a day city and later bus routes are needed.
  - Concern regarding students and hospitality sector employees who work late hours, but do not have transit services year round.
  - There's a need to better incorporate the Falls Shuttle seasonal services into the municipal service.
  - Minor route adjustments (quick fixes) have been submitted by the Union Executive and are currently being evaluated (drive times etc.) by management for implementation.
- Public Image:
  - Need was expressed by many that the public image of public transit needs to be improved.

- Niagara Falls has lost a generation of riders because we did not educate them about the transit system. Public outreach is required and recognized by the IBI study.
  - Parent Councils should be presented with information to help improve public image and encourage ridership.
  - Policies are in place to ensure passengers can't harass drivers or riders. Drivers are to call their supervisor if ever they require assistance with a difficult passenger. Transit has capability to ban riders and this can become a legal issue. Bus Operators strongly stated they will not allow customers to be harrassed by other passengers.
- Maps:
    - Individual maps of each route could be made available. Drivers could hand them out.
    - Maps need to be improved. Stops are not listed. Maps are not available at all high schools. Maps need to be easier to read.
- Tickets:
    - Encourage School Boards to purchase and distribute greater amounts of Student Tickets, which will generate additional ridership and revenue eg. Pass and Ticket Programs.
    - The General Manager advised discussions are ongoing with NSTS however the service needs to be improved to meet the student's current needs. The school boards have one office that buys the transportation services for the students.

## 5. Additional Handouts

- Key Opinion Leaders:
  - There will be a stakeholders meeting at the MacBain Centre on April 27, 2011 from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
  - Correspondence with School Boards and individual schools are directed towards superintendents and senior staff of schools and not the individual students.

- Website Questionnaire:

**Action:** Questionnaire needs to be added to the City website and the newspaper.  
The ad should direct people to the website.

**Action:** MYAC to continue to make announcements at schools to help generate input from students.

## 6. Work Plan Schedule

- The Director or Transportation Services presented the work plan schedule and a copy of the schedule was provided to all those in attendance.
- Updates to Council will be provided to Council along the way.
- If Council is receptive of plan, implementation will take place in the Fall of 2012.

## 7. Review Meeting Dates

- A list of meeting dates was provided to all in attendance.
- The next Committee meeting is set for Tuesday May 3, 2011.

Meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Steno: Selene Tudini