
LEADING WITH TRANSIT SUMMARY DOCUMENT

May 2019

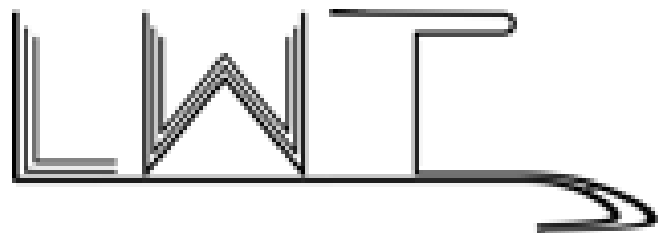




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INTRODUCTION

Our future as a city, region, and province depends on the commitment we make to public transit. Leading with Transit (LwT) is a community-based initiative spearheaded by more than 20 public, private, institutional, and non-governmental partners. LwT means:

- We have to make bold transit and development choices now to shape HRM's long-term vision.
- We must introduce a new pattern/strategy for growth – one that connects the centre, suburbs, rural areas, and province.
- We need to invest in transit first. Then ridership and development will support it.
- We will have fewer cars, less parking, and more room for people, bikes, commerce, and street life.

Transit Oriented Development

Transit oriented development (TOD) and redevelopment is the key to change. TOD is a simple concept of concentrating a mix of development that is pedestrian friendly around transit stations or hubs to encourage complete communities. Furthermore, TOD:

- Helps establish transit corridors, and the placement of infrastructure and public services along these corridors, significantly reducing dependency on the car.
- Discourages sprawl
- Focuses development and redevelopment, both public and private, in existing communities around transit hubs and corridors.

Mission / Vision

Transit is the essential public service that connects people and places. It can improve each of our lives. It is more than buses – it includes light rail, ferries, trains, etc., and exists beyond the needs of the commuter. It must be the vision that determines HRM's future. Investment in great transit is not a choice, but the only way to meet our collective expectations for healthier, more environmentally responsible and economically vibrant communities. It also makes it possible to rethink public spaces (particularly streets) as places that are not increasingly dominated by cars, focused on parking, and designed primarily for movement. Fewer cars will result in more transit, bikes, and pedestrians. We should experience our streets as social, open spaces.



To accomplish this, transit needs to be for everyone and the obvious, best, and first choice. Transit can only meet these expectations if it is efficient, frequent, reliable, passenger-centric, and accessible. It should also be seen as permanent because it provides an essential public service; therefore, transit infrastructure needs to be separate from traffic infrastructure. Light Rail Transit (LRT) on designated alignment at grade would meet this criteria and is the best option for the main mode of transit in Halifax. There is almost entirely room on existing roads for this.

LwT will only happen because it reflects community values. Our intention is to engage the community in designing, promoting, approving, and building LwT. To that end, LwT should be highly visible, clearly understood, and broadly supported.

SIGNIFICANCE

“The future is not predicted or projected. It needs to be invented.”
– Adapted from Northrup Fry

The case for transit is consistent with HRM Council’s priorities and is highlighted in the Integrated Mobility Plan. LwT builds on existing short-term operational plans and is distinguished in three significant ways:

1. Scope:
 - a. The time horizon is longer, i.e. 50 as opposed to 5 years.
 - b. The boundaries are more extensive. It extends to the suburbs and reaches rural communities.
 - c. The targets in terms of population growth and ridership are much more aggressive.
2. Permanence:
 - a. Transit is seen as basic, fixed, and integrated infrastructure linked to land use and city form.
 - b. Transit alignment/stops are fixed. Buildings can incorporate transit.
 - c. Transit can be effectively integrated into plans and streetscapes now in preparation.
3. Investment:
 - a. It requires a major commitment by the public and private sector.
 - b. It needs to start now. New buildings can help pay for it.
 - c. It benefits individuals, redirects public expenditures on mobility/services, and contributes to improving the environment, health, and social equity.



RATIONALE

Technology

New technologies such as autonomous vehicles present both a challenge and an opportunity. We cannot risk allowing new technology to shape our city for us, as the private automobile did decades ago. Instead we must be proactive, using strategic public transit investment to shape our city in a way that works for all its residents.

Environment

We must protect and celebrate unique natural context. Cities need to show environmental leadership in the face of climate change, such as investing in transit and active transportation infrastructure to provide viable alternatives to private vehicles and help reduce carbon emissions from cars and buses. Transit system design can also help protect natural areas by encouraging growth along transit lines, preserving green spaces between (see Copenhagen Finger Plan example on p.6).

Economy

There is an economic case to be made for strategic transit investment. The current low-density growth pattern at the edges of our city is unsustainable. Servicing low-density suburban development places strain on scarce municipal resources. Investing in a future-thinking transit system, though, will change patterns of development, encouraging greater-density development along rapid transit routes. Such development patterns cost less for the city to maintain and deliver services to.

Equity

Not everyone is able to own a car, but everyone should be able to access and connect with their city for jobs, education, services, recreation, and daily needs, regardless of income or mobility level.

Health

High quality public transportation and TOD affect travel activity in ways that provide major health benefits, including reduced traffic collisions and pollution emissions; increased affordability (which reduces financial stress on lower-income households); improved physical fitness and mental health; and better access to medical care, education, and healthy food (Victoria Transit Policy Institute 2010).



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

LwT members established 7 Guiding Principles essential to our vision and experience as a community to guide strategic transit investment in HRM:

1. Frequent

- Continuous service, maximum 5-10 minute wait times

2. Reliable

- Dependable at all hours
- Safe environments - on vehicles and at all stops and terminals
- Separate transit right-of-ways

3. Efficient

- Seamless connectivity between modes and routes
- Connectivity refers to the linking of communities with places of work, education, and recreation
- Environmental and energy efficiency
- Faster and easier than private vehicles

4. Permanent

- Long-term investment that will shape development of our city and province
- Routes will not change
- Permanent transit defines growth

5. Accessible

- Accessible for all abilities
- Equitable and affordable fare structure
- Maximum 500m access to transit

6. Passenger-Centric

- A more complete journey from our beginning to destination points
- Intuitive, simple, easy to navigate
- Identifiable routes and stops
- As much or more comfort than a private vehicle
- Weather protection, good lighting, Wifi, seating, food and coffee
- Space to accommodate bikes, groceries, or luggage

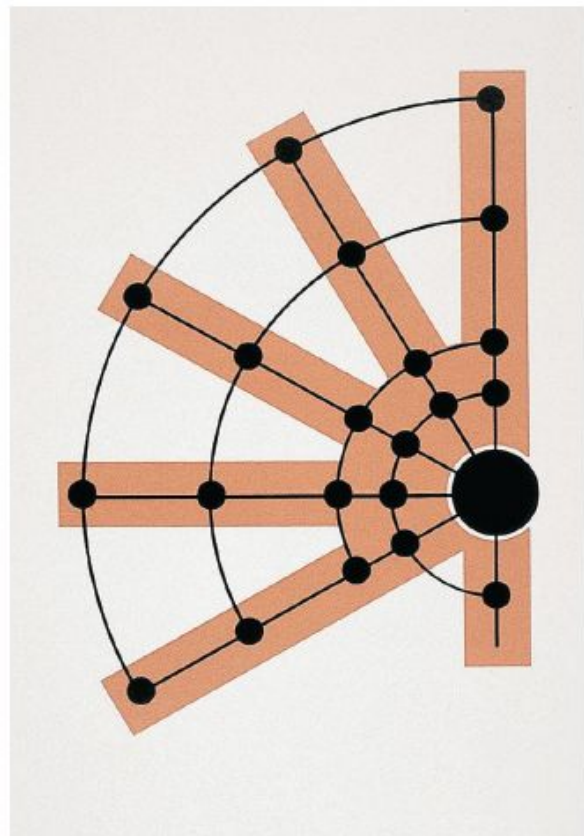
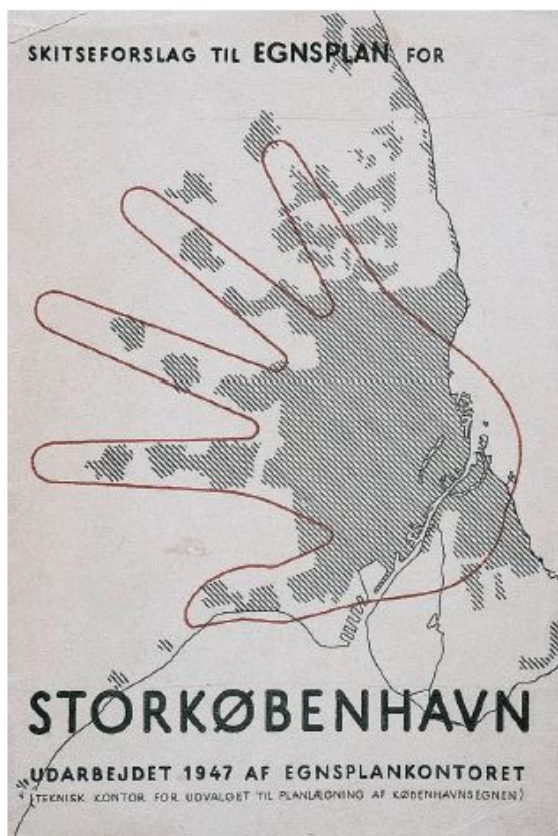
7. Placemaking

- Honour neighbourhood culture and heritage through signage, public art, and design
- Create identifiable transit stops with unique identities
- Tie communities together, rather than splitting them apart
- Integrate land use and built form

APPROACH & CONCEPT

Transit is the essential public service that connects people and places; it also determines where and how we grow. More than just better transit routes, LwT presents a vision for how our city should grow.

The well-known Copenhagen “Finger Plan” is a successful planning intervention that contained urban development within fingers extending from the urban core, preserved green spaces between the fingers, and provided efficient transit routes along developed areas.



1947 Copenhagen Plan

Copenhagen Transit framework today

LwT uses a similar methodology to determine the best system, building on our understanding of the elements that make up HRM's Natural and Human environment:

- Natural Areas
- Recreational
- Residential
- Work
- Institutions & Services
- Commercial

LwT's working concept follows the natural and human environment like fingers extending from the core. Our natural areas and our existing built-up urban areas define where transit is needed, and where future development should be focused. The concept aims to shape and contain development through strategic placement of transit lines.

