

# WHAT WE HEARD

During the first part of the engagement, participants were asked, what would make transit the best first option for them? The responses generally fell within six categories. Transit must be:

- Reliable and Frequent,
- Efficient,
- Passenger-Centric,
- Permanent,
- Accessible, and
- Identifiable/Act as a place-maker



## Reliable and Frequent

Participants voiced the need for transit in Halifax to be reliable and frequent. Specific needs that were expressed include having real time bus information available at every stop, or going further, that the system be so reliable that a user does not need to know the schedule ahead of time in order to use the system. There was a general consensus that a good transit system should fit in with daily routines and schedules, particularly for shift workers. One suggested remedy is that commuter express service should be provided throughout the day, not just at peak times, another common suggestion was that transit be available twenty-four hours a day with consistent 15 minute or better service. Lastly, several participants voiced the need for reliability in all weather conditions, often when transit is used the most.

## Efficient

Several suggestions were communicated regarding efficiency. These fell into three broad categories of efficiency: Network efficiency, Payment efficiency, and vehicle efficiency.

Significant emphasis was placed on network efficiency. Specific suggestions included:

1. The need for a multi-modal network that integrates: Light rail, Rail, Bus, and Commuter Shuttle.
2. Easy transitions between network lines at terminal interchanges (i.e. people should be given sufficient time to make a transfer; the location of transfers should be easy to understand and navigate to)
3. Dedicated right of ways should be given to the transit network in areas where there is congestion.



4. A future transit network should eliminate redundancy as much as possible with regards to the network layout.

In summary: A good transit system should have main lines with connector hubs. These lines should have simple, easy to understand wayfinding associated with them and, for major lines, should have exclusive rights of ways.

Payment efficiency was another improvement that was brought up by attendees. At each engagement, concerns around ease of payment and pre-pay boarding were brought up as way to address or improve overall efficiency of the system.

In addition to payment efficiency, vehicle efficiency was brought up as a suggestion for transit improvement. Hybrid or fully electric vehicles should be given serious consideration moving forward.

### **Passenger – Centric**

A good transit network should be designed for the user experience. Vehicles and stops should be clean, comfortable, safe and secure. Comfort applies to the whole transit experience. Safety concerns were weaved throughout many of the comments across the community meetings, but suitable lighting and expedited snow clearing at stops were seen as priorities for transit. There should be adequate seating on transit vehicles as well as real-time GPS updates at transit stops in addition to food and coffee at transit terminals.

Passenger – Centric comments also included understanding that transit should be comfortable for all users. Greater emphasis should be placed on vehicles being family oriented and designed to accommodate room for groceries, bikes, shopping, and children.

### **Permanent**

Participants voiced concerns that transit infrastructure should be more permanent. Some argued for light rail service, and some for commuter rail, but the underlying reason for wanting permanent infrastructure was that it would be easier to follow and plan around. Some participants argued that permanent infrastructure should be put in place to guide land development.



## **Identifiable/Act as a Place-maker**

Participants stated that vehicles, routes, and stops should all be identifiable. Transit vehicles should have branding that is eye catching and sells it as an experience. Additionally, route identification should be intuitive. Stops should use key landmarks or destinations as a reference in place of street names wherever possible and transit maps should be easy to follow and understand.



Engagement participants thought that transit could have a place making component. They thought that transit would be the best first choice for them if daily amenities and services were available at transit terminals to reduce the need to make multiple trips. Additionally, participants felt there is currently a missed opportunity to integrate community services with transit infrastructure and these two public services should be united in future projects.

Lastly, many suggestions were made about linking tourism and transit. Participants thought there was an opportunity to incorporate eco-tourism initiatives into the transit network.

## **Accessible**

Accessibility came up as a prominent theme throughout the engagement sessions in three forms: Physical accessibility; Network coverage, and; Affordability.

### *Physical Accessibility*

Participants were keenly aware of the challenges of an aging population in Halifax. They expressed that paratransit services like Access-A-Bus should be expanded significantly in addition to reducing the walking distance to stops, and transfers at stations, to make transit more accessible for slower moving users.

The changes that would make transit the best first choice for many participants was an increased availability of tickets and route information. Several participants suggested that transit tickets be available in more convenient locations, particularly grocery stores and at the ferry terminal. Additionally, a significant concern of participants is that route information is not easily available as



maps. Many suggested that having that information posted at stops and transfer points would go a long way to ensure they used transit more frequently.

### Coverage

Many participants were concerned with the lack of network coverage in vulnerable communities and suggested that a better transit network should connect these neighbourhoods with their needs. Beyond vulnerable communities, participants believed transit should provide excellent coverage to accommodate people's needs, like hospital visits, grocery trips, and access to tourism and cultural events.

### Affordable

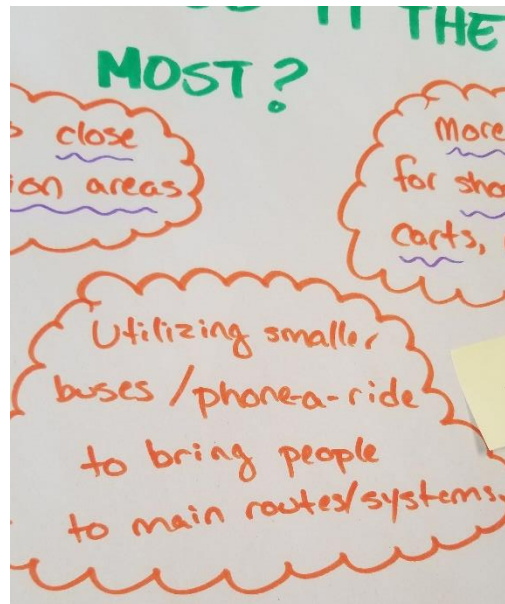
With regards to affordability, participants gave some possible solutions. Many advocated for free transit or extended fare assistance for low income individuals. Additionally, due to the price of a monthly transit pass, some participants suggested that there be more options like a family or short term (week, weekend) pass to make transit more affordable.

### Big Ideas

Participants were then asked to come up with big ideas for transit in Halifax under three themes: Concept, Communication, and Investment.

#### Concept Big Ideas:

- Connect rural areas of the province with buses to HRM
- Terminals should be a destination
- Neighbourhood transit nodes that reflect the identity of the community they serve
- Prioritize ridership
- Density and intensify suburbs (suburban retrofitting)
- Transit for Subdivisions
- Solar Electric Transit
- Looped (lines use the same street) transit
- Feeder buses to downtown (shuttles running on peninsula)
- Smaller community shuttles



- LRT
- Underground Monorail

#### Communication Big Ideas:

- All Councillors should be required to take the bus for a year
- Communicate transit success stories
- Celebrate the culture of transit
- Visualizing what could be for transit



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- Change the culture of people who operate transit
- Personalize transit
- Bus advertisements
- School mobility clubs
- Regional Support/Engagement
- Billboard on the highway (Stuck in traffic? There's a better way!)
- Transit as a selling feature of new developments
- Advertisement at community mailboxes
- Engage with regional trail groups

#### Investment Big Ideas:

- Tax for transit
- Tap into federal healthcare money
- Vehicle tax to enter downtown
- Provincial support on transit commission
- Disincentives for car users
- Pay people to use transit
- Transit Coffee card
- Move around money priorities in HRM budget
- Carbon Tax to fund sustainable transit
- Make car insurance more expensive
- Private investment



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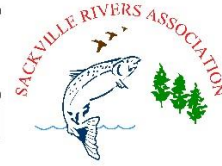
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Advocates for better transit in Halifax

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