



Subject: *Canada Public Transit Fund - Expression of Interest Submission*
To: Council
Date Prepared: July 23, 2024
Related Motions: None
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Approved by: Kim Ramsay CAO

Summary

East Hants has been approached by the Joint Regional Transportation Agency to participate in a Metro Region Agreement, with the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Municipality of East Hants as partners, to respond to the Canada Public Transit Fund Expression of Interest (EOI) announced on July 17th. An award through this program could be transformational for the Region and beyond.

Financial Impact Statement

No financial contributions required/expected at this time.

Recommendation

For the Province of Nova Scotia and the Joint Regional Transportation Agency to respond to Canada Public Transit Fund Expression of Interest (EOI) call to participate in a Metro Region Agreement, with the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Municipality of East Hants as partners as the fund requires that a designated Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) to submit the EOI.

Recommended Motion

That Council authorize the CAO to send a letter to the Joint Regional Transportation Agency confirming the Municipality of East Hants as a willing Metro Region Partner Organization in the Expression of Interest application for the Canada Public Transit Fund.

Background

- On July 17, 2024, the Federal Government announced the launch of the Canada Public Transit Fund, a new \$30 billion investment over the first ten years to expand public transit and make it more accessible across the country. This is the largest public transit investment in Canadian history.
- The Canada Public Transit Fund will transform the way transit funding is delivered to communities across the country. This permanent ongoing program will invest an average of \$3 billion per year to help cities and communities deliver better public transit systems for Canadians.
- The \$3B/year federal Canada Public Transit Fund has three main programs:
 - \$2B for the Metro Region Agreement (MRA) program
 - \$0.5B for base funding for all transit agencies
 - \$0.5B for other direct apply programs (e.g. Rural Transit Solutions Fund)

Discussion

East Hants has been approached by the Joint Regional Transportation Agency to participate in a Metro Region Agreement, with the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Municipality of East Hants as partners, to respond to the Canada Public Transit Fund Expression of Interest (EOI) announced on July 17th.

Key considerations:

- Agree to work with the Province of Nova Scotia (PNS), Joint Regional Transportation Agency (JRTA) and Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) to support the development of an Integrated Regional Plan (IRP) which will be based on the JRTA Regional Transportation Plan currently underway and due to government in November 2024.
- Subject to IRP recommendations, support full application for funding under the Canada Public Transit Fund and enter into Metro Region Agreement (MRA) with the PNS, JRTA and HRM.
- The MRA has been specifically set up to encourage intensification of urban areas to increase the supply of housing and affordable housing and requires all partner agencies (including municipalities) to commit to planning policies that encourage housing densification near transit systems.
- The MRA program is a potentially significant source of funding for major transit projects contained in the JRTA Plan. The program is expected to be highly competitive. Although there is no deadline to apply, early application to the program will be an advantage.
- The MRA program is required to be based on a Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). The Halifax CMA, which includes the Halifax Regional Municipality and the Municipality of East Hants, is the only CMA in the province. Accordingly, the MRA must be based on a geographic scope that includes HRM and East Hants as a minimum.

Definition of CMA

A census metropolitan area (CMA) or a census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000, based on data from the current Census of Population Program, of which 50,000 or more must live in the core based on adjusted data from the previous Census of Population Program... To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by commuting flows derived from data on place of work from the previous Census Program.

- The MRA program requires a commitment to a governance structure that includes all partner agencies (province, municipalities) within the geographic scope of the MRA that identifies how they will work together to prioritize projects.
- PNS and JRTA are preparing to respond to an Expression of Interest (EOI) call for the MRA program. The current work of the JRTA is highly aligned with MRA program requirements and the MRA program is a significant potential source of federal funding for the transit aspects of the JRTA's Plan.
- The MRA EOI stage requires provincial and municipal commitments to program parameters but does not include identification of specific projects. The projects to be funded under the MRA are yet to be determined.
- The initial geographic scope (CMA in this case) of the MRA is required to be identified at the EOI stage. The geographic scope of the MRA can be expanded to include adjacent municipalities at program intervals (currently anticipated five years in) and the JRTA will work with DMAH and the other municipalities to review the land use planning changes that will be required to enable them to join the program as it grows.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Council has an objective to invest in transit that supports our community's workforce, accessibility and environmental stewardship. Supporting regional transportation initiatives is important as we explore our own transit needs.