

JRTA – Q&As from Virtual Information Session

The following are answers to questions received by the JRTA during our Virtual Information Session, held February 13, 2024 that couldn't be answered during the allotted time. To watch the session, [please click here](#).

Third Crossing

Glad to see a reference to a Third Harbour Crossing in the list - will the JRTA be able to acquire the corridor lands for it?

In collaboration with our Core Partners, we are continuing to evaluate a third harbour crossing as part of the planning process. Considerations for land requirements would be part of this.

Do you know if the Third Harbour connection project would be located in the Halifax peninsula's south end to the Eastern Passage region in order to eliminate the large truck traffic downtown? And has there been any discussion in regards to creating a new rail link here too for public and private purposes?

Previous studies on a third harbour crossing did explore connections between the south end of the peninsula and Highway 111. The Halifax Port Authority Inter-Terminal Rail Solution project has previously been announced to reduce the number of port-related container trucks in the downtown core.

Funding

Does the JRTA expect to also be the ones to fund, implement and manage the infrastructure that comes out of this plan? Where is the funding coming from? Will some be directed toward transit?

How will projects identified that are within municipal jurisdiction be funded? How does this impact existing capital plans?

We are exploring a range of funding and implementation models in collaboration with our Core Partners and as part of the planning process. JRTA are exploring existing and proposed funding opportunities with other orders of government and partnerships with municipalities based on the recommendations of the final plan.

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Are there any funding or plans to conduct pilot projects in rural areas?

We are exploring funding and implementation strategies as well as early deliverables which could include some pilot projects.

How do you measure feasibility in these projected outcomes? With what can get built to achieve the 2060 vision.

For the long-term conceptual modelling, we are focusing on the potential impacts of the projects and policies. For the in-depth analysis we will look at what can feasibly be built within short- and medium-term time frames as part of the implementation plan.

What project did you suggest would be funded within time frame of the project?

The plan is still in development. Project recommendations will be part of the final plan, scheduled to be completed in Fall 2024.

Bundles

Might your Policy Focus Bundle include a new Traffic Safety Act?

The policies at this stage are being tested in terms of their potential impact on transportation rather than the method by which they could be implemented, but the eventual policy recommendations included in the plan could lead to updates to regulations if they are carried out.

Do the Measures include, in the full list, access to food, medical, childcare, and other community services?

We are looking at a range of accessibility measures including access to health services and activities among our evaluation metrics.

Have you looked at eliminating Parking Minimums?

Parking minimums for existing and new buildings are set by municipalities in their land-use by-laws. Some municipalities, including HRM, have recently reduced or eliminated parking minimums in some areas/contexts. As part of the policy bundle, the JRTA is testing the impact of parking costs on people's choice in travel mode.

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All but one of the bundles included the replacement for the Mackay bridge. Given that in today's costs this would be a Billion \$ plus project and the total annual budget for the NS provincial budget is around \$15 B, this one project would basically consume a very large chunk of resources. How would that mesh with a much broader transportation plan or would it seriously impair or constrain it?

At this time, the replacement of the MacKay bridge is assumed to be a committed project given limited lifespan left on the existing structure. The modeling work will test a variety of configurations of a replacement link, some with a greater focus on AT and/or public transit connections.

Are you considering multi-modal transportation? i.e. last mile travel in conjunction with transit. Thanks

Yes, the plan is exploring all modes of transportation. This includes 'first mile / last mile' connections to transit service that is considered in the scope of the plan.

For expanding highway infrastructure would you consider recommending 2+1 roads rather than twinning? As 2+1 have lower capital costs, lower operational costs, inherently reduce speeds, reduce accident severity, and decrease impact to ecosystem.

This stage of the project is testing generalized high-level concepts and approaches to identify where some level of intervention in the system may be needed/beneficial. Subsequent phases of work will include implementation plans and design of infrastructure.

It seems that highway improvements were included in all but one bundle, while commuter rail was only included in the transit and AT focus. Is there a reason for that?

Highway projects that have been started and/or committed have been included in each bundle. Other highway projects referenced in transit-focused bundles test revisions to existing infrastructure or already committed infrastructure (e.g. adding dedicated transit lanes to projects where they are currently not included).

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Highway 113

I see that the proposed Highway 113 shows up in a couple of the bundles and I note that you don't want to zero in on individual projects but instead talk about the bundles. This runs the risk of leaving out detailed discussion on major projects that have wide ranging impacts to the environment. There is a national urban park being planned for the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes area that will be impacted by a four-lane highway that bisects the wilderness. Will there be an opportunity to discuss the impacts of this Highway to the national wilderness park?

Will you recommend deleting HWY 113 from all plans?

This potential connection is being evaluated as part of the planning process using the plan's vision, goals and principles. There will be further opportunities to discuss this potential connection as the plan progresses. A part of this work is not only to review new options, but also to re-evaluate previously proposed projects in the broader context of the regional transportation plan to understand their impacts against a broad range of measures.

Scenarios

Was consideration given to encourage flexible working hours to employers to ease traffic pressure at peak times? Some pressure was eased by those working from home during the pandemic. Is there data indicating more could be done to ease traffic pressures at peak times?

Our future options considered a range of future teleworking scenarios in addition to demographic growth. While this was treated more as a disruptor than a deliberate policy, the impact on the transportation network is similar, and this is certainly an area we will be continuing to explore.

I am relieved that you are preparing for a wide range of possible futures. To what extent will you be modelling HOW the transportation will SHAPE the future, rather than how the transportation system will handle future scenarios?

Ex. if the bridge is never replaced, or if there were 3 or 4 bridges, that would certainly shape the future population and development patterns.

Our modelling will help us to identify how people can travel in future; in this case, the state of future infrastructure such as bridges or transit connections will influence the length and type of

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trips that can be made. There is a large range of factors (including transportation) that impact where people live that we are considering in our future growth projections.

Are you examining different sizes of vehicles for rural transportation? Smaller electric buses would be more efficient.

Yes--we are looking at options such as shuttles or feeder services to provide accessibility in more rural areas recognizing that full-size scheduled city buses may not always be the best solution, though our work is first to identify demand and then right-size the vehicle types to that demand.

Have you incorporated the option of priority transportation for zero or near zero emission vehicles?

This hasn't been specifically looked at in the long-term analysis but can be tested as a policy; it may be helpful in the shorter term to encourage a faster transition to zero emission vehicles.

What is the ideal community population for our current transportation service? In other words, in what year was our current transit system designed?

There isn't a definitive year that the current transportation system is designed for as it continually evolving and changing. This happens in response to growth and changes in land use. The transportation system can also influence growth and shape land use so it is a dynamic two-way relationship.

Is travel time measured from door to door (e.g. including parking a vehicle) or is it just time on the road/walkway?

Travel time is measured from the start of a trip until the end of a trip.

Our travel times during rush hour traffic to from downtown has been doubled or tripled after pandemic! When can we see a solution for this and what actions /plans are being taken or will be taken to avoid one person one car scenario?

The draft plan, currently anticipated for fall 2024 will provide a series of recommendations and actions to help address changes in travel times among other items to meet the established

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vision and goals. The plan will also include an implementation strategy that will provide insight into the timing of these initiatives.

Highway 102

For the 102 improvements, I was able to see the long-term plan. I was wondering if this section could be used for higher order transit from the city centre to the airport.

Yes, the plan will consider options of improving transit access to the airport.

Halifax Transit Funding

Additional regional transit services will require more drivers, and multiple transit services would be competing to attract and retain drivers from the same regional talent pool. How are driver shortages and competition between transit services providers for available drivers factored into your models?

Right now, the focus is on identifying the right mix of investments to support the region. But you are correct in identifying this potential challenge. Operator shortages would be an important consideration for the implementation strategy.

Will the JRTA work directly with Metro Transit Halifax to fix existing shortcomings with the transit system before preparing a TDM model for the broader metro region?

HRM is one of the JRTA core partners and we are working collaboratively with HRM transportation planning and Halifax Transit staff to identify projects and policies to support the region.

Examples from other jurisdictions

Are you looking at other models from other cities/ countries that could help our transit situations?

Yes, we are looking at regional transportation models from elsewhere in Canada such as British Columbia and Ontario among others, including international examples.

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What agencies in other provinces and around the world are you looking at and taking inspiration from for what's possible and what's appropriate?

We are looking at numerous agencies that conduct regional transportation planning and some service providers. Some agencies include TransLink, BC Transit, Metrolinx, other Canadian Ministries of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the US.

Study Area

Why has Sheet Harbour, identified by HRM as a Rural Growth Centre not been included in the studies.

The primary study area of the JRTA includes the regional around the Halifax regional centre and approximately the one-hour commute time from the regional centre. The plan will consider opportunities for other areas along the periphery of the study area as the work advances.

Other Questions

Curious to see rural connectivity proposals such as Rural Express bus service further out present limits.

Inter-municipal regional transit service that connects communities within the study area is being explored through the plan.

Ecosystem Health was mentioned up front...will nature based solutions be considered as you move forward with implementation ideas & plans?

Yes, nature based solutions will be considered as it aligns with the plan's resiliency and sustainability principles.

Recreation & Tourism is an important economic factor as well as the reason people want to live here. How will you integrate these matters with your planning?

Recreation and tourism are important considerations in the planning process. We'll be evaluating these elements through the next phase of work as it will be focused on the spatial analysis of travel times and access to employment, services and key destinations.

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Would you kindly prioritize recommending bike lanes within the regional centre?

The All Ages and Abilities Bikeway Network in the Regional Centre is included in the committed project bundle making it a foundational element of the Regional Transportation Plan.

What are the next Rings of Growth around Halifax's Radial Settlement Pattern?

We are working with HRM Regional Planning staff and our other Core Partners to explore and analyze future growth and determining the right mix of transportation investments to support the region.