

## Executive Summary

Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) was retained by the City of Moncton to conduct a Strategic overview of the public transit services operated by Codiac Transit. This was in order to:

1. Assess the appropriateness of existing transit services;
2. Determine opportunities to manage and increase ridership; and
3. Ensure that the transit system responds to customer needs in an efficient, effective and fiscally responsible manner.

An extensive public consultation process was undertaken involving members of council, the user community, non-transit riders and key stakeholders. There was also an overwhelming level of involvement from the public, with over 1,500 individual comments or survey responses received over a short period of time. This points to the significance of transit in the community and the desire for change.

Key input received from the public included the desire to increase bus frequency, reduce total travel time, reduce the need to transfer and the desire for more marketing and information. There was a high degree of support for the drivers and a sense that both the fare is fair and the existing level of taxpayer support is fair.

A benchmark comparison was also conducted comparing Codiac Transit to its peers in the 50,000 to 150,000 population group in Canada and to Atlantic Canada. These comparisons showed that ridership was low, utilization per capita and per revenue service hour was low as well as hours of service per capita. On the other hand, the financial performance of the system in terms of revenue/cost ratio was slightly below the average in the peer group. This is partially due to a lower average fare and lower ridership in the system. However, the service being provided is one of the most efficient in the peer group in terms of operating cost per passenger and per hour.

The public outreach and peer review were supported by a review of the overall system. Within Moncton, transit routes have evolved over time, however, have not changed significantly with the exception of a new Express Service on Mountain Road.

The overall route structure evolved in response to the political limitations and operating restrictions of providing service in three municipalities, and not passenger convenience. The artificial transfers required at Highfield Square (from Riverview) and at Champlain Mall (from Dieppe) are present only because of those limitations/restrictions. This was considered a priority to address.

Service frequencies were considered too low on certain routes and not consistent by route or time of day. This leads to a higher degree of passenger confusion and reduced convenience and flexibility. This, along with the need for transfers, is considered one of the key factors that is limiting ridership. The Express Route was considered successful, providing a high level of service that is well utilized. This service type is considered a model that should be replicated moving forward.

Based on these broad conclusions reached, a number of recommendations were made. These are identified below.

### **1. Service Standards**

The first priority is to formally develop and adopt a Strategic Direction, service standards, and transit operating policies. These are essential policy directions and communication tools that will

guide how transit will operate now and into the future. A monitoring program should be established to measure system performance on a regular basis. Services either not meeting or exceeding performance targets should be targets for revision.

This needs to be completed in cooperation with Dieppe and Riverview as part of a comprehensive service review of Codiac Transit.

## **2. Route Structure and Terminals**

The route structure is not designed to optimize inter-municipal trips between the three primary service areas; namely Moncton, Dieppe and Riverview. This leads to duplication of service, extra travel time and the need for unnecessary transfers. There are several other areas where existing service concepts should be expanded and corridors should be streamlined. Several short-term solutions are recommended, however, others (due to issues of governance) need to be undertaken as part of a more comprehensive review.

Two short-term solutions that can be implemented right away include:

1. Realign Routes 1 and 2 to avoid duplication of the Express Service on Mountain Road as proposed by Codiac Transit.
2. Realign Route 5 to reduce overall travel time and better service the University.

Other routing modifications that need further exploration (potentially as part of a Comprehensive Codiac Transit study) include:

1. Expand the Express Route network:
  - a. Extend the existing Mountain Road service west to the Casino (opening June 2010) and extend east into Dieppe to the Moncton International Airport. The service should operate as a seamless system between Moncton and Dieppe.
  - b. Explore the opportunity to turn the modified Route 5 into a third Express Service. The service would have a 30-minute run-time and provide two-way service to the Hospital and the University.
  - c. All routes should converge at a centrally located downtown terminal, including the existing Express Service along Mountain Road.
2. Consider additional changes on Route 7, 9 and 10 as proposed by Codiac Transit, subject to further study.
3. Reduce the number of buses along Main Street by identifying opportunities to relocate the Highfield Square terminal closer to the downtown core.
4. Reduce the number of required transfers by interlining routes from Dieppe and Riverview to access destinations in Moncton. This would involve changes to the overall governance structure of Codiac Transit.

## **3. Service Hours and Frequency**

The hours of service provided by Codiac Transit are appropriate for Moncton. However, there was some desire by those consulted to increase overall service hours, and this should be done on individual routes as opposed to increasing system-wide service hours.

The overall service frequency was another point mentioned in the consultation process. Many routes have poor frequencies which make the service inconvenient. As a general rule of thumb,

peak period service frequencies should not exceed 30 minutes, and off-peak frequencies should not exceed 60 minutes (although 30 minutes is a preferred minimum).

The scheduling of buses is also not designed to accommodate timed transfers and is difficult to understand without referring to a schedule. Based on this assessment, the following recommendations are made:

1. Full Service Routes operate at minimum 30-minute frequency during the weekdays from the first run to the first evening run.
2. Services on weekdays and evenings should be assessed based on a utilization target, but should not exceed 60 minute frequency.
3. Adjust service frequencies on the Express Route to 15 minute peak and 30 minutes off-peak (including weekends)
4. Service frequencies should be divisible by 60 minutes (including 10, 15, 30 and 60).
5. Consistency in the frequency for each route during specific periods of the day should be maintained (i.e. always 30 minutes during the peak periods)
6. Timed transfers should be facilitated at the central terminal were applicable by reorganizing all routes to operate on a 60 minute clock-face.
7. Hourly service should be monitored and increased to 30 minute service if specific ridership performance targets are reached.

#### **4. Transfer Policy**

Due to issues of overall governance, there are a number of unnecessary transfers that take place in the system. Transfers are also not timed due to the various bus travel times and service frequencies per route and throughout the day. As such, transferring becomes a significant impediment to using the system. As such, it is recommended that:

1. Codiac Transit adopt an extended transfer policy of 90 minutes.
2. A restructuring of routes identify opportunities to time transfers at major terminals during the more comprehensive study which involves Dieppe and Riverview.

#### **5. Accessibility of Fleet**

Codiac Transit is replacing its existing fleet with accessible low-floor buses. This is an important initiative to improve overall accessibility in the community. Routes will be designated as fully accessible once there are enough buses to accommodate the Express Service (stage 1) and the Full Service Routes (stage 2). This strategy of staging is appropriate. To move towards a fully accessible system, the following recommendations are made:

1. Identify opportunities to increase the timing of the vehicle replacement plan as recommended by Codiac Transit to advance the start date of low-floor bus service.
2. Once in place, designate routes as 100% Accessible Transit Routes and phase this strategy in starting with all Express Routes, all Full Service Routes, followed by Peak Hours and Peak Hour Enhanced Routes. Appropriate spare buses should be available to ensure full accessibility is maintained if a low-floor bus is not in service.
3. Develop policies and procedures regarding snow clearing, curb-cuts and sidewalk placement to ensure stops with low-floor bus routes are accessible.
4. Develop driver training program and low-floor bus policies and procedures.

5. Initiate a Review of the Ability Transit Service.
6. Explore Community Bus Concept in Conjunction with the Ability Transit Review.

### **6. Transit Fares and Passes**

The fare structure available to transit riders is appropriate for Moncton. The fares are also in line with the peer group with the exception of the Adult Monthly Pass. Any adjustments in fares should be made in line with improvements in overall service. Fare adjustments should also promote the use of pass and tickets rather than cash to increase frequency of use and minimize cash handling costs.

A Universal Pass should be promoted with the Universities and New Brunswick Community College (NBCC). NBCC already has a high level of service with the Express Route and negotiations with the University and the Student Association should begin right away. For the Université de Moncton, in order for it to be accepted by the student population, the bus schedule should be altered to better meet the class schedule and the service should be improved.

### **7. Governance**

The governance structure of Codiak Transit is one of the key issues that is preventing the system from truly meeting the needs of passengers. The Transit Commission, which was displaced in December 2008, needs to be replaced with a governing body that can address a metropolitan service design and establish an equitable funding formula that permits better metropolitan planning and integration of true origins and destinations. This would enable existing transit terminals at Highfield Square and Champlain Place to be located at key destinations instead of the boundaries of the municipalities, would reduce the need for transfers, and would reduce service duplication on Main Street. While there would be a clear benefit for residents of Dieppe and Riverview, for Moncton, it would streamline certain services and improve overall route structure for Moncton residents. Therefore, it is recommended that:

1. Codiak Transit, the City of Moncton, Dieppe and Riverview review governance structure options for Codiak Transit as part of a comprehensive service review with the intent of developing a seamless transit system within the metropolitan area.

### **8. Staffing**

Codiak Transit is amongst the lowest costs of operations compared to its peers. However, this comes at a cost saving that may be too onerous. There is the need to hire persons to undertake planning and marketing, to supplement operations (2 people) and to supplement the clerical function in maintenance/stores.

### **Next Steps**

The City of Moncton should adopt the short-term recommendations identified in this report. These include:

1. Revisions to Routes 1 and 5
2. Adoption of an extended transfer policy
3. Negotiation of a Universal Pass with the Universities and College
4. Increase in staffing requirements and explore means to expedite driver recruitment
5. Increase speed of vehicle replacement plan (for accessible vehicles)

These recommendations can be made in isolation of the other municipalities that Codiac Transit services. However, there are a number of recommendations need to be made in a metropolitan context.

Codiac Transit has applied for funding to complete an enhanced metropolitan transit strategic plan for its entire service area. This should be proceeded with whether the application is approved. Such a study would address the governance matter, a metropolitan route plan based on a 60 minute clock face and an acceptable cost-sharing formula to allow seamless routing of buses. The study should include an on-board survey of origins and destinations and a transfer trace. The study could also include a revamped strategic plan, implementation plan and dialogue with small municipalities outside of the metro area with respect to park'n ride opportunities.