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Law Amendments November 1, 2021 - 6:30

Bill 61 – Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act

Thank you, Good evening Honourable MLAs,

I would first like to thank the Law Amendments Committee for the opportunity to speak to Bill 61 – Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act here today in Mi'kmaki, the unceded and unsurrendered lands of the Mi'kmaq people.

My name is Anika Riopel, I am the Transportation Coordinator with the Ecology Action Centre. Over the years, my role has involved various initiatives, including coordinating the Welcoming Wheels program. Welcoming Wheels is a program partnership that enables newcomers to enjoy the many benefits of cycling. Through cycling, newcomers connect with their communities and gain access to services, people, places, jobs, and the physical and mental benefits of cycling.

During this time, I have had the privilege of meeting newcomers from all over the world and learning about their perspectives, barriers, and transportation needs. I have also worked with other underserved communities to develop programming to support their active transportation needs, such as the Pop-Up Bike Hub.

By working directly with newcomers and other underserved communities, I have learned much about this municipality and this province, as well as my own knowledge gaps and assumptions. I am highlighting this because I want to underline the importance of *actively and intentionally* including diverse voices in all phases of planning. Something that I will return to later.

First, I would like to acknowledge the importance of transportation for all ages and abilities. Ensuring that all citizens have access to services, jobs, and community is paramount for healthy, resilient cities. This means designing our city's transportation systems to give people options to move about safely. This also means providing transit and active transportation networks that enable people who cannot drive to access and participate in community life.

I would also like to acknowledge that the importance of access to Active Transportation options has already been highlighted in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, Bill 57, section 2, (b) and 9. We would like to see the following amends made to Bill 61 to align with the goals of Bill 57.



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### **Inclusion of Active Transportation as a mode of transportation.**

In Bill 61, section 5, indicates that the objectives of the Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act are:

*“to conduct a comprehensive review of all modes of transportation associated with the Municipality including roads, bridges, highways, ferries, transit, rail, airports and ports for the purpose of creating a master transportation plan...”*

We would like to see the inclusion of Active Transportation as a mode of transportation.

### **Inclusion of Active Transportation experts on the Technical Advisory Board.**

In Bill 61, section 8 (2) indicates that the:

*“The Board's members must be licensed professional planners or professional engineers or hold such other technical expertise and qualifications as determined by the Governor in Council in the regulations.”*

We would like to see the inclusion of Active Transportation experts on the board.

In section 19 (2) indicates that the:

The Technical Advisory Board appointed under subsection (1) must include *representatives from*

- (a) the Municipality;*
- (b) the Halifax Port Authority;*
- (c) the Halifax International Airport Authority; and*
- (d) Halifax Harbor Bridges.*

We would like to see the inclusion of representatives from the municipality's Active Transportation Team alongside other municipal staff.

### **Addition of diverse voices in initial planning phases**

While we applaud the province's commitment to find fast solutions, we would like to ensure that all voices are included in all phases of development.



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Regardless of anyone's technical training or education, we don't know, what we don't know. The status quo systems in place have long ignored marginalized voices and have resulted in deeply problematic policy and planning procedures. To ensure that we do not continue to repeat history, we would urge the province to include diverse voices throughout the planning phases.

We would encourage the Province to work with partners and representatives from the Mi'kmaq, African Nova Scotian and newcomer communities, as well as representatives from disability communities, youth, seniors and other marginalized groups.

This could include representatives from the Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre, the Mobile Outreach Street Health Team, CNIB, Autism Nova Scotia, ISANS, reachAbility and HRM's own The Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO which consists of the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO), Diversity Advisors and the Local Immigration Partnership, amongst others.

Fast solutions are great, but fast solutions that overlook important perspectives and community needs will result in ineffective infrastructure, expensive overhauls and community backlash. Let do it right the first time.

Further to this point, in Section 5 (a) the line

"the safe, efficient and co-ordinated movement of people and goods" should include the word "equitable".

As per Bill 57 definition, "equity" means the recognition of people's differences and the attempt to counteract unequal opportunities by considering fairness and justice;

**Clarity on redundancy:**

We request a clear outline of the relationship between the Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act and the HRM's Strategic Transportation Planning Team that is overseeing the Integrated Mobility Plan.

If the Joint Regional Transportation Agency is limited to the HRM, the HRM already has an Integrated Mobility Plan with seemingly identical goals, and the Strategic Transportation Planning team to oversee its implementation.

A Joint Regional Transportation Agency at the provincial level would have the jurisdiction to facilitate projects that cross municipal boundaries (in a way that municipal governments do not). The scope of a Joint Regional Transportation agency should include municipalities adjacent to the HRM to enable intermunicipal transit service and active transportation networks.

I would like to close by again thanking you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 61.