

Mid-Term Governance Review White Papers Summary #6

Proposal regarding a Transit Commission

At present, all aspects of transit governance occur at City Council, Transit Committee and joint meetings of Transit Committee and Transportation Committee. The General Manager of Transit Services is responsible for operating the transit system within the policies and budget set by City Council.

White Paper #6 outlines City Council's options if it wishes to change transit governance: a strengthened Standing Committee or various models of independent and arms-length transit commissions/authorities. The paper explains that the benefit of an arms-length organization would be its ability to focus on transit issues.

Because City Council is responsible for transit funding, it would retain overall accountability for transit. However, there are some areas of operation in which an independent transit commission may be given more or less delegated authority: labour/contract negotiations; some aspects of strategic planning; service goals; fares; access to citizens; mobility split or routes. Such authority could also be delegated instead to a strengthened Standing Committee or General Manager of Transit Services should Council decide not to adopt the independent commission model.

Should an independent transit commission be established, its reporting relationship to Council would be very important. Such a commission would probably report directly to City Council, rather than through a department or Standing Committee, but the frequency of its reporting requirements and the matters covered in its reports would have to be determined.

Questions/Issues:

Given the importance of public transit in the lives of so many Ottawa residents, what transit issues should remain solely in the hands of our elected representatives?

How might the establishment of an independent transit commission affect the ability of Ottawa residents to have a voice in the operation of our public transit system?