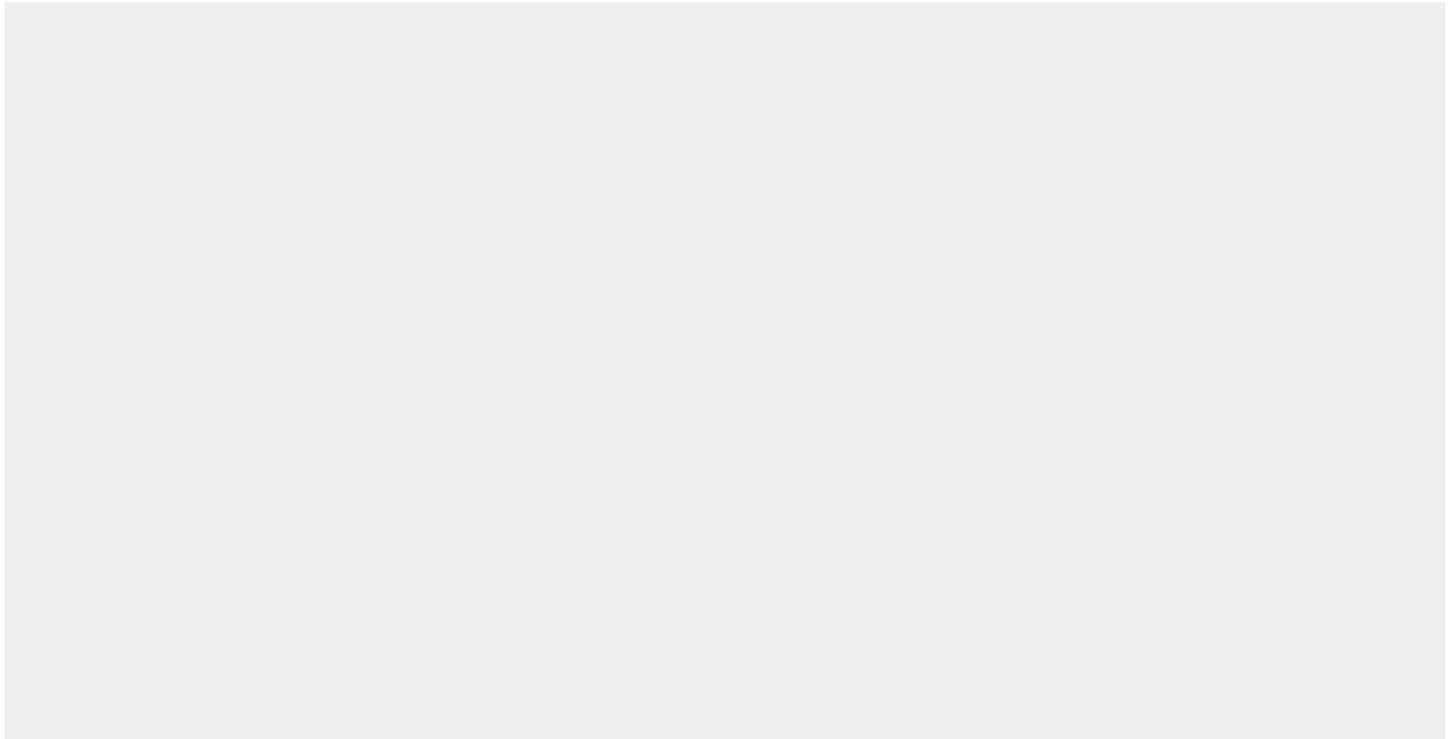


Plans for Gottingen Street bus lane denied

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The North End Business Association has opposed the dedicated bus lane as originally proposed, and can count Thursday's council decision as a victory for the time-being. (TIM KROCHAK / Staff)

Halifax Regional Municipality's transportation standing committee has turned down a recommendation by staff to proceed with the detailed design and implementation plans for a dedicated bus lane on Gottingen Street, asking instead for a report on having no parking during peak transit times.

It will also look at the issue of how many express buses are travelling on the street without stopping.

Coun. Lindell Smith brought forward an amended motion to proceed with design of a continuous, northbound bus lane only from 7-9 a.m. and 3-6 p.m. on weekdays, and look at the potential for moving northbound express buses to a different route, and Dartmouth-bound express buses to Barrington Street via the bridge ramp.

Councillors agreed that it made more sense to have limited times of no parking rather than removing parking spaces permanently.

The North End Business Association has opposed the dedicated bus lane as originally proposed, and had wanted a six-month trial period of no parking or loading in the southbound lane from 7-9 a.m. and in the northbound lane from 4-6 p.m., with better parking enforcement on both sides.

Association executive director Patricia Cuttell said after Thursday's meeting the group is pleased with the amended motion.

"We think that peak hours transit accommodation is all that's necessary," she said.

Cuttell said she wants to see more discussion on whether peak hours in the afternoon start at 3 p.m., or if an hour later would be adequate, and how a transit lane will be enforced.

"I don't think everything is resolved yet, but at least it's a start in the right direction."

The changed motion was also welcomed by the group It's More Than Buses. Executive director Ben Wedge said he's pleased to see the focus on changes limited to peak hours.

"We're satisfied there is no congestion outside the peak hours," he said. "If the traffic grows over the next couple of years, maybe we'll have to come back and revisit whether off-peak buses should get more priority, but based on our observations and the knowledge we have, it seems like the only real issue is during rush hour."