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## **The Regional Municipality of Durham**

### **MINUTES**

#### **ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, November 23, 2021**

A meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, November 23, 2021 at Regional Headquarters, Council Chambers, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby at 1:02 PM. Electronic participation was permitted at this meeting.

#### **1. Roll Call**

Present: D. Campbell, Whitby, Vice-Chair  
A. Beach, Oshawa  
H. Hall, Participation House, attended the meeting at 1:08 PM  
D. Hume-McKenna, DMHS  
Councillor R. Mulcahy  
R. Purnwasie, Ajax  
M. Roche, Oshawa  
**\*all members of the committee participated electronically**

Absent: C. Boose, Chair  
S. Sones, Whitby

#### **Staff**

Present: J. Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services, Durham Region Transit  
S. Austin, Director of Corporate Policy and Strategic Initiatives  
R. Inacio, Systems Support Specialist, Corporate Services – IT  
A. Labriola, Eligibility Coordinator, Transit Specialized Services, Durham Region Transit  
C. Norris, Deputy General Manager, Transit Operations, Durham Region Transit  
J. Traer, Accessibility Coordinator, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer  
N. Prasad, Assistant Secretary to Council, Corporate Services – Legislative Services  
K. Smith, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. Adoption of Minutes**

Moved by M. Roche, Seconded by A. Beach,  
That the minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on September 28, 2021, be adopted.

**CARRIED**

#### 4. Presentations

A) Jamie Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services re: Whitby Autonomous Electric Vehicle

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Jamie Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services, provided a presentation with regards to the Whitby Autonomous Electric Vehicle Electric shuttle (WAVE).

J. Austin advised that some committee members were provided with an overview of the vehicle and its accessibility features ahead of the launch. He advised that a media day was also held to provide the media with a sneak peek and service was launched on November 8, 2021 with approximately 80 passengers in the first week.

J. Austin provided a video that highlighted some of the key aspects of the Whitby Autonomous Vehicle Electric shuttle (WAVE) pilot.

J. Austin responded to questions with regards to the WAVE being the first in Canada; the kind of feedback DRT has received; and whether DRT has developed a smooth braking operation.

B) Christopher Norris, Deputy General Manager, Transit Operations re: On-Demand Service

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Christopher Norris, Deputy General Manager, Transit Operations provided a PowerPoint Presentation with regards to the transition to an amalgamated demand responsive service.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Transition to an Amalgamated Demand Responsive Service
- Demand Responsive Transit Study
- Findings
  - service delivery and operations
  - culture and collaboration
  - technology and analytics
  - external communications and education
  - strategy and key partnerships
- Recommendations

C. Norris advised that DRT initiated a demand response study in early fall of 2021. He advised that the objective of the study was to help DRT with the following:

- ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements specific to Specialized Services;
- reorder demand responsive services (On Demand and Specialized Services) as required to be client centric and outcome focused;

- ensure the equity of access of Specialized Transit is comparable to scheduled and On Demand service models;
- recalibrate the roles and responsibilities of parties throughout the transit system;
- identify opportunities for efficiencies and values; and
- ensure the service model aligns with the strategic priorities of the Region and Durham Region Transit.

C. Norris provided an overview of the findings with regards to service and operations; culture and collaboration; technology and analytics; external communications and education; strategy and key partnerships. He advised that with regards to specialized services processes and practices and AODA considerations, the study confirmed that the following practices comply with the AODA:

- application of AODA criteria for unconditional, conditional and temporary eligibility;
- origin to destination services using integrated services approach;
- mandatory requirement for a customer to provide and travel with an attendant when the customer is unable to use the service independently; and
- current booking practice requiring pre-booking of trips.

C. Norris also provided an overview of the following recommendations of the study:

- further integrate specialized services and on demand services in compliance with AODA;
- examine existing workforce communication channels and tools for effectiveness, invest in cross-training, and implement new feedback mechanisms to drive ongoing dialogue and improvements;
- consider and plan for investments in technologies that enable customer relations management, workforce management, and analytics;
- engage stakeholders to access to proposed future state model and design for Demand Responsive transit and allow time to implement educational initiatives; and
- establish a “One DRT” strategy.

C. Norris responded to questions with regards to specific examples of the objectives provided and how this will improve things for customers; whether the study parallels other transit systems; the importance of understanding that transportation is an issue for those with non-visible disabilities; and the process involved when booking on demand and specialized service.

C) Andrea Labriola, Eligibility Coordinator, Transit Specialized Services,  
Durham Region Transit re: Specialized Services Application Process

Andrea Labriola, Eligibility Coordinator, Transit Specialized Services provided a PowerPoint Presentation with regards to the Specialized Services Application Process.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Specialized Transit Eligibility Review and Appeal Process
- Eligibility Review
- Eligibility Outcomes
- Eligibility Appeals
- Appeal Process
- Role of the Appeal Panel
- Composition of Eligibility Appeal Panel
- Appeal Panel Decisions

A. Labriola stated that the eligibility review is required for customers registered prior to January 2015. She advised that the purpose of the eligibility review is to determine the best way to provide mobility to customers and the review is based on current abilities in accordance with the AODA requirements. She provided an overview of the following eligibility outcomes: unconditional eligibility; conditional eligibility; and temporary eligibility.

A. Labriola also provided an overview of the Appeal Process and stated that an appeal must be initiated by the customer or representative within 30 days of the eligibility decision. She reviewed the process involved with regards to the completion process of the appeal form.

A. Labriola also stated that the role of the Appeal Panel is to deliver an objective, consensus-based decision on eligibility through a review of the applicant's specialized services application; supporting documentation and assessments; results of any functional assessment; appeal materials; and appeal interview. She advised that the appeal panel has final authority on all DRT decisions. She further advised that decisions are based on the applicant's ability to use conventional transit and appeals based solely on compassionate grounds are not considered.

A. Labriola provided answers to questions previously asked by the committee with regards to: the number of customers that had to reapply for the eligibility review; the number of customers that were reclassified to integrated service; whether extra time is granted to have forms completed due to lack of appointments; the number of customers that did not submit documentation and were made ineligible; the number of customers that were told that they cannot access specialized services after going through the appeal process; the purpose of the appeal hearing; and barriers to the appeal process.

A. Labriola responded to questions with regards to how many of the 90% of people who did qualify to be on the list for specialized services were approved to be on the service with an attendant as well as without an attendant; whether there is a transition period for customers who no longer qualify to use specialized service to help them adjust to using conventional transit.

Moved by H. Hall, Seconded by A. Beach,  
That the Committee recess.  
CARRIED

The committee recessed at 2:23 PM and reconvened at 2:30 PM.

Following the recess, the Committee Clerk conducted a roll call and all members of the Committee were present except C. Boose and S. Sones.

**5. Discussion Items**

There were no items of discussion.

**6. Correspondence**

There were no items of correspondence to consider.

**7. Information Items**

A) Education Sub-Committee Update

J. Traer advised she's looking into having a presentation at the January meeting on the accessibility of tank rides at the Ontario Regiment in Oshawa. She advised that she's also looking into having more presentations with regards to cognitive disabilities.

B) Update on the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC)

H. Hall advised that DRT has added more conventional buses on high priority ride times.

M. Roche advised that he is hoping to get an answer at the next TAC meeting with regards to the appeal process and the 210 people who did not submit applications for eligibility of specialized services.

C) Accessibility Coordinator Update

The following update was provided:

- C. Boose is on a temporary personal leave
- L. Schisler is no longer with Community Care Durham and another representative will be appointed.

- S. Austin provided an update on the reopening of Regional headquarters. She advised that they are looking at having staff return in a gradual and hybrid approach to the office in January 2022. She advised that committee members attending meetings would have to comply with the Region's visitor policy and provide a covid screening prior to attending.
- J. Traer advised that she is currently working with Department representatives to complete the Compliance Report to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. She advised that the Report has to be submitted before December 31, 2021.
- J. Traer advised that she is working with the Works Department with regards to the design standards for the Region. She advised that they are looking at improving the signage at Regional headquarters as well as all buildings owned and operated by the Region.
- J. Traer advised that the site plan subcommittee met with Works Department staff to review site plans for the outdoor play spaces of four regionally operated childcare centres. She advised that the play spaces are being redesigned and will be incorporating natural materials instead of standard playground equipment.
- J. Traer advised that accessible Electric Vehicle Charging Stations have been installed at the west entrance of the accessible parking area at Regional Headquarters. She also advised that the electric vehicle charging station policy will be updated to include specific language on the use of this space.
- The Joint Accessibility Advisory Forum is scheduled for November 23, 2021 from 5 to 6:30 PM and will be held virtually. The Honourable David C. Onley has been scheduled to speak at the Forum. A representative from the Robert McLaughlin Art Gallery will also provide a presentation with regards to a current exhibit that highlights accessibility.

**8. Reports for Information**

There were no reports to consider.

**9. Other Business**

There were no items of other business.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 1 PM.

**11. Adjournment**

Moved by A. Beach, Seconded by M. Roche,  
That the meeting be adjourned.  
CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 2:54 PM

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D. Campbell, Vice-Chair  
Accessibility Advisory Committee

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N. Prasad, Assistant Secretary to  
Council