
TO: Transit Select Committee **MEETING:** March 21, 2019
FROM: Erica Beauchamp
Superintendent, Transit Planning &
Scheduling **FILE:** 8600 20 CRP
SUBJECT: Revised Custom Transit (handyDART) Registration Process Implementation

RECOMMENDATION

That the implementation of the BC Transit Revised Custom Transit Registration process for Regional District of Nanaimo Custom Transit (handyDART) be approved.

SUMMARY

Current registration practices for the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Custom Transit (handyDART) system are outdated in comparison to a number of transit systems across North America, who are moving towards a more accurate and personalized method of registering custom transit riders. In 2015, BC Transit approved and implemented the *Revised Custom Registration Process* based on current best practices in use across Canada. This new registration process includes an in-person assessment with a mobility coordinator (occupational therapist) in order to match an applicant's needs with the most appropriate type(s) of transit services available. Based on this, RDN Transit recommends implementation of the BC Transit Revised Custom Transit (handyDART) Registration process for new RDN handyDART applications, as well as for those current clients that demonstrate a change or decline in abilities.

BACKGROUND

At the March 28, 2017 Board meeting, the following motion was defeated:

That the Board direct staff to work with BC Transit to implement the enhanced Custom Transit Registration Process for new handyDART application.

Adoption of the Custom Transit Registration Process would provide a more accurate and standardized eligibility process, increase opportunity for transit training for seniors and those with disabilities, while also reducing the number of unmet trips, ensuring that those utilizing custom transit services are those with the greatest need.

Rationale

In 2015, BC Transit piloted and implemented the Revised Custom Transit Registration Process after recognizing that increased transit systems across North America had adopted a more personalized method of registering custom transit riders in accordance with recommendations

from the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) . The new process involves a much more personal approach whereby each individual client's travel needs are taken into consideration during an assessment of their cognitive and physical abilities with regards to using both custom and conventional transit services.

At this time, there are several transit properties within British Columbia that are utilizing this custom registration process, including (but not limited to) Campbell River, Comox Valley, Cowichan Valley, Kelowna, Kamloops, Central Fraser Valley, Chilliwack, Sunshine Coast and Vernon. This revised process adds to the paper-based approach by including an in-person assessment with a mobility coordinator (contracted third party occupational therapist), to which a handyDART ride can be arranged, and both of which are provided at no cost to the applicant. The objective of this process is to determine if the applicant is more suitable for custom transit, is able to utilize conventional or is suited to a mix of both transit services.

As the RDN's population continues to age, there is an anticipated growth in demand on custom services. It is imperative that services such as Custom Transit, that are available to this aging population and other persons with disabilities, are focused on those customers who require these specialized services. At present, RDN applicants wishing to access handyDART services are required to provide a completed, impersonal & self-declared, paper-based application form and have it reviewed by handyDART Dispatchers. This system relies on non-professional assessments of a client's self-declaration, missing a chance for the clients to be aided by a mobility coordinator, who can evaluate the clients mobility devices from a transit perspective as well as improve the client's knowledge of the other available transit services, i.e., Conventional Transit. The current application process does not address individual needs, travel needs, ability to use conventional transit, variable conditions (weather, daylight, etc..) nor conditional eligibility (e.g. steep hills).

The Custom Registration process would tie in well with the current RDN Transit travel training available to the public in the form of the 'Seniors Ride the Bus' program, helping to identify those transit clients that would benefit from travel training to increase awareness and comfort with utilizing the available services.

As well, when a handyDART driver notes a decline in a client's cognitive or physical abilities, it is in the best interest of the client to be assessed/reassessed by a professional such as an occupational therapist (mobility coordinator), with whom the change in their abilities can be appropriately reviewed and addressed. At this time, there is no formal process to follow up on a client's noted decline in abilities.

An in-person assessment serves as a professional functional ability evaluation by a mobility coordinator, taking into account an individual's travel needs, as well as cognitive and physical abilities, with regards to using both custom and accessible conventional transit.

Mobility coordinators can also:

- instruct applicants about accessible transit options available to them;
- assess their physical and cognitive abilities to travel safely;
- ensure mobility aids are appropriate for transport within the transit system and;
- make recommendations to RDN Transit regarding the applicant's handyDART eligibility category (unconditional, conditional, temporary or ineligible).

The Revised Custom Registration Process results in a refinement of eligibility, yielding four (4) categories (unconditional, conditional, temporary or ineligible) rather than the standard 'eligible vs. ineligible' thus identifying clients who may be able to benefit from use of both custom and conventional transit (e.g. conditional eligibility, whereby the client needs custom transit during the evening or on certain days and may use conventional during the day). Another benefit to the use of the mobility coordinator is their ability to assess a clients current mobility aid for use on both custom and conventional transit, determining whether it is of appropriate size for travel and whether it is sufficient for the client's needs. The custom registration process will help to ensure that needed custom transit services remain available for those with genuine need, and helping to reduce both the number of unmet trips.

If an applicant does not agree with the eligibility outcome, they have the right to appeal the decision.

ALTERNATIVES

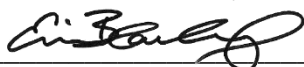
1. That the implementation of the BC Transit Revised Custom Transit Registration process for Regional District of Nanaimo Custom (handyDART) Transit be approved.
2. That alternate direction be provided.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost for the Revised Custom Transit Registration process has been estimated at \$40,000 annually, cost shared at 66.69% for BC Transit and 33.31% for the RDN, for a direct cost to the RDN of approximately \$15,000. This cost is primarily due to the use of third-party contracted occupational therapists (mobility coordinators), and the cost to transport applicants, both free of charge, to their mobility assessment. These costs will be included in the 2019/2020 Annual Operating Agreement.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Focus On Service And Organizational Excellence - We Recognize And Plan For The Impact Of Our Aging Population



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Reviewed by:

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