
TO: Transit Select Committee **MEETING:** May 23, 2019

FROM: Erica Beauchamp
Superintendent, **FILE:** 8600 20 CTRP
Planning & Scheduling Transit

Subject: BC Transit Revised Custom Transit Registration Process Update

RECOMMENDATION

That the BC Transit Revised Custom Transit Registration process for the Regional District of Nanaimo Custom Transit System be approved for implementation in 2020.

SUMMARY

The current Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Custom Transit registration process is outdated compared to a number of transit systems across North America, who have moved towards a more personalized approach. In 2015, BC Transit implemented the *Revised Custom Transit Registration Process*, based on best practices in use throughout Canada and recommendations of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This new registration process includes an in-person assessment with a mobility coordinator, enabling an applicants needs and abilities to be matched with the most appropriate type(s) of transit services available. As the population within the RDN grows and more people move towards 'aging in place', the demand on an already inundated Custom Transit service will continue to increase. This increasing demand necessitates the modernization of old processes, bringing practices more in line with current recommendations. Implementation of the revised custom transit process would help ensure that Custom Transit services remain available for those most in need of them as well as to provide an educational opportunity for an individual to learn about the diversified suite of accessible transit services.

BACKGROUND

At the March 21, 2019, Transit Select Committee (TSC) meeting, the following motion was deferred to a future TSC meeting in favour of being provided more clarification to issues and concerns raised:

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

Rationale

When Custom Transit began, it was the only option for accessible transit since there were no accessible conventional transit alternatives. Since then, there has been diversification within the BC Transit fleet, leading to improvements in accessibility by means of low-floor vehicles capable of transporting persons using wheelchairs, scooters, walkers and other mobility aids. Many persons with disabilities can benefit from this change in transit accessibility, however many are unaware of the changes because the current paper-based, self-assessment application form does not reflect the options in transit services that are available. As well, there is no system or process

currently in place to help persons with disabilities to navigate or be educated about, the options in transit services.

In 2015, BC Transit piloted and implemented the BC Transit *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 Disabilities Act (ADA). This new registration process involves a personal approach whereby individual applicant's travel needs and abilities are taken into consideration during a transit-based assessment with a mobility coordinator. The mobility coordinator evaluates both the applicant's cognitive and physical abilities, with regards to using both custom and conventional transit services. An additional focus of this registration process assesses the safety of an applicant's ability to travel alone, and whether their mobility aids are safe for conventional and/or custom transit.

Custom transit is essential for persons with limited mobility and/or cognitive abilities, to ensure they can access services, medical appointments, and attend social gatherings, among other travel reasons. At this time, RDN Custom Transit has over 100 requests for subscription trips that are on a waitlist. A subscription trip means a regularly scheduled trip on one or more days per week at the same time each day, for which a client does not need to continuously call in to book them. Due to the importance of these trips in clients' day-to-day lives, subscription trips are in high demand and there is limited availability, causing some clients to be on a waitlist. As well, the percentage of unmet trips within RDN custom transit (6.62%) exceeds the recommended target of 1%. Add to these factors the population growth within the RDN, and the high demand for custom transit services is evident, emphasizing the need for a process to ensure that they remain focused on and available to customers who require the specialized services the most.

Proposed Implementation

Implementing the revised custom registration process would offer a more accurate, consistent and personalized method of registering potential Custom Transit users and provides a platform to educate applicants about the suite of transit services available. This process would help identify where there may be conditions which would make it difficult for an applicant to use conventional transit all or part of the time, leading to a differentiation in eligibility categories. An applicant may be ineligible, conditionally eligible, unconditionally (fully) eligible, or temporarily eligible. In the case of a temporarily eligible designation, there is a provision for this category to be approved solely by the handyDART office without the use of a mobility coordinator, for up to a three month period (with 1 month extension possibility).

Use of the mobility coordinator to educate applicants about accessible transit service options, broadens the applicants possibilities of finding a transit solution that works best for them. It would also identify those applicants that can use conventional transit all or part of the time, keeping the custom transit services for those with a demonstrated need, helping to reduce the demand for subscription trips as well as reducing unmet trips. Appointments with the mobility coordinator would be coordinated via the custom transit office and will include a custom transit ride to the location, both at no cost to the applicant. The assessment itself would last from 30 to 60 minutes, assessing transit-related skills and abilities, providing transit education, and discussing safety in transit including use of the applicant's mobility aids and the client's ability to travel alone. The objective of this process is to determine if the applicant is more suitable for custom transit, is able to utilize conventional transit or is suited to a mix of both transit services.

At this time, there are several transit properties within British Columbia that use this revised custom registration process, including (but not limited to) Campbell River, Comox Valley,

Cowichan Valley, Central Fraser Valley, Chilliwack, Kamloops, Vernon, Kelowna, Coast and Sunshine Coast.

The RDN Transit Future Plan (adopted in 2014) outlines that the revised custom registration process will help to ensure that limited resources are allocated appropriately and are available for those that most require the service.

Questions raised at the March 21, 2019, TSC are addressed in Attachment 1, to aid in a clarification of the process and provide a better understanding of the motivation behind the change to custom transit registration processes.

ALTERNATIVES

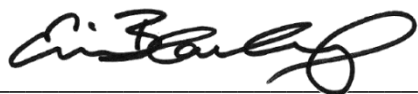
1. That the BC Transit Revised Custom Transit Registration process for the Regional District of Nanaimo Custom Transit System be approved for implementation in 2020.
2. That alternative direction be provided.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The funding for the Revised Custom Transit Registration process has been estimated at \$40,000 annually. Using the BC Transit Shared Service Model, BC Transit's cost share would be 66.69% and the RDN's share would be 33.31%, a net cost to the RDN of approximately \$15,000. This cost is due to the contracted mobility coordinator and would thus depend on the successful proponents bid, however based on costs in other systems, it is estimated at \$95 per one hour visit. The assessment and the cost to transport applicants to their mobility assessment would be provided free of charge. These costs will be included in the 2020 financial plan and incorporated into BC Transit's 2020/2021 Annual Operating Agreement.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

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



Erica Beauchamp
ebeauchamp@rdn.bc.ca
May 6, 2019

Reviewed by:

- D. Marshall, Manager, Transit Operations
- D. Pearce, Director, Transportation and Emergency Services
- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment

1. Question & Answers from March 21, 2019 TSC