

Questions & Answers from March 21, 2019 TSC

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

1. What is the extent of the problem we are trying to deal with?

The primary purpose of revising the registration process is to preserve the custom transit service for those who have no other option. In-person mobility assessments have been the industry best practice for several years and are in place for the majority of urban transit systems in North America. The issue is not an abuse of the system, but rather the increasing capacity constraints and rising number of unmet trips, resulting in people being unable to get the trips they need. While there have been significant improvements to accessibility of fixed-route transit, many people are unfamiliar with the availability and benefits of the low-floor accessible transit fleet. As well, the in-person mobility assessment is an opportunity to assess an applicant's ability to safely use handyDART without an attendant, ensure their mobility aid is safe and of appropriate size for transport and to provide education regarding what handyDART is.

2. With respect to the self-assessment, will there be a component of demonstrated functional abilities vs. just a subjective report from the individual applying for the service?

Yes. The functional mobility assessment is based on the applicant's demonstrated functional abilities to use fixed-route transit services. The current application process is essentially a self-assessment however the revised registration process is designed to include an assessment from a mobility coordinator. A sample functional skills list can be found on page 3.

3. Is there a standardized assessment protocol in place to assess these individuals?

Yes. A standardized assessment is established during the RFP process, which assesses physical, cognitive, and sensory skills and abilities specifically related to the utilization of fixed-route transit. A 'Sample Functional Skills List' can be reviewed on pages 3 & 4.

4. Concern was expressed about who is going to define impairment, which is usually in the domain of the physician or psychologist, not usually in the domain of the OT.

The process is modeled after the functional model of ability, rather than the previous medical model. It is designed to look at what the individual's abilities are instead of focusing solely on diagnoses. The medical model tends to reduce the individual to a classification of ailments, whereas the functional model is more individualized and is a more accurate depiction of what the person needs and is able to do. Thus, mobility coordinators are trained to determine what transit-specific tasks (physical and cognitive) the applicant is able to do, instead of using a predefined set of blanket categories. The physician/GP is not intended to be a part of the revised handyDART application process as the process is not to diagnose but rather see what they are capable of from a transit perspective.

5. What if a person has everything except a driver's license, would they qualify for the program?

A person is only eligible for custom transit if they have a disability (physical or cognitive) that prevents them from using fixed-route conventional transit without the help of another person. Ability to drive is not a factor in determining eligibility for handyDART.

6. Is there an appeal process?

Yes, if the applicant does not agree with the eligibility determination, they can appeal the decision. An appeal form is included with all letters (other than those of unconditional eligibility).

7. What would be the time frame for seeing the mobility coordinator (occupational therapist, physical therapist or nurse/nurse practitioner)?

The maximum time allowable for a patient to be assessed by the mobility coordinator can be specified within the RFP documentation. In discussion with Comox transit, who has adopted the Revised Custom Registration Process, the maximum allowable time is 10 days, before which the applicant needs to have been assessed.

8. Where will the mobility coordinator be located, we don't want someone from the far reaches of the district to have to travel to the other end of the district?

Location of the mobility coordinator(s) is dependent on who applies for the contract. It is certainly a consideration to look at issuing two contracts, one in the North area of the RDN, and another in the South, depending on responses to the RFP.

9. What will be the provisions for a re-assessment if someone has a decline in cognitive or physical abilities?

Often, a decline in abilities (cognitive or physical) is noted by handyDART drivers. When this occurs, an assessment (for previously registered handyDART clients) or re-assessment can be scheduled with the mobility coordinator. This second stage of assessment will ensure a client's mobility aids remain adequate for their needs, as well as determining when a client would be safest traveling with an attendant.

10. How many applicants a year apply in the RDN?

In 2018 there were 507 new applicants for handyDART transit. Of those applicants, roughly 25% did not continue or take rides on handyDART, leaving an average of 380 new handyDART applicants for 2018.

SAMPLE FUNCTIONAL SKILLS LIST

From BC Transit document: RFP 18.58 Custom Transit Registration Program

The following sample list is used in assessing abilities to use fixed route transit services. Tasks must be performed independently or with assistance of a mobility aid.

With a reasonable level of effort or risk, can the applicant consistently:

1. Get and Remember Transit System Information
2. Walk/Wheel to and from Transit Stop/Station
 - Throughout area - up to 1,250 metres
 - Over various surfaces
 - Over various terrain
 - Up/down curbs
 - Up/down curb-cuts
 - Cross streets of various widths and with various controls
 - Find way in familiar and unfamiliar settings
3. Enter and Exit Transit Stations / Major Exchanges
 - Navigating complex stations / major exchanges
4. Wait at a Stop/Station for Transit Vehicle
 - With and without benches/shelters
5. Locate and Recognize Bus/Train to Take
 - Single route and multiple routes with transfers
6. Board and Exit Vehicle
 - Inaccessible vehicles
 - Accessible vehicles (lift, ramp)
7. Pay Fare
8. Get to Seat/Securement Area
9. Ride in Seated or Standing Position
10. Recognize Destination
11. Signal for Stop
12. Perform Above Tasks in Various Weather and Environmental Conditions
 - Snow, ice, rain, heat, humidity, cold, smog
 - Bright light, low light, background noise
13. Handle Unexpected Situations
14. Travel Safely in the Community

PHYSICAL FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Physical functional abilities needed to perform tasks required to use fixed route transit system.

1. Walking speed
2. Endurance
3. Coordination
4. Strength
5. Balance
6. Gait
7. Range of Motion
8. Dexterity

COGNITIVE FUNCTIONAL SKILLS LIST

Cognitive functional abilities needed to perform tasks required to use fixed route transit system.

1. Orientation to Person, Place and Time
2. Judgment and Safety Skills
3. Problem Solving
4. Coping Skills
5. Short and long-term memory
6. Concentration (Attention to Task)
7. Ability to Seek and Act on Directions
8. Ability to Process Information
9. Ability to Communicate Needs
10. Consistency
11. Behavioral Skills

SENSORY FUNCTIONAL SKILLS LIST

Sensory functional abilities needed to perform tasks required to use fixed route transit system.

1. Orientation to Place
2. Directional Wayfinding
3. Ability to Detect Changes on Surfaces
4. Ability to Detect Environmental Cues (Hearing)
5. Proficiency in Using Mobility Aids