

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting No. 05-2021

Date: Thursday, May 13, 2021

Time: 1:03 P.M.

Virtual Location: MS Teams

Chair: T. Soderberg

MEMBERS

A. Antenucci
T. Brownlee
K. Crites
J.P. Gamache
J. Gobeil
Councillor R. Johnson
T. Lennox
T. Soderberg
B. Spare
R. Sponchia

SECTOR REPRESENTATIVE

Parent to a Child with a Disability
Caregiver to a Person with a Disability
Mental Health Representative
Mobility Disability Representative
Citizen Representative
Council Representative
Learning Disability Representative
Visually Impaired or Blind Representative
Hard of Hearing/Late Deafened Representative
Development Disability Representative

OFFICIALS

K. Power
D. Earle
S. Garner
F. Track

City Clerk
Deputy City Clerk
Municipal Accessibility Specialist
Council & Committee Clerk

RESOURCES

J. Bogacki
K. Bonazzo
D. Smith

Program Supervisor, Adult Fitness, Wellness & Inclusion Services
Human Resources
Mobility Coordinator

GUESTS

B. Loroff
G. Sherman
J. Avella

Manager, Transit Services
Supervisor, Customer Care & Administrative Services – Transit
Manager – Corporate Information Technology

AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair called the meeting to order and a roundtable of introductions followed.

2. COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The Chair explained the communication process.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

MOVED BY: Tara Lennox
SECONDED BY: J.P. Gamache

WITH RESPECT to the May 13, 2021 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, we recommend that the Agenda as printed, including any additional information and new business, be confirmed.

CARRIED

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program: Public Transit Stream

Memorandum from B. Loroff, Manager – Transit Services dated May 3, 2021 relative to an approved application to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP): Public Transit Stream that will result in installing a Fully Automatic Wheelchair Securement Station in all rear-facing wheelchair seating positions on conventional Thunder Bay Transit buses was provided for information.

Document entitled “QUANTUM GEN2 Brochure” relative to the above noted, was provided for information.

B. Loroff, Manager – Transit Services and G. Sherman, Supervisor, Customer Care & Administrative Services – Transit appeared before the Committee via MS Teams, provided an overview relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted and included the following:

ICIP Projects

- Transit will be purchasing new buses as part of the federal grant funding and would like to install a securement option on buses called a Quantum Gen2. The devices are installed on rear-facing seats only.
- The securement option will increase safety for passengers with mobility devices. Passengers will be able to control the securement themselves or it can be controlled by the driver. The device takes approximately 25 seconds to secure.
- Increased independence for passengers, increased safety and decreased face-to-face contact between a bus driver and passenger should the passenger need to be manually secured.
- Units will be installed as a pilot to determine if the whole fleet will have the units installed in all rear-facing seats which could be 4 units on 2 buses with 2 rear facing seats or 2 units on 2 buses with 1 forward and 1 rear-facing seat.
- Transit is requesting input from the committee regarding changing the bus seating to 2 rear-facing seats instead of 1 forward and 1 rear. The fleet of 48 buses is currently mixed – some have 2 forward facing, some have 2 rear facing, some have 1 forward and 1 rear.
- Securement is not mandatory. A passenger has the option in the forward-facing to securement, but doesn't have to. If seating was all rear, all passengers have the easy-to-use option of securement with the Quantum device.
- The Quantum can be used with both manual and power wheelchairs.
- The ADA (American Disability Act) requires that all public transit buses have 1 forward facing and 1 rear facing seat.
- If the pilot wasn't successful, the units would be removed.
- How often do passengers request securement? This is unknown at this time.
- The units can be installed on any existing bus with rear-facing seat. If the pilot was successful, the remainder would be installed.
- Forcing passengers to ride backwards when they don't want to, when they can't – is against the Committee's mandate.
- The video provided was not accessible. The discussion related to safety, but not about the functionality of the device.
- Units have been installed in other municipalities. Product has been on the market for approximately 7 years.
- Is the button easy to access? The button is at approximately at elbow height and can be pushed by an elbow, arm or hand.
- There have been no wheelchair tip-over incidents in the last couple years. There has never been a rear-facing tip-over if a wheelchair is secured. Transit can follow-up on the recorded number of forward-facing tip-over.
- There are other public transit systems with similar climates using the device, such as Winnipeg and North Bay.
- The trial would manage the impact of snow, ice and dirt.
- Suggestion to visit local agencies to trial, test and educate passengers.

MOVED BY: Tara Lennox
SECONDED BY: Brian Spare

THAT the Accessibility Advisory Committee supports the purchase of two (2) conventional transit buses in 2021 with two (2) rear-facing seats and Quantum securement device on each bus.

CARRIED

Other Transit-related Concerns

- Time spent on Lift booking lines
 - o Tbaytel is updating all City of Thunder Bay phones which may improve call system for the booking line. The project is scheduled to take place over the next 2 years.
 - o A project is also underway to introduce an online booking module. Committee stresses importance of ensuring that any new features are accessible.
- Booking line hours
 - o Transit staff do their best to respond to evening calls but may be on the road and not responsive to passengers' needs.
- Request to have Transit return to the Committee to review all projects that are currently planned

The meeting recessed at 2:15 pm.

The meeting resumed at 2:30 pm.

4.2 Corporate Digital Strategy

Memorandum from J. Avella, Manager – Corporate Information Technology dated April 21, 2021 relative to a recommendation, made by the consultants Grant Thornton in 2020, upon the completion of the City of Thunder Bay's Program & Service Review, that the City develop a comprehensive digital strategy was provided for information

The City's Corporate Information Technology has partnered with The Perry Group Consulting Ltd. to develop a digital strategy for the City of Thunder Bay. The AAC has been recognized as a stakeholder, and as part of the discovery phase, the consultants are meeting with various stakeholders to provide input into the formulation of the strategy and to hear what digital services and technologies would be of benefit for the City to make available in the future.

Document entitled "Thunder Bay Interview Guide – AAC" attached, providing information and questions, relative to the above noted, was provided for discussion.

J. Avella, Manager – Corporate Information Technology appeared before the Committee via MS Teams, provided an overview relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

B. Perry and A. Grange, Consultants – Perry Group Consulting Ltd. appeared before the Committee via MS Teams and provided an overview relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted and included the following:

- The City will always continue to offer in person, paper based solutions; however, the plan is to give an idea of opportunities to use digital services to make the City better and what should the City be aware of as the digital strategy is being developed to be inclusive and accessible.
 - o Suggestion to provide renewal or application of PAL (support service card for Recreational programming) card be available online.
 - o Suggestion to have registration for Youth Inclusion and Junior Inclusion services remain as is, but once the person is registered for the services, they can register for activities online.
 - o Registration for all activities with the City should be stream-lined through one portal. Parents should not have to go to different websites to apply or register.
 - o Receipts for online payment should be sent directly to the parent and should not have to be requested.
 - o Registration phone lines should be open longer than business working hours (830-430).
 - o Transit passes are only available in-person in select locations. Suggestion to have it made available online or phone sales.
 - o Ensure that services provided online are accessible across different devices, computer, tablet and smart phone. Access to some City services online are not mobile-friendly.
 - o Captcha technology creates a barrier when accessing online services. An alternative to captcha should be explored.
 - o Pandemic information was inaccessible because of captcha feature.
 - o Ensure that online forms have been reviewed for accessibility, such as reading order, tables.
 - o Concerns about security and access to documents and information.
 - o Assumption that everyone has access to services through technology. In person and phone must always be available.
 - o Challenges that exist with making maps accessible.
 - o Suggestion to include publicly available accessible washrooms on mapping solutions.
 - o Notifications and options to renew services by email.
 - o Concern that we're looking to move more services available through technology but the services that are currently provided are not 100% accessible.
 - o Online forms should have a "save and go back" feature, click to fill features instead of having to type information.
 - o Recommendation to have the report presented to the Committee prior to being presented to Council.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting No. 04-2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee, held on April 8, 2021, to be confirmed.

MOVED BY: Randy Sponchia
SECONDED BY: Tom Brownlee

THAT the Minutes of Meeting No. 04-2021 of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, held on April 8, 2021 be confirmed.

CARRIED

6. ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

At the April 8, 2021 meeting of the AAC it was the consensus of the Committee to create and send a survey monkey to gather feedback on potential topics for the Annual Open House, to be held in either a virtual or pre-recorded event to be scheduled for September or October.

Document entitled “Virtual AAC Open House Survey Questions” was provided for discussion.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- The Committee provided input on the list for potential topics for videos for a virtual open house in the fall of 2021.
- D. Earle will update the list and circulate to the Committee for further feedback prior to launching an online survey.
- The survey will be open for up to three weeks and results will be shared at the June meeting.

7. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The AAC’s current Terms of Reference were ratified by City Council on February 11, 2019. As per the Committees Terms of Reference an annual review is required and was scheduled to take place at the March 2020 AAC meeting, which was cancelled due to COVID 19.

Document entitled “AAC Terms of Reference – ratified 11-Feb-2019” was provided for discussion.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

It was the consensus of the Committee that there are no changes required to the Terms of Reference.

8. ROUNDTABLE OF ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

The Chair, T. Soderberg was contacted by local media regarding the Committee's concerns about the installation of the roundabout at Edward and Redwood.

9. 2021 MEETING SCHEDULE

At the January 14, 2021 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee it was the consensus of the Committee to schedule future monthly meetings from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, as follows:

Thursday, June 10, 2021

Thursday, September 9, 2021

Thursday, October 14, 2021

Thursday, November 18, 2021

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:39 p.m.