

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting No. 07-2021

Date: Thursday, September 9, 2021

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Virtual Location: MS Teams

Chair: Tessa Soderberg

MEMBERS

SECTOR REPRESENTATIVE

Tom Brownlee

Caregiver to a Person with a Disability

Kai Crites

Mental Health Representative

John Gobeil

Citizen Representative

Maurice Rubenick

Senior with a Disability Representative

Tessa Soderberg

Visually Impaired or Blind Representative

Brian Spare

Hard of Hearing/Late Deafened Representative

Randy Sponchia

Developmental Disability Representative

J.R. Wheeler

Brain Injury Representative

OFFICIALS

Krista Power

City Clerk

Dana Earle

Deputy City Clerk

Scott Garner

Municipal Accessibility Specialist

Flo-Ann Track

Council & Committee Clerk

RESOURCES

Jessy Bogacki

Program Supervisor, Adult Fitness, Wellness & Inclusion Services

Carly Toppozini

Classification Analyst, Human Resources & Corporate Safety

Darrik Smith

Mobility Coordinator, Infrastructure & Operations

AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

2. COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Chair Tessa Soderberg explained the communication process.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

MOVED BY: Randy Sponchia
SECONDED BY: Brian Spare

WITH RESPECT to the September 9, 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. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting No. 06-2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee, held on June 10, 2021, to be confirmed.

MOVED BY: Kai Crites
SECONDED BY: Maurice Rubenick

THAT the Minutes of Meeting No. 06-2021 of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, held on June 10, 2021 be confirmed.

CARRIED

5. ARENAS – ACCESSIBLE VIEWING AREAS

Deputy City Clerk Dana Earle provided an update relative to the installation of accessible viewing areas at the Delaney Arena and Fort William Gardens.

The following information was provided:

Delany Arena:

- Consultants have completed design work for accessible viewing area, the work can be completed while the facility is open and should be completed before year end

Fort William Gardens:

- Built Environment Working Group and Construction Services worked together to determine appropriate handrail. Engineer has stamped the design and Administration will proceed with tendering process next week. Hoping to have that work completed by end of year as work can be completed while arena is open.

- Considering age of the facility and investment required, work was done over the summer to determine the best way to increase accessible seating. Options discussed were ramping or creating raised seating platforms in areas that are currently available. There are 16 – 20 seats available, only one of which is designated, marked as accessible seating. Instead of construction, the 16-20 seats will be properly designated with signage. Supervisors will provide staff training and seating area will be monitored to ensure barrier free access is available, i.e. not to be used for storage, proper waste receptacle placement

Discussion was held relative to the above noted:

- Has removing seats at rink level been considered at Fort William Gardens to provide for accessible seating?
 - Yes, but a platform will still be required to access the seating area. The current plan focuses on using the existing space and monitoring to see if it meets the community's needs, prior to undertaking any major construction. The 16-20 seats to be designated are at rink level
- Will the 16-20 seats allow for seating next to each other, are they individual areas?
 - Two or three of the spots will accommodate up to four wheelchairs, the other areas will accommodate two
- Is a seating chart available with measurements?
 - Members will be provided the diagram via email
- Can a site visit be arranged for the Built Environment Working Group to review the areas?
 - Yes
- Is there a specific area to enter the seating areas in a wheelchair?
 - There is a ramp on both the East and West sides of the rink to access the seating areas
 - All entrances entering from the sidewalk are accessible, and the main south side entrance is fully accessible
- Do people with mobility issues have to stand in line?
 - Yes
- Has the proposed event facility been put on hold?
 - Yes, the new arena/event centre is currently on hold, a potential update may come to Council in the next six months
- Has the proposed indoor sports facility also been put on hold?
 - An Expression of Interest request was recently sent out for like facilities, for short or long term, and a report back is expected sometime in October
- Are there chairs available for accessible seating on the first level for individuals able to use the stairs
 - No, the 16-20 seats that will be designated accessible are at ice level. The installation of the handrails will contribute to 45% of the total seats in the facility to be accessible for individuals able to use stairs. Consideration for the safe storage of mobility aides will be available in the event that there is no room available at ice level.

- Has designating the first and last seats of each row, on the upper levels, as accessible seating been considered?
 - Designating the seats on the upper level would be misleading as they are not fully accessible, the end seat could be considered preferred seating
- Are all of the seats numbered? Aisle seats are numbered alike?
 - Yes all seats are numbered, unfortunately each section has a different number of seats. Seat number one could be designated but some sections have ten and others have thirteen or fourteen, so we couldn't designate by number because seat ten, for instance, may land in the middle of a row.
- Similar to transit we could explore priority seating, asking individuals that are able, to move up to the next row to allow individuals utilizing mobility devices access to the first seat.

6. ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

Municipal Accessibility Specialist Scott Garner provided an update relative to the above noted.

Consultation with videographers is underway. It has been suggested that the length of each video be shortened from ten minutes down to three to five minutes, strongly suggesting closer to three minutes. Experience has shown that longer videos lose audiences, shorter videos can provide more concise information, and hold the audiences attention. Previous experience with the videos for the Respect. Campaign, spot-lighting members of the AAC, and produced by Janice Gummesson, were shorter in length and well received.

Interviews and location videos will be scheduled in the coming weeks, hoping to complete filming over two consecutive days, with launch scheduled for the week of December third. For individuals wishing to participate, an email will be sent out to Members to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.

7. CANADA GAMES COMPLEX

Program Supervisor - Adult Fitness, Wellness & Inclusion Services Jessy Bogacki provided an update relative to the installation of new and upgraded accessible equipment.

Five new machines have been purchased and installed. One of the machines is a new option for the facility, a Lap Pull-Down Machine, featuring a yellow pin mechanism that lowers the bar for use from a seated position. The four others are upgraded models to replace some of the red and white machines, a Rowing Machine, a Chest Press, a Shoulder Machine and a Cable Machine. All of the new machines feature seats that swivel out of the way to accommodate individuals utilizing a mobility device in a seated position, and large side holds for balance. Four of the five machines, previously located at the back of the building, are now located in the weight room. Approximately half of the old machines have been replaced with new, the others remain as no suitable replacements are available at this time.

A new elevator has also been installed, and additional pool lifts will be purchased once a suitable option has been determined through future consultation with the AAC and other users.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- Was the old equipment sold?
 - Yes, only after it was offered to local user groups
- Are leg strengthening machines available?
 - There are leg machines available but require individuals to transfer from a wheelchair. Transfer boards are available. Parallel Bars, to help with balance and the new Cable Machine which features large bars on either side to hold onto, can be used in the standing position.
 - Wheelchair accessible lower body equipment was not available for purchase at the time, research is ongoing
- Can a site visit be arranged for the Built Environment Working Group to review the new equipment?
 - Yes
- Are the existing pool lifts suitable for accessing the spa area?
 - Yes, one provides users that option, other lifts will be sourced for this purpose once a suitable option has been determined

8. BUILT ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Members provided the following updates:

8.1 Roundabout

Members of the Built Environment Working Group and the public were invited to attend a Roundabout Information Session on Saturday, August 20, 2021, an opportunity to experience the new roundabout located at Edward Street and Redwood Avenue and provide feedback to members of Administration in attendance during the event.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- The event provided an opportunity for individuals to navigate through the roundabout in vehicles and travel the pedestrian paths prior to opening for regular public use.
- It was a good opportunity to experience the scale of the structure and become familiar with the features
- The following accessibility issues were noted:
 - Design images provided to the AAC during consultation did not depict how curvy the paths would be between crossings
 - For blind travelers it was difficult to navigate along the winding sidewalk pavement between pedestrian crossings without appropriate signage or tactile

indicators in place. It was also difficult to determine where traffic enters and exits the roundabout

- When walking on the pathway/sidewalk between crossings there is no audible signal to guide you to the next crossing, a yellow painted line down the centre of the path or tactile strips along edge of side walks to show where pathways branch off, similar to the bar shaped tactile edging utilized in the Tokyo Olympic Village, would improve navigation
- Several of the tactile plates are discoloured, obscured with cement dust that does not wear off, reducing the benefit of installing a colour contrasting tactile plates
 - Will the cleaning process diminish the integrity of the surface?
 - Can the contractor be held accountable, directed to remove the cement dust prior to the City providing final sign off of the project?
- The mound in the centre of the roundabout is too high without plantings, preventing a clear sightline of vehicles across the centre of the mound and makes it challenging to hear the traffic. Future plantings will reduce the traffic noise and further obscure the sightlines
 - Is the mound in the centre of the roundabout going to be used for plantings?
- The ramp from Northwood Mall parking lot to the South West corner of roundabout is not the acceptable width, and was built with the minimal slope ratio of 1:12, making it difficult for individuals utilizing/pushing a manual wheelchair to navigate or prevent the chair from rolling backwards on it. London's standard is 1:20, the standard endorsed by the AAC. Is it possible to fix the ramp before winter?
- All newly installed pedestrian crossovers should include audio messaging and flashing lights as that is the standard the AAC originally endorsed
- Some cities are moving to separated protected bike and pedestrian lanes, is this something that is being considered for Thunder Bay in the future?
- The Built Environment Working Group would like another opportunity to visit the site before it is opened for public use

Mobility Coordinator Darrik Smith thanked the Built Environment Working Group for, participating in the Roundabout Information Session, and for sharing their feedback.

The following information was provided:

- Curvy pathways and chicanes are used to calm trail traffic entering the roundabout, safety features for trail users to ensure they aren't entering a conflict area at such a speed as to cause a collision. There is an increased risk of accidents without them.
- First roundabout in the City of Thunder Bay serves as a testing ground
- Cameras are not currently in place. As part of future traffic studies scout cameras will be set up to determine daily traffic volumes, typically on existing infrastructure having clear sightlines such as telephone poles.

- Concerns relating to the cement residue, centre mound height, audible pedestrian crossover messaging as well as other feedback that has been provided will be shared with Administration and follow up will be provided
- The City of Thunder Bay's Active Transportation Network has been designed utilizing, the Ministry of Transportations book series "The Ontario Traffic Manuals" Book 15 and Book 18, Book 18 relates specifically to bike infrastructure. Information gathered via recently attended related webinars and virtual conferences suggests that changes relating to mixed modality infrastructure being separated, will be made to the design principals for bike and pedestrian lanes, possibly separating them in future iterations of Book 15 and Book 18. Dependant on the availability of right of way and land use it is difficult to find the space to design separate paths, but it is something to consider as a best practice in the future, where space allows.
- Accessibility awareness training is ongoing
- The roundabout is scheduled to open in mid to late September

During the discussion of the above noted item quorum was lost.

The meeting recessed at 2:53 p.m.

An information session commenced at 3:10 p.m.

9. ROUNDTABLE OF ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

Committee members reported on accessibility issues encountered in the community.

The following information was provided.

9.1 New Low-Floor Specialized Buses

- Hand rails are only available at the top of the ramp, leaving passengers to feel unstable at the bottom of the ramp
- Administration will consult with Transit to determine possible solutions
- Transit Administration is scheduled to attend the November 18, 2021 AAC meeting

9.2 Digital Strategy

- Booking swimming times during Covid via telephone, particularly a smart device was difficult. When booking via the website the space bar or enter key is used to make a selection, if accessing with phone you don't have a space bar or an enter key, is this a failing of voice over to not provide appropriate options? It was a disadvantage for individuals who are blind using smart devices.

9.3 Parking - Downtown North Core Re-design

- New parking meters have been installed in the middle of the block, in front of the parking spaces, without ramp access to the curb. In order to pay for parking users will have to travel halfway down the street to pay for parking, then go back down the street to cross, if required. The machines look to be user friendly but, are still missing some accessibility features
 - Can more information be provided prior to activation?
- Cumberland is now a one way street
- Parking metres on Cumberland Street should be placed closer to accessible parking
- Accessible parking spots are not large enough
- Accessibility training should be mandatory for all consultant groups/individuals designing public spaces
- Invite Parking Authority to a future meeting

9.4 Federal Election Advance Poling Station – accessible door actuator

- During a recent visit to an advance poling station, it was noted by a Member that the accessible door actuator was not working. A few days later the Member returned and the accessible door actuator was working. Conversation with attendant determined that the actuator switch had mistakenly not been activated during the time of the Members previous visit.
 - Should a request that a letter be sent from Inter-Governmental Affairs Committee to ask that accessible voting locations are available be made?

9.5 Forest Fires Evacuation Plan – is there a plan in place to evacuate vulnerable people in Thunder Bay in the event of an emergency?

- Transit is part of the City's emergency control group, a phone call goes to the operations team to pull buses to move people, there is a plan in place
 - Is there a data base/list of contact information and addresses of vulnerable individuals?
 - There is a place for individuals to self identify

10. 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, October 14, 2021
Thursday, November 18, 2021

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.