

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting 09-2021

Date: Thursday, November 18, 2021

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Virtual Location: MS Teams

Chair: Tessa Soderberg

MEMBERS

Anne Antenucci
Tom Brownlee
J.P. Gamache
Councillor Rebecca Johnson
Tara Lennox
Maurice Rubenick
Tessa Soderberg
Brian Spare
Randy Sponchia

SECTOR REPRESENTATIVE

Parent to a Child with a Disability
Caregiver to a Person with a Disability
Mobility Disability Representative
Council Representative
Learning Disability Representative
Senior with a Disability Representative
Visually Impaired or Blind Representative
Hard of Hearing/Late Deafened Representative
Developmental Disability 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

GUESTS

Pascal Gauvreau	Acting Manager - Transit Services
Matthew Furioso	Supervisor, Customer Care & Administrative Services – Transit Services
Jonathan Paske	Supervisor – Parking Authority

AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

2. COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Chair Tessa Soderberg explained the communication process.

3. PRESENTATIONS

3.1 New Low-Floor Specialized Buses

At the September 9, 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting a discussion was held relative to the absence of a handrail for customer stability on the lower section of the access ramp of the new Low Floor Specialized Buses.

Municipal Accessibility Specialist Scott Garner advised that Administration would consult with Transit Services to determine possible solutions and report back at the November 18, 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting in conjunction with Transit Services Annual Update scheduled for that date.

Acting Manager - Transit Services Pascal Gauvreau and Supervisor, Customer Care & Administrative Services – Transit Services Matthew Furioso appeared before Committee via MS Teams and provided information relative to the above noted.

Hand rails are only available at the top of the ramp as there is no way to safely secure a hand rail on the lower section and maintain proper function of the ramp. The ramp function is the same as on conventional buses.

Transit drivers are trained and available to provide assistance should passengers require an arm to hold onto for balance when using the steps or ramp.

3.2 Transit Services Annual Update

Acting Manager - Transit Services Pascal Gauvreau and Supervisor, Customer Care & Administrative Services – Transit Services Matthew Furioso appeared before Committee via MS Teams, provided an overview relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

Ridership statistics for Lift + were provided for the period of January – October 2021, for information:

- Total number of trip requests – 28,468
- Total trips completed – 24,981
- Total unaccommodated trip requests – 232
- Total number of applications processed – 437
- Total number of registrants – 1,825
- Total number of active registrants – 1,017

Conventional service ridership statistics were provided for information:

- Pre-pandemic ridership had seen an increase to more than 4.2 million trips in 2019
- Ridership is currently at 56% of pre pandemic levels
- Peak times, frequencies on routes and hours of operations were changed to adjust for ridership during the pandemic
- As of August 29, 2021 service levels increased to 85% of the pre-pandemic levels
- As of December 12, 2021 service levels will increase to 90% of pre-pandemic levels

3.3 Quantum Securement Devices

At the May 13, 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting a motion was passed to endorse the purchase of 2 new conventional transit buses with two rear-facing seats and Quantum securement devices installed on each bus.

Acting Manager - Transit Services Pascal Gauvreau and Supervisor, Customer Care & Administrative Services – Transit Services Matthew Furioso provided an update relative to the above noted.

After consultation with Nova Bus, the manufacturer, Administration was advised that the two rear facing seat configuration, endorsed by the AAC, will not work and it was advised that one rear facing and one forward facing seat is the recommended configuration. Transit Services has ordered the two buses with one rear facing and one forward facing seat with the Quantum securement devices as recommended by the manufacturer. Demonstrations will take place, to show how the new securement devices work, before the buses are put into service.

3.4 Electronic Fare Management System

Acting Manager - Transit Services Pascal Gauvreau and Supervisor, Customer Care & Administrative Services – Transit Services Matthew Furioso provided an update relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

Transit Services is currently finalizing a Request for Proposal for a new electronic fare management system to replace the existing fare-box system. The new system will be AODA compliant and fully accessible, capable of accepting payment by debit, prepaid transit cards and cash. Riders will be able to pre-load cards online, by phone, at the Transit office or kiosks and select authorized locations. It is expected to take approximately 12 – 18 months. Prior to the implementation public consultation will occur.

3.5 Parking – Downtown North Core Re-Design

At the September 9, 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting Members reported on accessibility issues experienced in the community. Discussion was held relative to the above noted with respect to the size and location of accessible parking spaces, sidewalk ramp access and the new parking pay station locations. Members requested that Parking Authority be invited to a future meeting.

Supervisor - Parking Authority Jonathan Paske appeared before Committee via MS Teams, provided an update relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

3.6 North Core Parkade

At the October 14, 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting Members reported on accessibility issues experienced in the community. Discussion was held relative to the above noted with respect to the limited number and size of accessible parking spots, ticketing and enforcement.

Supervisor, Parking Authority Jonathan Paske provided the following information, after the November 18, 2021 AAC meeting:

- Enforcement officers issue tickets to anyone using the accessible spaces without the proper permit.
- More accessible parking spaces will be added to the north core parkade.
- Parking Authority will review the size of the accessible spots and consider repainting the lines, but that will not take place until the spring, due to the cold weather.

The meeting recessed at 2:24 pm

The meeting reconvened at 2:40 pm

3.7 Municipal Autism Strategy

City of Sault Ste. Marie - Municipal Autism Strategy Report dated June 28, 2021 was provided for information.

Member Anne Antenucci appeared before Committee via MS Teams, provided a presentation relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

- In April 2019, Sault Ste. Marie's City Council approved a resolution requesting that the Accessibility Advisory Committee form a subcommittee to work with community partners to develop a municipal autism strategy to assist families, caregivers and individuals dealing with an autism diagnosis and to create a roadmap to assist with accessing available services.

- As all forms of accessibility, including autism were already included in the City's Multiyear Accessibility Plan, the committee focused on three specific tasks:
 - Autism Services Inventory – The committee compiled an extensive list of the various autism services available identifying the focus age group and contact information, included both public sector and private sector services and will be added to the city's website. This will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains current.
 - Autism Roadmap – Given the complexity and range of support services available, the committee established roadmaps to services from when autism is first suspected through pre-diagnosis, diagnosis, and care management. Two separate roadmaps for those 16 years of age or less and older persons were prepared.
 - Design Guidelines – Research determined that there are very few design guidelines available that take into consideration individuals with autism. This is particularly important to municipal operations as the city requires that all new facilities meet high standards of accessibility. City Council also provides funding to remove identified barriers on an annual basis. The committee created a document entitled "Sensory Spaces, Design Guidelines for the Spatial and Perceptual Needs of Individuals with Autism."

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- The City of Thunder Bay's Multi Year Accessibility Plan is an inclusive strategy.
- A list of services and providers would be a valuable resource for individuals of all abilities.
- Design guidelines for the built environment are always changing to create more inclusive environments.
- What are other Municipalities doing?
 - Sault Ste. Marie is the first Municipality to adopt a Municipal Autism Strategy to align with their Multi Year Accessibility Plan
- More information is required:
 - Can the information be linked to the AAC's webpage?
 - Can outside agency/service providers be listed on the website without creating the perception that the City is affiliated with it?
 - How do we ensure service providers are not missed inadvertently?
 - Services Inventory – scope of work to develop a list of resources
 - A maintenance schedule will be required to ensure information remains current.

MOVER: Maurice Rubenick
SECONDER: Tara Lennox

WITH RESPECT to the presentation from Committee Member Anne Antenucci relating to the City of Sault Ste. Marie - Municipal Autism Strategy, we recommend that the information be referred to Administration for further review;

AND THAT the report back date be scheduled on or before March 10, 2022.

CARRIED

4. AGENDA APPROVAL

MOVER: Tara Lennox
SECONDER: Randy Sponchia

WITH RESPECT to the November 18, 2021 meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, we recommend that the Agenda as printed, including any additional information and new business, be confirmed.

CARRIED

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting 08-2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee, held on October 14, 2021 were distributed separately on Thursday, November 18, 2021.

MOVER: J.P. Gamache
SECONDER: Brian Spare

THAT the Minutes of Meeting 08-2021 of the Accessibility Advisory Committee held on October 14, 2021 be confirmed.

CARRIED

6. ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE UPDATE

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

The following information was provided:

- Video recordings have been completed at various locations around the City.
- Vocal recordings will be scheduled and completed next week.

- Media release and videos/presentations are scheduled to air on Friday, December 3, 2021, to coincide with International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- Videos will be available via the City of Thunder Bay's Facebook and YouTube.

7. BUILT ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP UPDATE

7.1 Roundabout

At the September 9, 2021 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting discussion was held relative to the above noted with respect to the pedestrian crosswalk message volume, message continuity and frequency, crosswalk activation button, and options available to assist with navigation around the pathway to the next intersection, for example tactile surface, audible signals or painted lines.

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

- Messaging volume, for the pedestrian crossover and location beacons, have been increased.
- The messaging system has been re-programmed to read message 3 times.
- The request button has been adjusted to require less force to active crosswalk.
- The current message is "yellow lights are flashing" the message will be updated as soon as the manufacturer has available. Once updated the message will say "yellow lights are flashing, vehicles may not stop, proceed with caution".
- Yellow lines will be painted on the pathway next year.

8. ROUNDTABLE OF ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

Committee members reported on the following accessibility issues encountered in the community.

8.1 Customer Service Counters - Payment Policies

A member reported that the Thunder Bay Community Auditorium is no longer accepting cash payments. Credit card only payment policies and the absence of in-person customer service counters create barriers for individuals not having access to digital service or a credit card.

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- City Manager Norm Gale recently shared information with City Council regarding a review of Customer Service Counters within the Corporation.
- Advocacy from the AAC is required to ensure people have accessible access to services.

- Self service kiosks are not accessible for everyone
 - Administration will reach out to remind all departments that the use of kiosks create barriers to accessibility, and that accommodations, such as accepting cash payments, should be available for individuals requesting them
 - Every Municipal Employee participates in Accessible Training, the goal is to improve awareness and create accessibility champions within the Corporation in a collaborative and respectful way.
 - Members of the AAC are welcome to review the training material at any time.
 - We continue to build champions for accessibility
- It was the consensus of the Committee to defer this item to a future meeting for further discussion.

9. ITEMS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

The following list of items to be scheduled at future AAC meetings is provided for information:

- a) Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for 2022.
- b) First Draft – New Zoning By-law - City Planner, Jamie Kirychuk to provide a presentation relative to the above noted - January 13, 2022.
- c) Customer Service Counters – Payment Policies
- d) Landscape Architect Guy Walters to provide information and options for the relocation of trees planted on the outside of the walking path, next to traffic lanes, at the Roundabout.

10. ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE VACANCIES

The following was provided for information:

Five Committee Representative Positions will be vacant as at November 30, 2021. An advertisement has been posted seeking representatives for the following positions: Senior with a Disability, Visually Impaired or Blind Representative, Service Agency Representative, Culturally Deaf Representative and Culturally Deaf (non-voting) Representative.

Applications and letters of recommendation should be received no later than Friday, January 14, 2022 and may be emailed to tina.larocque@thunderbay.ca OR mailed to: The Office of the City Clerk, City of Thunder Bay 500 Donald Street East, Thunder Bay, ON P7E 5V3

11. 2022 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings of the Accessibility Advisory Committee will be scheduled from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

on the following dates:

Thursday, January 13, 2022
Thursday, February 10, 2022
Thursday, March 10, 2022
Thursday, April 14, 2022
Thursday, May 12, 2022
Thursday, June 9, 2022

Discussion was held relative to the above noted.

- Due to Covid 19 and current health guidelines, meetings will continue to be held virtually utilizing MS Teams for January, February and March 2022, respectively.
- Members advised that the use of virtual meetings has improved accessibility for some members of the public, and increased opportunities for involvement with various committees/boards and groups.
- Administration will continue to monitor and reassess to determine future meeting options.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.