

# TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

**MEETING DATE:** October 19, 2011

**SUBJECT:** 2012 WHEEL-TRANS OPERATING BUDGET - INFORMATION  
REQUEST

## **ACTION ITEM**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Commission:

1. Note that TTC Wheel-Trans buses currently provide approximately 40 percent of trips to customers; the remaining trips (60%) are provided through contracted accessible taxis or sedan taxis. This is the optimal split between TTC provided services and contracted services, and
2. Note that the TTC is attempting to secure alternative funding for the transportation of ambulatory dialysis customers who do not meet the Wheel-Trans eligibility criteria, in order to avert the discontinuance of their service in the New Year, as approved by the Commission at its meeting of September 16, 2011, and
3. Forward this report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for Ontario seeking confirmation of funding for all dialysis customers prior to the New Year.

### **FUNDING**

There are no funding implications in this report. There are no funds in the approved 2012 Wheel-Trans budget to allow Wheel-Trans service for dialysis customers who do not meet the Wheel-Trans eligibility criteria.

### **BACKGROUND**

At the September 16, 2011 Commission Meeting, the amended 2012 TTC and Wheel-Trans Operating Budgets were approved as amended by a number of motions. With respect to Wheel-Trans, Commissioner Palacio moved "that a report be brought to the next TTC meeting on a comparative cost analysis on operating Wheel Trans services, including reducing the service ratio within the TTC Wheel-Trans and the possibility to shift dialysis patients to alternate service providers". This report responds to Commissioner Palacio's motion.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Service Ratio**

Wheel-Trans customers use a variety of mobility devices in order to travel within the community. These range from canes and walkers to large wheelchairs and scooters. To accommodate the various types of devices plus an assortment of trip times and distances, Wheel-Trans uses three types of vehicles: buses, accessible taxis, and sedan taxis. Each of these vehicles has different capabilities of accommodating customers and their mobility devices. Wheel-Trans' operated buses are capable of carrying all types of mobility devices. Accessible taxis are capable of transporting customers with small wheelchairs and scooters plus ambulatory customers using mobility devices such as canes and walkers. Sedan taxis are used to provide transportation to ambulatory customers using mobility devices such as canes, walkers, and small folding wheelchairs.

Many scooters, large wheelchairs, and a few other devices can only be transported on Wheel-Trans buses. By virtue of the large physical dimensions of the devices, they will not fit into accessible taxis. In 2012, it is estimated that 312,000 trips or 10% of all trips will require a Wheel-Trans bus based on the nature of their mobility devices. The random nature of the travel patterns and times that these customers travel requires a bus fleet in the order of 130. The capacity of the bus allows it to also accommodate other customers with similar travel patterns at little additional cost. An additional 780,000 trips or 25% of requested trips can be accommodated in this manner, increasing the total percentage of customers carried to 35%.

In addition, Wheel-Trans operate Zone Services which are buses operating in a particular confined geographical area linking up major travel destinations (e.g. hospitals, malls, etc.). These buses are extremely productive and operate at a lower cost per trip than contracted taxi service. In 2012, it is projected that these vehicles will carry 150,000 customers or 5% of the demand, bringing the total to 40% of customers carried on Wheel-Trans buses.

All other customers (approximately 60%) are transported in contracted accessible taxis or sedan taxis depending on their mobility needs.

### **Transportation of Ambulatory Dialysis Customers**

Wheel-Trans provides service to persons with physical functional mobility limitations provided they meet the eligibility criteria approved by the Commission. The sole exception to the criteria allows ambulatory dialysis patients to use the service for travel to and from dialysis treatment. This exemption was approved by the Commission in the mid-1990's following requests from the community. At the time, Wheel-Trans received a 50% subsidy from the Province of Ontario.

A survey of twenty-eight (28) transit properties within the Province of Ontario found that three (3) properties have an eligibility criteria that allows dialysis customers to use their paratransit service: Hamilton, York Region, and Sault Ste. Marie. (Several jurisdictions have

criteria, such as age for example, that might include certain ambulatory dialysis patients.) In other jurisdictions, transportation for persons receiving dialysis treatment is provided by a family member or by volunteer agencies. In many Ontario communities, the Province funds transportation of dialysis patients.

Currently, there are approximately 800 ambulatory dialysis customers that take an average of six trips per week or 250,000 trips per year at a cost of \$5.0 million. Wheel-Trans also transport an additional 1,100 customers that receive dialysis treatment that meet the eligibility criteria. Given the current 2012 budget constraints, it was approved by the Commission that the exemption from the Wheel-Trans eligibility criteria afforded to ambulatory dialysis patients (i.e. who do not require accessible transportation) be discontinued in order to preserve service for customers who meet the eligibility criteria. The Commission also directed staff to continue to explore the possibility of shifting dialysis patients to alternative service providers.

Wheel-Trans staff has met with representatives from the medical community, renal units, the Kidney Foundation, and representatives from the Ministry of Health to seek alternative funding or transportation arrangements. During these meetings, the dialysis community including care givers, has clearly stated a preference to have Wheel-Trans provide transportation as the infrastructure is in place to safely accommodate patient needs, both for trip arrangements and in the event of medical situations in transit. Our primary effort is therefore focused on establishing alternate sources of funds to enable the current delivery model to continue. It should be noted that funding for all dialysis trips (ambulatory or not) is being sought. In the event that funding for the transportation of ambulatory dialysis customers not meeting the eligibility criteria is unavailable, Wheel-Trans will begin to notify customers in late November 2011 that their service will discontinue effective January 1, 2012. Customers will be given the opportunity to have their eligibility reviewed prior to the discontinuation of service. In addition, Wheel-Trans staff will provide customers with a list of alternate transportation providers that may be able to assist them.

**JUSTIFICATION**

Wheel-Trans is currently operating at optimal levels with roughly 60 percent of the delivery of service contracted to accessible taxis or sedan taxis.

Staff continues to seek alternate funding sources that would permit the current exemption for ambulatory dialysis customers to continue. In addition, if funding for all dialysis customers was achieved, the Wheel-Trans budget gap would be significantly reduced.

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October 11, 2011  
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