



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

ACAT Request to Amend the Highway Traffic Act

Date:	June 22, 2015
To:	TTC Board
From:	Chief Executive Officer

Summary

This report responds to the November 21, 2014 communication from members of the TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit (ACAT) requesting assistance in amending the Ontario Highway Traffic in order to improve safety for passengers boarding or exiting a stopped streetcar. The proposed amendment would require vehicles to stop two metres behind a streetcar which is stopped to serve customers, as opposed to the current legislative requirement that vehicles stop two metres behind the open door of a streetcar which is stopped to serve customers. TTC staff responsible for traffic engineering and safety have reviewed the proposed amendment and concluded that it would not materially improve the safety of customers accessing or departing streetcars, and would not be practical or achievable because car drivers would not always have sufficient advance warning to be able to stop two metres behind a streetcar which is stopping to serve customers.

TTC staff have met with members of ACAT's Service Planning Subcommittee, and there was agreement that the much-improved three visual warning systems on the TTC's new streetcars – which will be much-more effective than the warning provisions on the current CLRV and ALRV streetcars -- will provide an earlier and clearer warning to motorists that a streetcar will be stopping to serve customers, and should result in more-consistent compliance and safe driver behaviour. Motorists will still be required to be vigilant and prepared to stop behind a streetcar if its doors open to serve customers. ACAT sub-committee members and TTC staff concluded that the existing legislation meets the safety-related intent of the proposed amendment, and that the amendment is not warranted.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board forward this report to the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation, the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO), and the City of Toronto Transportation Services.

Financial Impact

This report has no effects on the TTC's operating or capital budgets.

Accessibility / Equity Matters

This report speaks to the issue of customer safety when boarding or exiting TTC streetcars. While safety is paramount at the TTC and is equally important and applicable to all customers, safety has come into the spotlight in the context of the TTC's new low-floor streetcars which will allow people who use mobility devices to, for the first time, use the TTC's streetcar services as part of their daily travel. ACAT raised the idea of an amendment to the HTA in the interests of improving safety of access and egress for all customers who will be using this group of newly-accessible services.

Decision History

At its December 9, 2014 meeting, the Board received a communication from ACAT requesting its assistance in putting forward an amendment to the HTA.

http://www.ttc.ca/About_the_TTC/Commission_reports_and_information/Commission_meetings/2015/January_21/Minutes/index.jsp

The Board referred the communication to staff for report back.

Issue Background

The TTC's streetcar services operate in the centre of the road and, at most streetcar stops, customers are required to walk across the curb traffic lane to get to and from the streetcars. When they do this, vehicular traffic approaching from behind is required to stop, as specified under Section 166 (1) of the HTA:

Passing street cars

Standing street car, etc.

*166. (1) Where a person in charge of a vehicle or on a bicycle or on horseback or leading a horse on a highway overtakes a street car or a car of an electric railway, operated in or near the centre of the roadway, which is stationary for the purpose of taking on or discharging passengers, he or she shall not pass the car or approach nearer than 2 metres measured back from the rear or front entrance or exit, as the case may be, of the car on the side on which passengers are getting on or off until the passengers have got on or got safely to the side of the street, as the case may be, but this subsection does not apply where a safety zone has been set aside and designated by a by-law passed under section 9, 10 or 11 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* or under section 7 or 8 of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*, as the case may be. 2006, c. 32, Sched. C, s. 24*

In the interests of improving safety for customers who have to cross a lane of traffic when boarding or exiting TTC streetcars, ACAT passed a motion requesting that the TTC

Board, in conjunction with the City of Toronto, request the Province of Ontario to amend Section 166 of the Highway Traffic Act.

http://www.ttc.ca/About_the_TTC/Commission_reports_and_information/Commission_meetings/2014/December_9/Reports/C_3_ACAT_Motion_Streetcar_Safety.pdf

Analysis

The TTC's current CLRV and ALRV streetcars have decals on the rear window and the body of the streetcar to warn motorists to stop behind a streetcar which is stopped to serve customers. However, the only indication to motorists that a streetcar is actually stopped to serve customers is when the doors open and two reflective stop signs -- which are adhered to the outside of the rear-facing doors -- become visible to following traffic. This means that there is no warning to the motorist, in advance of the doors opening, that the streetcar is about to stop and serve customers.

This situation has long been recognized by TTC staff who have incorporated significant design changes in the new low-floor streetcars to make the situation better and safer. The new low-floor streetcars include three warning systems which signal to motorists and cyclists, who are following behind a streetcar, that it is about to, or has opened its doors to serve customers. These three systems are:

1. an illuminated "Do Not Pass" pictogram at the rear of the streetcar;
2. four car-body-mounted rear-facing red LED light strips on, but independent of, the right-turn signal assembly; and,
3. four door-panel-mounted rear-facing red LED light strips.

When a Streetcar Operator is approaching a stop where customers will be required to walk across a traffic lane, he or she will press the "Do Not Pass" activation button and, when the streetcar has slowed to a speed of less than 5 km/hr, the pictogram and the rear facing car-body LED lights will begin flashing. When the streetcar stops, and the doors begin to open, the door-panel-mounted flashing LED lights will also become visible.

These much-more visible, illuminated, advance warning systems are expected to significantly improve drivers' compliance and safe-driving behaviour regarding stopping when a streetcar is stopped to serve customers. This feature, and other improvements of the new streetcars are demonstrated in the video "Meet your New Ride Toronto! TTC Unveils its New Streetcar" which can be viewed on the TTC's YouTube channel.

Staff met with ACAT members to discuss these matters, and both groups concluded that the three visual warning systems on the new streetcars will provide an earlier and clearer warning to motorists that a streetcar will be stopping to serve customers. Of course, motorists must still be vigilant and be prepared to stop behind a streetcar if its doors open to serve customers, even if something anomalous and unlikely occurs, such as the warning systems fail. Equally, customers who are boarding and alighting from the new

streetcars must also be vigilant and ensure that vehicles in the curb lane have come to a stop before stepping from the sidewalk or from the streetcar to begin crossing the curb traffic lane.

Based on these discussions, ACAT and TTC staff agree that the current legislation meets the safety-related objectives of the proposed amendment, and that the originally-proposed amendment is not necessary.

Independent of the safety concerns raised by ACAT members, TTC staff noted that the HTA legislation appears to have been drafted when TTC operated only streetcars with two doors, and it has not been amended to reflect the operation of ALRV's which have three doors or the operation of the new low-floor streetcars which have four doors. To update the legislation to reflect the TTC's current and evolving fleet of streetcars, TTC staff will request Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) staff to make a "housekeeping" amendment to Section 166 (1) to require motorists to stop their vehicle behind any of the open doors of a streetcar. This could be done whenever the HTA is next brought before the legislature for amendment. ACAT sub-committee members requested TTC staff to keep the Committee apprised of discussions with MTO staff on this proposed housekeeping amendment, and TTC staff will do that.

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