

2052.2



Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit

February 25, 2021

TTC Board Members
Toronto Transit Commission
1900 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4S 1Z2

Dear Board Members:

The Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit (ACAT) is forwarding the approved minutes of its General Monthly meeting of January 28, 2021 to the April 14, 2021 Board Meeting for information (attached).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Igor Samardzic
2021 ACAT Chair

Attachment

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

COMMITTEE MINUTES

Minutes of Meeting: Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit
Meeting No. 362

Meeting Date: Thursday, January 28, 2021
1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Location: Virtual meeting via Webex

Present: Igor Samardzic, Chair
Debbie Gillespie, Co-Vice Chair
Chris Stigas, Co-Vice Chair
Margo Brodie
Gwyneth Dalzell
Carmen Galvan
Sean Hollingsworth
Angela Marley
Jonathan Marriott
Craig Nicol
James Pyo
Lauri Sue Robertson
Sam Savona
Janice Shachter
Mahendan Sivabalasundaram

Pool Members: Kim Pearson
John Rae
Rhonda Cheryl Solomon
Howard Wax

TTC Representatives: Valerie Albanese, Head – Diversity & Human Rights
Dwayne Geddes, Head of Wheel-Trans
Sal Maltese, Head – Operations Training Centre
Al Pritchard, Head – Vehicle Maintenance
Stephan Boston, Chief Instructor, Operations Training Centre
Heather Brown, Manager – Customer Communications
David LoPresti, Manager – Contracted Taxi Services, Wheel-Trans
Dean Milton, Manager – Strategic Initiatives, Wheel-Trans
Cameron Penman, Manager – Customer Service, Wheel-Trans
Charlene Sharpe, Manager – Divisional Manager, Wheel-Trans
Michelle Edwards, Engineering Technologist – Vehicle Program

Matt Hagg, Senior Planner – System Accessibility
Desrienne McIlwrick, Travel Specialist, Wheel-Trans
Lema Salaymeh, Senior Community Liaison
Daniela Jimenez, Human Rights Consultant

Invited Guests: Commissioner Julie Osborne, TTC Board Member

Copies: Rick Leary, Chief Executive Officer
Gary Downie, Chief Capital Officer
Josie La Vita, Chief Financial Officer
Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas, Chief Strategy and Customer Officer
Kirsten Watson, Deputy Chief Executive Officer – Operations
Orest Kobylansky, Executive Director – Operations
Deborah Brown, Head of Marketing and Customer Experience
TTC Board Members

Items Discussed

1. Call to Order / Attendance
2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest
3. Housekeeping Items and Procedures (Accommodations)
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Remarks from ACAT Chair
 - a. Report on TTC Board Meeting and Accessibility Matters
6. 2021 ACAT Executive Committee Elections
7. Review and Approval of December 17, 2020 Minutes
8. Outstanding Items
9. Deputation: Nil
10. Review of Correspondence: Nil
11. Announcement of 2021 Subcommittee Membership
12. Subcommittee Reports and Updates
 - Communications
 - Design Review
 - Service Planning
 - Wheel-Trans Operations
13. Wheel-Trans Transformation Update from Dwayne Geddes
14. Other / New Business
15. Next Meeting – February 25, 2021
16. Adjournment

1. Call to Order / Attendance

ACAT Chair Igor Samardzic called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. and attendance was taken.

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Nil.

3. Housekeeping Items and Procedures (Accommodations)

The ACAT Chair reminded all members of ACAT Housekeeping items, the definition of Conflict of Interest, and Virtual Meeting Best Practices. Additional tips and reminders were provided, including:

- ACAT meetings are public and sensitive information will be in the public domain
- ACAT meetings are live captioned
- ACAT meeting minutes are published on the TTC.ca website
- Members should refrain from topics that are private and/or not of public interest
- Members and staff are encouraged to speak slowly to ensure the captioner is up to speed
- When responding to emails, members should reply to sender and copy ACAT Executive members only, do not reply to all
- When giving a presentation via Webex, members and staff are to do their utmost to describe in detail what they are referring to

Questions and Comments from the Subcommittee

A member recommended that members email addresses be shared only with permission.

Another member asked participants to limit the use of the Webex chat feature because anyone who is using a screen reader or voiceover feature will hear the chat readout at the same time as they hear people who are talking in the meeting, which becomes difficult to understand.

A member asked about procedures leading up to the meetings. Since multiple emails with changes and amendments are sent to participants prior to the meeting, it was suggested to staff to use Google documents or Microsoft Word tracking so that it is easier to keep track of the changes.

Another topic that was brought up was internet connectivity issues and best practices when members lose their connectivity in order for them to get up to speed with the topic discussed. Regarding this issue, it was suggested to ask the speakers to repeat themselves if they are able to. Members could also get referenced on the last topic discussed with the closed captioning link as it may not lose connectivity in a separate browser.

4. Approval of Agenda

On a motion by Sam Savona and seconded by Angela Marley, the agenda was approved.

5. Remarks from ACAT Chair

ACAT Chair Igor Samardzic congratulated all the new ACAT members and Pool members for their appointments and welcomed back returning members. He acknowledged the two Vice Chairs for this year, Chris Stigas and Debbie Gillespie that he is honoured to work with.

2020 has been a difficult year for many of us while navigating a new normal created by the pandemic. The last in person ACAT meeting was held one year ago and this milestone is a reminder that ACAT's work cannot continue as usual but also that ACAT has continued to persevere during these challenging times while consistently meeting, advising, advocating and championing the cause of accessibility for Torontonians and the wider region.

The ACAT Chair is proud of all the work that ACAT has done, and continues to do every day. He also acknowledged that progress doesn't come easy for persons with disabilities as it is a constant battle against the status quo.

He is encouraged by the work of ACAT members, staff, and the TTC Board to ensure a transportation system that works for everyone regardless of ability and is looking forward to working with every member of ACAT.

a. Report on TTC Board Meeting and Accessibility Matters

There was no TTC Board Meeting in January. The next TTC Board Meeting will be held on February 10, 2021. ACAT members can visit the TTC.ca website for the meeting schedule, agenda, minutes, and the official TTC YouTube channel for the live broadcast.

On December 29, 2020, Bay station became the 52nd subway station to become accessible. Across the TTC, 69% of stations have elevator access which is a huge achievement.

b. Report on Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting

The Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC) is holding its next meeting on February 10, 2021 at 1pm through video conference. This information is available on the City of Toronto website.

6. 2021 ACAT Executive Committee Elections

Members have received an enclosed document regarding the 2021 ACAT Executive Committee Elections which were held on January 14, 2021.

The ACAT Chair asked ACAT members to certify the election results with moving and seconding them during the ACAT General Meeting.

The ACAT Chair Elections were moved by Sam Savona and seconded by Craig Nicol, all in favour.

The ACAT Vice Chair Elections were moved by Lauri Sue Robertson and seconded by Angela Marley, all in favour.

7. Review and Approval of December 17, 2020 Minutes

On a motion by Angela Marley and seconded by Debbie Gillespie, the December 17, 2020 Minutes were approved with no amendments.

8. Outstanding Items

Outstanding items:

- Item: Review of the Impact of Curb-Side Bike Lanes on Wheel-Trans Customers and Operators in Accessing Certain Pick-Up / Drop-Off Locations – Ongoing. No updates since October 29, 2020.
- Item: GTHA Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) Joint Meeting – This item has been put on hold due to the pandemic. Item listed under 'Future items'.
- Item: Update on the New TTC Website and Updated Station Descriptions which have been on hold – Ongoing. No updates. Staff will provide an update at the February Communication Subcommittee Meeting.
- Item: Deputants - Meenu Sikand and Dennise Carrasco-Service on Kilgour Road as it relates to Holland Bloorview Children Rehabilitation Centre – On hold. This item will be addressed when Line 5 is almost operational.

Questions and Comments from the Subcommittee

Member suggested the GTHA Accessibility Advisory Committee (GTHAAC) meeting should continue to be held by alternative means similar to other meetings in the City during the pandemic.

9. Deputation:

Nil.

10. Review of Correspondence:

Nil.

11. Announcement of 2021 Subcommittee Membership

The ACAT Chair reminded members to review the enclosed document in the meeting package that references which subcommittee members sit on.

Members may have already or will receive an email from their subcommittee staff liaison for the first meeting date and time. Members are encouraged to consider running as subcommittee Chair. More information can be acquired from the staff liaison.

12. Subcommittee Reports and Updates

Communications Subcommittee (CS) – Bobbi Moore, 2020 CS Chair

A CS meeting was held on December 3, 2020 via Webex.

Chrisanne Finnerty, Director of Commission Services discussed accessibility issues with the TTC Board Meeting livestreams that are broadcasted on YouTube. The “Stay tuned, webcast will begin shortly” placeholder message was used to start 20 minutes prior to the meeting. This issue was brought to the vendors’ attention and meetings will only start five minutes ahead of time. In order to assist persons with visual disabilities, audio chimes and message will be sent to alert the virtual audience that the meeting has not begun. For persons with hearing disabilities and/or are using screen readers, the vendors are cleaning up the file to be more clear that the meeting has not begun. The closed session will be set up in a similar manner. The screen will go up, it will be replaced by a sound that will be activated more frequently to indicate the meeting will begin soon and is currently now on hold.

Alicia Fowlie, Senior Digital Communications Specialist, provided an update on digital communications and a new team member has been hired to report to the IT staff. She will be working with the IT department in the Digital Communications team to work on the migration project which takes the items from the existing TTC website to the new website. Functional testing was done in November 2020 and content has been moved from the present website to the new one. More functional testing will be done before the end of 2020 and a full cycle of accessibility testing will be completed as well.

The third-party vendor once selected, will work on fixing issues that were identified to make the environment ready for business testing by mid-January 2021. The next steps include training for Communications team and stakeholders and will be available for review by the Communications Subcommittee in February 2021.

Stations Descriptions Migration Project

The station descriptions migration has started and should be completed by year end. During the migration, it may be possible to make some adjustments on the size of icons. The international symbol of access icon will be confirmed when the Digital Communications team gains access to the new site.

Both the Digital Communications team and Service Planning teams are working together to review the route descriptions and station descriptions in order to update them for accuracy. Once the migration project is approved, it should be completed by the end of January 2021.

In the upcoming months, the advertising campaign will focus on customers, welcoming them back to the system and reassuring them that the system is safe.

The content management system for the website will allow different parties within the Communications team and staff across the TTC to update their own sections of the website.

Members inquired whether or not they would be able to review the E-blasts before they are sent to staff. Staff explained that it would be possible given the material are not time sensitive. The Communications Subcommittee reviewed the list of items they had worked on during 2020 and made suggestions for initiatives to work on during 2021.

The CS Chair, Bobbi Moore thanked members for their commitment and help with the initiatives in the committee.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 4, 2021.

Service Planning Subcommittee (SPS) – Anita Dressler, 2020 SPS Chair

A SPS meeting was held on December 21, 2020 via Webex and was read by Matt Hagg, Senior Planner – System Accessibility.

All ACAT members were invited by the City of Toronto staff to talk about the yongeTOmorrow project. The project aims to revamp Yonge Street between College and Queen Street. The current recommended design concept will narrow the street to two vehicle lanes with wider sidewalks, as well as flexible spaces for cafes and passenger loading. Certain areas would be closed to vehicles during the day using automatic gates and open again for buses to use at night and during subway closures.

Member raised concerns that Wheel-Trans access should be available at all destinations along this part of Yonge Street. City staff used Wheel-Trans data to make their decisions and ensure pick up and drop off on demand is available at all of the major destinations. Pedestrian priority zones are all limited to a maximum of 100 metres and there will be passenger and commercial loading zones located very close to the end of each priority zone. ACAT members asked about the 97 Yonge bus which currently operates through the area as well as what will happen with shuttle buses during unexpected subway closures. Comments also focused on access for people with vision loss, as well as snow clearing. Committee members wanted to ensure that shelters are available for people who are waiting for pick ups.

Next steps:

- bring this concept to City committees for approval
- in the next year or two, more consultation will occur on the operational concept
- construction, which should start in 2023

Following a member's request, possible solutions for the 97 Yonge bus rerouting will be added to a future Service Planning Subcommittee agenda.

The first SPS meeting of the year will be held on February 3, 2021.

Wheel-Trans Operations Subcommittee (WTOS) - Sam Savona, 2020 WTOS Chair

A WTOS meeting was held on December, 11 2020 via Webex.

Marco Iorfida, Wheel-Trans Scheduling Policy Specialist and Angela Marley, ACAT member provided an update on subway landmarks and on the landmark system. The following three subway stations; Dundas Northbound (additional subway stop), Dupont and Chester stations were referred to Service Planning for their reviews and comments. Angela Marley noticed the following issues and reported to the group:

- Subway station search results require individuals to type with perfect spelling in order to get results, for example Queens Park. The search should allow for more spelling in order to be inclusive for people which English is their second language.
- Pioneer Village station is still in question with its non-accessible entrance on 185 Northgate. Accessible entrance is located at the other end of the platform, municipal address 20 Moscoe Way. Member stated address should reflect accessible entrance.
- Additional general issues regarding the wording of subway stations. Some elements, such as bus stations and bay numbers are repeated twice.

Cameron Penman, Wheel-Trans Manager of Customer Service presented the Second Sourcing update. At the December 17, 2020 ACAT General Meeting he provided an update on TELUS soft launched, which was on November 22, 2020 and it included on-the-job training and coaching. On December 13, 2020, the full launch of the Reservations center occurred. This report was submitted by Sam Savona, 2020 WTOS Chair on January 28, 2020.

13. Wheel-Trans Transformation Update from Dwayne Geddes

Dwayne Geddes, Head of Wheel-Trans and David LoPresti, Manager - Contracted Taxi Services at Wheel-Trans presented an update.

Wheel-Trans moved to the next phase of scheduling and dispatch. An update was done on January 24, 2021 where Wheel-Trans added new features to its scheduling and software system.

Vehicle availability are dependent on customer specific eligibility criteria. Wheel-Trans wanted to provide a vehicle that best suits the customers' needs while keeping with the service delivery standards that was created for the accessible practice as well as for TTC bus operations. Some of the stakeholders that are engaged are Wheel-Trans Bus Operations, Transit Enforcement, Transit Control and Dean Milton, Wheel-Trans Manager of Strategic Initiatives, who was a great help on putting this together.

Questions and Comments from the Subcommittee

Website Glitches

Members noted glitches on the Wheel-Trans website that were already reported but not yet fixed. These items should have been ticketed. Some of the issues related to the drop down menu of schedule times and users not always able to use a keyboard to type in the number.

Members were advised to liaise with Cameron Penman for any related issues.

Members were also unable to use their old shortcut to access the Wheel-Trans Reservations page now that the Phase 3 upgrade has taken place. Members were advised to create a new shortcut as the website credentials have changed.

SOP Acronym

Members asked for clarification on the meaning of SOP acronym. SOP was explained as Standards Operations Procedures that is used throughout the TTC on various procedures. For Wheel-Trans Bus Operators SOP are used to explain how to safely enter and exit a station, deploy their vehicle and accessible features. The same training and procedures have been provided to the Sedan contractors.

Sedans Taxis rules on the King Street Transit Priority Corridor

Members asked whether or not sedan taxis were allowed to travel through the King Street Transit Priority Corridor that is currently only allowing streetcars and vehicular traffic one block at a time.

Staff explained they were indeed allowed to stop on King Street but must make a right hand turn at each intersection like other private vehicles.

Background clarifications for New Members

Accessible Taxis Vans and Sedan Taxis

Wheel-Trans provides services with three vehicle modes, Wheel-Trans buses, contracted accessible taxi vans which are low-floor side entry ramp, and sedan taxis for overflow and additional trips.

New members can request additional information.

Family of Services

Wheel-Trans Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Dean Milton provided a brief explanation on Family of Services. This type of service delivery is for customers who have conditional eligibility. In other words, customers who can travel on the conventional TTC transit system when their specific conditions are not present. When the conditions that prevent them for using the conventional TTC transit system are present, they will receive door-to-door service.

There are three categories of eligibility in Wheel-Trans.

- **Unconditional service** means that the customer has a disability that always prevents them from using the TTC's conventional service. In this case they will require door-to-door service.
- **Conditional service** means that the customer has a disability that limits their ability to consistently use TTC conventional transit. Customer may be able to use conventional transit for all or part of the trip, but may also qualify for door-to-door service under specific circumstances (e.g., weather, travel to a non-accessible location).
- **Temporary service** means that the customer may have a temporary disability that prevents them from using conventional TTC service and require Wheel-Trans for all or part of the trip for a defined period of time (e.g., following an injury or surgery).

Family of Services trips have designated transfer stops at accessible subways as well as along key frequent service bus and streetcar routes. Buses and accessible taxis are able to pick up and drop off at all designated transfer points, and in the near future sedan taxis with specific decals will be able to enter into accessible subway stations

Currently, when a conditionally eligible customer is offered a Family of Services (FOS) trip, they can choose to accept it or decline it for a door-to-door trip. Conditional Trip Matching e.g. mandatory Family of Services, was originally going to launch in Summer 2020 but has been delayed to late Spring/Summer 2021.

Sedan Taxis in TTC Accessible Stations

David LoPresti, Wheel-Trans Manager of Contracted Taxi Services, provided an overview of the project to include Wheel-Trans Sedan Taxis under contract entry in to TTC Accessible Stations similar to the Buses and Accessible Taxis that have been doing this since 2015 to assist with the Family of Services initiative.

Sedan taxis in the City of Toronto are allowed up to three drivers, but when they are contracted, only one driver is authorized to use that vehicle during the Wheel-Trans provision of work. Not every taxi, City taxi or independent City taxi can enter the subway station. Only sedan taxis with the appropriate Wheel-Trans decals that have been approved and authorized for service and the drivers are permitted to be used by the Contractors for entering TTC accessible stations.

Authorized Wheel-Trans sedan taxis under contract to the TTC will be permitted to enter accessible stations to pick-up and drop-off customers at the designated Wheel-Trans stops.

Designated Wheel-Trans bus stops have been identified and are clearly marked in the stations. Only approved authorized sedan taxis that have the affixed Wheel-Trans decals on their vehicles will be allowed entry. Wheel-Trans currently has service contracts with the three sedan contractors: Beck Taxi, Co-Op Taxi and Scarborough City Cab Sedan. Sedan taxi drivers will have their photo identification on display in their vehicle and on their person. Any sedan taxi vehicle/driver failing to comply will be subject to the appropriate charges/fines.

This will vastly improve scheduling flexibility and trip availability for Family of Services trips and benefit customers by integrating them into the conventional TTC network. A Family of Services trip connects Wheel-Trans customers to and from accessible conventional TTC (bus, streetcar, subway), allowing them ease of travel.

Wheel-Trans is targeting the end of February for a launch pending approval from senior TTC Executives.

Wheel-Trans is working with Transit Enforcement because they have identified that there may be a risk of illegal non-TTC approved sedans that may enter stations. Wheel-Trans decals are the first proof which have been affixed to both sides of the vehicle as well as the driver's personal ID badge that will demonstrate they are authorized. Drivers can only enter when they are servicing the customer to and from a location to perform the Family of Services delivery and obey all operating procedures as well as any posted signage.

14. Other / New Business

Revisiting Family of Services Criteria

Member suggested revisiting what constitutes the Family of Services conditions, how Wheel-Trans identifies when a customer's conditions are or are not present and whether a customer must take Family of Services.

Sometimes a condition is identified on the system but the algorithm of the booking may not identify that condition and not suggest the service. The member suggested finding a more equitable way to determine whether conditions are present or not.

Organizing social meetings for members

Members suggested organizing online social gatherings in order to help build the members community and increase engagement.

Discussions on the New Crosstown, Ontario Line and the new Scarborough extension

A member suggested bringing these topics for further discussion in upcoming meetings and providing feeding on accessibility through TTC and Metrolinx online channels.

Another member suggested discussing broader policy projects such as Metrolinx updates on the mobility hub guidelines and the City of Toronto guidelines related to the use of bike lanes.

15. Next Meeting – Thursday, February 25, 2021

The next meeting of ACAT will be held on Thursday, February 25, 2021 from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. via Webex.

16. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:43 p.m. on a motion by Angela Marley.

Valentine Benichou
Recording Secretary