

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

7. Keeping HandyDART Accessible to People Living with Disabilities

Submitted by: Councillor Swanson

WHEREAS

1. HandyDART exists to increase the accessibility of the region for people living with temporary or permanent disabilities that reduce mobility;
2. TransLink has proposed several changes to HandyDART, calling the proposal the "Modernization Program." The changes include a new, four-step application process;
3. This new application process will add a mandatory, in-person interview to determine eligibility for HandyDART. This step will present a major accessibility barrier to those who are applying for HandyDART service;
4. The mandatory interview would replace the current process, in which applicants consult with their personal physician, or family doctor, to fill out the form for HandyDART. Under the new system, the family doctor will be excluded from the application process, and instead people who require HandyDART will have to go through a personal assessment with a staff member from a private healthcare company;
5. Family doctors know their patients and have a duty of care for them. They are funded by the public healthcare system;
6. Staff members conducting consultations will have no previous experience with people who apply, likely no personal experience navigating the transit system with a disability, and will be hired under contract by TransLink;
7. The result of this application process will be a "determination of eligibility," which can result in applicants being denied HandyDART service after expressing their need;
8. TransLink's webpage for public engagement states that "demand for the service is expected to grow," and that these changes will help them to "manage growth," in other words, it will keep more people with disabilities from accessing the door to door service;
9. The HandyDART Rider's Alliance has stated that they are against the changes, as service needs to be expanded to meet the needs of a growing population of people with disabilities, and this program will instead create barriers to access for the most vulnerable who need HandyDART service;
10. A January 23, 2020 motion from the city's Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee says the Committee is opposed to "the

implementation by TransLink of an in person application process for HandyDART users because:

- The rate of determining that applicants are eligible or not eligible for paratransit is essentially the same for paratransit systems using a paper application or an in-person application, when this is based on persons who complete the paper application or attend the in-person interview. In other words, both types of application process have essentially the same effectiveness at determining eligibility;
 - However, in-person applications do reduce the number of persons applying for HandyDART before these people's eligibility can be assessed, because many people are not willing or able to go through the process – reductions between 10%-20% have been reported in Canada;
 - The persons who do not apply have been eliminated from paratransit use, not because they don't qualify, but because many are not willing or able to go through the process;
 - In-person applications are difficult for persons with mental health conditions, cognitive disabilities, dementia, and persons with English as a Second Language;
 - The in-person application process is therefore a barrier to the use of HandyDART services, and the process eliminates the most frail and vulnerable users;
 - In-person applications discourage persons from applying for HandyDART because the process is humiliating, frightening and invasive;
 - The in-person application process is also expensive and the funds should be used for needed HandyDART service;"
11. In 2011, the City of Vancouver's Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (PWDAC) opposed similar processes to screen HandyDART applicants as a way of reducing costs. They stated: "Access Transit (TransLink) has been contemplating a new process to deal with increasing demand for HandyDART without increasing funding to meet the need. The process they are contemplating is an invasive, time-consuming, and upsetting process, which would discourage many people, especially persons with language issues, developmental disabilities, persons who are older, frail or confused, from applying for HandyDART. In essence, it solves the problem of not enough HandyDART rides by eliminating the most vulnerable of users"; and
12. The City of Vancouver is "committed to removing barriers and creating equal opportunities for all residents." (<https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/equity-diversity-inclusion.aspx> [\[na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com\]](http://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com)).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Vancouver City Council requests the Mayor to urge TransLink to maintain HandyDART's current, accessible application process; and to ensure that the proposed in person interview is not mandatory.
- B. THAT Vancouver City Council requests the Mayor to urge TransLink to provide information about accessible transportation options to HandyDART users and to their public healthcare providers so everyone involved is aware of options to HandyDART including taxis, buses with ramps, the Skytrain and the SeaBus.

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