

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 8(a)

MEETING DATE: June 24, 2013

SUBJECT: STAFF RESPONSE TO AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT –
REVIEW OF WHEEL-TRANS SERVICES – SUSTAINING LEVEL
AND QUALITY OF SERVICE REQUIRES CHANGES TO THE
PROGRAM

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1) Receive for information the attached staff response to the Auditor General's report Review of Wheel-Trans Services – Sustaining Level and Quality of Service Requires Changes to the Program; and
- 2) Forward the staff response to the City Audit Committee.

FUNDING

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

BACKGROUND

At the December 19, 2012 Board Meeting, Jeff Griffiths, Auditor General, City of Toronto, Alan Ash, Auditor General's Office, and Jane Ying, Auditor General's Office provided a presentation on the results of an audit conducted in 2012 on Wheel-Trans operations entitled "Review of Wheel Trans Services – Sustaining Level and Quality of Service Requires Changes to the Program". The Board received the presentation and report for information.

The TTC Chair moved referral of the Auditor General's Report to the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit (ACAT) and the TTC's Audit Committee for a review to be completed by the April 2013 Board meeting, before being forwarded to the City's Audit Committee. The ACAT was established as an advisory committee of the TTC to provide a mechanism for ongoing public participation in accessible transportation in the city of Toronto.

The motion by the TTC Chair carried.

The report was forwarded to the TTC Audit Committee meeting on February 19, 2013 and to ACAT on February 28, 2013. At the Audit Committee meeting, Commissioner Peter Milczyn requested that TTC staff investigate and respond to Recommendation #4a below:

Auditor General's Recommendation #4a

The Commission requests the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit, to review and enhance the Wheel-Trans eligibility assessment process and criteria to ensure that applicants' abilities to use the conventional fixed-route transit system are objectively and credibly appraised. Steps to be considered should include but not be limited to requiring a medical or health certification regarding mobility conditions as part of the application process.

At its meeting on April 25, 2013, the TTC Audit Committee received the staff response to Recommendation #4a for information and approved forwarding the response to a regular meeting of the Board for information and then to the City Audit Committee.

In addition, the attached "Management's Response to the Auditor General's Review of Wheel-Trans Services – Sustaining Level and Quality of Service Requires Changes to the Program" indicates the ACAT Subcommittee that each of the Auditor General's recommendations has been referred to, where applicable.

DISCUSSION

On March 7, 2013, TTC staff met with the ACAT Wheel-Trans Operations Subcommittee who reviewed the following:

1. Current Wheel-Trans Process

The TTC has established eligibility guidelines for service based upon an individual's level of physical functional mobility in the home, within the area immediately surrounding the home, and in the community at large as well as the permanency of the disability. Eligibility is not based on particular disabilities.

Although factors such as income, the unavailability of family members or an escort for transportation purposes, inconvenience, and trip purpose all impact on daily living, these do not determine the need for accessible transit.

All Wheel-Trans applicants, regardless of mobility status, are required to attend an in-person interview in order to determine eligibility. Applicants are not required to complete an application form nor obtain a letter from their doctor prior to this interview.

An appeal process is in place as well as a Questionable Rider program which ensures service is provided to those who continue to meet the eligibility requirement. This program identifies riders who demonstrate through their mobility while using the service that they may no longer require door-to-door service.

Ninety per cent (90%) of applicants are approved.

The current eligibility process used by Wheel-Trans works well and was the subject of a Human Rights Charter Challenge which was upheld by the Ontario Superior Court as a fair and equitable process.

2. Medical Model

Eligibility determination is based on information presented on an application form which includes a section requiring input by a medical practitioner (i.e., a physician, physiotherapist or occupational therapist)

The medical practitioner's input will be considered as part of the application's overall assessment.

No interview is involved in this model. One example is Hamilton Transit which is experiencing an approval rate of approximately 78% since November 2012.

This process would require applicants to have a medical practitioner fill out the section of the application at the applicant's expense.

3. Medical Form and Interview

This option is a combination of the Medical Model option (#2) and an in-person interview.

This process would require applicants to have a medical practitioner fill out a medical form to support their need for service. This would be the applicant's responsibility prior to being considered.

This option would ensure medical information is available for confirmation at the time of the in person interview or prior.

ACAT Wheel-Trans Operations Subcommittee Conclusions

Following extensive discussion and review, the ACAT Wheel-Trans Operations Subcommittee members unanimously recommended that the TTC maintain the current Wheel-Trans application process requiring an in-person interview, and did not support the introduction of a medical note. The Subcommittee supported the current process for the following reasons:

- Applicants would be discriminated against because the medical note is an extra hardship with added costs to persons with disabilities many of whom are on low or fixed income.
- Subcommittee members have had personal experiences of doctors advocating and providing unnecessary devices for patients in order to qualify for Wheel-Trans Service.
- There is a Questionable Rider Program already in place that is effective in evaluating fraud.

ACAT General Meeting

At the March 28, 2013 ACAT General Meeting, the following motion was put forth:

The members of ACAT do not support the Auditor General's recommendation number 4a contained in the report entitled "Review of Wheel-Trans Services – Sustaining Level and Quality of Service Requires Changes to the Program" and recommend that Wheel-Trans continue to use the existing application process to determine eligibility for Wheel-Trans service.

This motion was passed unanimously.

CONCLUSION

Staff concurs with ACAT's recommendation and note that, in an upcoming report conducted by the Canadian Urban Transit Association entitled "Specialized Transit Eligibility Certification Programs" which compares eligibility process of various paratransit properties in Canada and the United States, Wheel-Trans was used as one of the models for having an "exemplary eligibility program".

As one of the key findings in the report it states "In-person assessments are much more effective than paper-based applications, even when the latter includes medical verification from health care practitioners."

18-20

Attachment: Management's Response to the Auditor General's Review of Wheel-Trans Services – Sustaining Level and Quality of Service Requires Changes to the Program



STAFF SUMMARY SHEET

8(a)

CEO's Office - AUDIT

16225 BR

PREPARED BY: Joseph L. Kennelly

SECTION: CEO's Office

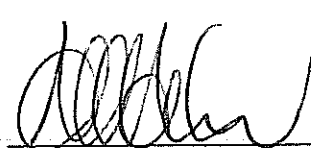
EXTENSION: 2030

HEAD: Joseph L. Kennelly

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Andy Byford

BOARD REPORT: STAFF RESPONSE TO AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT – REVIEW OF WHEEL-TRANS SERVICES –SUSTAINING LEVEL AND QUALITY OF SERVICE REQUIRES CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM

#	ROUTING	CONCUR	NON-CONCUR	DATE	ATTACHMENT(S)
	CHIEF CAPITAL OFFICER				Board Report
4	CHIEF SERVICE OFFICER	OK		06/06/13	
	CHIEF FINANCIAL & ADMIN OFFICER				
	CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER				
3	HEAD BUS TRANSPORTATION	OK		3/6/13	ACTION REQUIRED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
2	SENIOR MANAGER WHEEL-TRANS	Kw.		May 31/13	<input type="checkbox"/> SIGN AGREEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APPROVE FOR SUBMISSION TO BOARD <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE FOR SUBMISSION TO CHAIR
	HEAD OF FINANCE				
	HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES				
	HEAD OF LEGAL				
5	EXECUTIVE DIR CORPORATE COMM	OK		June 7/13	
	CHIEF OF STAFF	OK		June 7/13	
1	HEAD OF AUDIT	OK		May 27/13	SIGNATURE:  DATE: JUNE 13 2013

