

# TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

**MEETING DATE:** September 30, 2010

**SUBJECT:** 2010 PUBLIC FORUM ON ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

## **ACTION ITEM**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Commission forward this report to City of Toronto, Metrolinx, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, noting that:

- The 2010 TTC Public Forum on Accessible Transit, which was held on June 17, 2010, provided an opportunity for members of the public to present input and suggestions on accessible transit services at the TTC;
- the forum, which was undertaken jointly with the TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT), was attended by Commissioners, TTC senior management and staff, and the Monitor for the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal;
- the forum was well attended, and the TTC received over 500 individual comments and suggestions regarding ways of improving its service, all of which were recorded and are being assessed;
- this report, and details of the comments received from the public, are being widely distributed throughout the TTC so that responsible departments can take action to address the suggestions and concerns; and
- the TTC will hold a forum on TTC accessibility issues every year, with the next forum planned for May/June of 2011.

### **FUNDING**

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

### **BACKGROUND**

In response to complaints made against the TTC related to stop and station announcements, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario issued an Order requiring the TTC to hold public meetings in 2008, 2009, and 2010 to obtain public comments on TTC accessible services. The 2010 Public Forum was again undertaken jointly with the Commission's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT), with involvement from TTC Commissioners and TTC staff.

All arrangements for this and previous forums were developed in consultation with Mr. Matthew Garfield, Monitor for the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

Advertising for the 2010 forum included public address announcements, displays on station platform electronic signs, invitations on the TTC website, advertisements in the print media (Metro paper), a news release, Collector booth cards throughout the subway system, 'take-one' slips in transit vehicles, additional guides/posters at Bathurst Station, phone messages, and invitations sent electronically and by mail. Invitations were sent directly to a wide range of agencies, institutions, and organizations in the city, those who provided contact information after attending previous forums, and others who expressed an interest in the event.

Unlike the 2009 annual forum, the 2010 public forum was not advertised in the Wheel-Trans newsletter, as the decision on the location did not provide sufficient time for distribution to customers. In place of the newsletter, Wheel-Trans customers were advised by e-mail, a notice was posted on the internet trip booking page, a telephone call-out advertisement, and a telephone greeting message, when customers called to book trips. Advertising in the Wheel-Trans newsletter will be addressed in the future annual forums, as suggested by the Monitor.

This report summarizes the results of the 2010 forum and the comments received, provides an update on the actions being taken in response to these comments, and re-iterates the TTC's commitment to continue these events on an annual basis.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Conduct of the June 2010 Public Forum**

The 2010 forum was held on the evening of June 17<sup>th</sup> and was attended by TTC Chair Adam Giambrone, most of the Commissioners and ACAT members, TTC senior management including Chief General Manager Gary Webster, and many other TTC staff. The 2010 forum was well attended by approximately 350 people.

Service Planning Manager Mitch Stambler provided an initial presentation to the audience outlining the status of accessibility initiatives at the TTC. ACAT Chair Susan Davidson also spoke on the role and responsibilities of ACAT, as well as on current initiatives on the accessibility front. However, the primary focus of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for attendees to speak about their concerns and suggestions related to accessibility issues. There was a main comment session conducted during the formal forum proceedings and, new to this year's forum, a one-on-one session at the end of the formal forum proceedings where attendees could speak individually with TTC staff, senior management, ACAT members, and Commissioners about concerns or issues they had regarding accessible transit service. Fifty people spoke during the formal part of the meeting, and more spoke to Commissioners and staff during the subsequent 'one-on-one' part of the evening. Staff recorded the comments received during the forum, and obtained additional input through a comment form, calls to the customer service office, and

electronically before and after the forum.

The comments and concerns raised at the meeting were documented at the time and all attendees were provided with a questionnaire soliciting written comments. The completed questionnaires were collected at the end of the evening. A postal address and an email address were also provided to receive comments, and individuals and organizations were requested to provide additional written comments following the meeting. The formal comment period for the forum extended into early July; however, submissions received later were also processed. The results of the input received are summarized in the section below.

#### Summary of Input Received in 2010

Comments were recorded for all 50 speakers during the formal forum proceedings, and staff received a total of 63 written submissions in the form of the comment sheets distributed at the forum. In addition, 15 responses were recorded from the one-on-one session by TTC staff, and another 9 responses were recorded from this session by TTC senior management/Commissioners. As well, 20 submissions were received electronically before and after the forum date. This brings the total number of submissions received to 157 (146 are believed to be from unique individuals). It should be noted that many respondents provided comments on more than one individual issue, and often more than one person provided the same comment or suggestion. The number of individual, separate comments received from all sources and submissions was 510.

Appendix A, *Summary of Responses in 2010*, shows the number of individual comments received, grouped into four categories: specialized (Wheel-Trans) services, conventional services, other issues, and comments on the forum itself.

Many of the comments received were very positive. Some respondents had only positive experiences to share and positive comments to make on the service provided by the TTC. This is especially true with regards to TTC Operators and for the level and quality of service in both the TTC's specialized and conventional accessible transit services. However, many also had concerns and issues with current services and wanted to see a variety of improvements implemented. While some new insights and perspectives were presented, many of the comments advocated for the types of changes already contained in the TTC's *Accessibility Plan*, including improving specialized services, adding more accessible buses and streetcars, and making more subway stations accessible. The categories and general nature of the comments are summarized in Table 1, attached.

There was an even split between comments received for specialized (Wheel-Trans) service and conventional transit service, at 42% each. Only a small percentage of comments were received on issues such as policy and fares. The top five specific categories of comments were related to the trip-booking process at Wheel-Trans, Wheel-Trans customer service, the conduct of the forum itself, stations/terminals and stop locations, and customer service on the conventional system.

Table 1**Classification of Comments -- 2010 Public Forum**Specialized (Wheel-Trans) Services

These comments were divided into five (5) classifications:

## Reservations/Appointment Booking:

- Comments received in this category expressed a general dissatisfaction with the phone booking system, especially with how the phone lines are often busy and reservations staff can be hard to understand
- Many expressed a desire for a feature where one could add in new addresses when booking online versus using pre-determined locations

## Marketing/Customer Service:

- Comments received in this category expressed unprofessional behaviour of contract drivers
- Many also mentioned that drivers were not waiting long enough for customers or should wait longer for customers to arrive
- Many comments praised TTC Wheel-Trans operators for their kind, courteous, and professional qualities

## Level of/Extensions of Service:

- Comments here expressed a desire to have Wheel-Trans service extend outside City of Toronto boundaries and/or have greater coordination with paratransit services in neighbouring municipalities, as well as different choices for transfer locations
- Comments also suggested a general sense of satisfaction with the current level and quality of service provided

## Service Reliability:

- Comments indicated vehicles for booked trips do not show up, or are extremely late in arrival
- Besides a desire to have vehicles arrive on time more often, other comments received said that trips on Wheel-Trans took too long

## Vehicles (Buses/Taxis/ Minivans):

- Comments received in this category mentioned poor conditions on contract vehicles (taxis and minivans) and a desire to have all of these vehicles replaced by Wheel-Trans buses
- Some expressed dissatisfaction with the new Wheel-Trans bus design in terms of height, grab-bar location, etc.

Table 1 - Continued**Classification of Comments -- 2010 Public Forum**Conventional Services

These comments were also divided into five (5) classifications:

Marketing/Customer Service:

- Comments here were mainly concerned with Operator behaviour and front-line customer service. It was mentioned that many drivers tend to accelerate/brake too fast, causing 'jerk' and do not wait for customers to find their seat before departing stops
- Others stated there should be a better system in place for ensuring wheelchair seats are reserved for those who need them and/or better signage on buses to this effect

Level of/Extensions of Service:

- Comments received in this category were mainly positive, with many customers appreciating the frequency and quality of service provided by the TTC
- However, other comments mentioned specific route changes that would be beneficial to customers and a desire for a change to the current scheduling process to better combat bunching and crowding of vehicles

Stations/Terminals/Stops:

- Comments received suggested more subway stations should have elevators installed, and that station design should consider a wider range of accessibility features such as better signage, more assistance for blind customers, etc.
- Some other comments were concerned with the confusing layout of some bus terminals, poor lighting, and undesirable locations for some bus stops

Access (Elevators/Escalators/Lifts):

- Comments received in this category mentioned the need to have elevator/escalator repair occur faster and have more information on repairs available to customers in a timely fashion
- Some comments suggested a desire to have elevators reserved for those with disabilities only

Vehicles (Buses/Streetcars/Subway):

- The main comment received in this category was that all streetcars and buses should be accessible
- Other comments expressed dissatisfaction with the design of some of the TTC's newer buses, regarding issues such as comfort of ride, width of entry/exit points, location of grab bars, and problems with back doors
- Another common comment was that vehicles should be lowering right to the curb at all times

Table 1 - Continued**Classification of Comments -- 2010 Public Forum**Other Miscellaneous Issues

This category included all other types of comments received, mainly on the subjects of corporate and system policies, fares, and a desire to better integrate TTC services with neighbouring municipalities. The majority of responses received in this category mentioned that transit should be discounted to the senior/student level or be provided free for those with disabilities or those living on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Other comments stated escorts should not be charged a fare and a new card identification system be established for transit users with disabilities.

Conduct of the Forums

This category dealt with comments on the forum itself, including quality of the venue, presentations given, opportunity for input, and audio/visual issues. Comments received here expressed a general feeling that the forum was useful and appreciated by attendees, and that people were satisfied from getting a chance to be heard. Many suggested improvements for future forums, such as a better quality sound system, having speakers speak more clearly/slowly, and providing a handout for attendees concerning the progress on accessibility initiatives to-date.

The majority of comments received concern the TTC's specialized and conventional transit services. Comments on other issues, and on the forum itself, cover about 22% of the comments received. With the exception of 2009, where there was a noticeably lower number of participants and a lower number of comments were processed, there have been a fairly equal number of comments received for Wheel-Trans and conventional transit services (33% and 36% in 2008 and then 42% each in 2010). The percentage of all comments is relatively high across all three years for the categories of Wheel-Trans trip bookings and customer service, conventional transit customer service, and subway stations/terminals/stops, with matters pertaining to front-line services predominating. Fewer comments have been received relating to levels of service for both types of transit, service reliability of Wheel-Trans, and vehicles for both types of transit, with the exception of conventional service vehicles in 2009 where that category garnered 18% of total comments received. The table in Appendix B, *Summary of Responses (2008 -2010)*, provides a comparison of comments received over the past three forums (2008-2010).

Action Plan to Address Concerns Expressed

The purpose of having TTC Commissioners and senior management present at the forums is to allow them to hear directly from the public. A number of the suggestions heard by the Commissioners and staff are already being addressed through the TTC's ongoing programs, and ACAT and its subcommittees are providing advice and oversight on these programs. These programs include making the entire bus fleet accessible, making all existing subway stations accessible, and the introduction of accessible light rail vehicles (LRV) for the legacy

and Transit City systems. The public's comments with regards to these TTC undertakings are primarily to get them completed faster.

On a number of occasions, the TTC has requested additional funding from the Province of Ontario. This would permit the TTC to accelerate making TTC services and facilities more accessible and/or increase the quantity of accessible service. To date, the Province has not announced any additional funding for accessible public transit services or funding for the implementation of the accessibility standards being implemented by the Province.

The service-specific concerns received have been transmitted to various divisions and offices for consideration and corrective action. Those concerns pertaining to the TTC's conventional transit services are being addressed through the Marketing and Customer Service Department's processes for customer complaints and suggestions, and are being added to the database for customer comments. All communications with a specific concern or suggestion are being forwarded to the appropriate division/department, and a reply will be issued to customers that have left contact information.

The TTC's Wheel-Trans office is taking similar action with regards to the complaints and suggestions on specialized services.

The suggestions to provide free travel to attendants, to develop identification cards for people with disabilities, and some other matters of this nature, as well as the need for additional funding, have already been included in TTC submissions to the Province of Ontario with regards to the Province's accessibility legislation and proposed regulations. Staff will again raise these matters in discussions with representatives of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

As was done in 2008 and 2009, the comments from the public will also be referred to members of the Commission's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation and, as appropriate, referred to the ACAT subcommittees for assessment and advice.

#### Future Public Forums on Accessibility

The TTC will hold public forums on accessible services on an annual basis. The next forum is planned to be held in May/June of 2011.

At the suggestion of the Monitor for the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, the TTC will re-assess possible alternative venues for the forum, and re-assess the methods of advertising the event before arrangements for the 2011 event are confirmed.

#### SUMMARY

The TTC undertook its third annual public forum on accessible transit services in 2010. This event provided an additional opportunity for TTC Commissioners, ACAT representatives, and TTC staff to directly hear the public's views on specialized and conventional transit services and facilities. Staff have put in place a systematic process of recording, assessing, and

responding to the comments and suggestions received. To create an ongoing process of public input, and to present information on the status of suggestions received at past meetings, the TTC will hold a forum on accessibility issues every year. The next forum on accessibility issues is planned for spring 2011.

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September 13, 2010

11-31-48

Attachments: Appendices A and B



Appendix A

**Summary of Responses in 2010**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of comments</b>	<b>% of all comments</b>
<b>Specialized (Wheel-Trans) Service:</b>		
• Reservations/Appointment Bookings	77	15
• Marketing/Customer Service	67	13
• Level of/Extensions of Service	25	5
• Service Reliability	29	6
• Vehicles (Buses/Taxis/ Minivans)	15	3
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Conventional Service:</b>		
• Marketing/Customer Service	49	10
• Level of/Extensions of Service	31	6
• Stations/Terminals/Stops	59	12
• Access (Elevators/Escalators/Lifts)	29	6
• Vehicles (Buses/Streetcars/Subway)	48	9
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Other (policy issues, fare issues, etc.)</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Conduct of the Forums</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>100</b>

Appendix B

**Summary of Responses (2008-2010)**

Category	2008		2009		2010	
	# of comments	% of all comments	# of comments	% of all comments	# of comments	% of all comments
<b>Specialized (Wheel-Trans) Service:</b>						
• Reservations/ Appointment Booking	33	11	7	4	77	15
• Marketing/ Customer Service	19	6	14	8	67	13
• Level of/Extensions of Service	17	6	1	1	25	5
• Service Reliability	19	6	1	1	29	6
• Vehicles (Buses/Taxis/ Minivans)	13	4	7	4	15	3
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Conventional Service:</b>						
• Marketing/ Customer Service	20	7	27	16	49	10
• Level of/Extensions of Service	14	5	5	3	31	6
• Stations/ Terminals/Stops	30	10	22	13	59	12
• Access (Elevators/ Escalators/Lifts)	18	6	18	11	29	6
• Vehicles (Buses/Streetcars/ Subway)	26	8	30	18	48	9
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Other (policy issues, fare issues, etc.)</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Conduct of the Forums</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>100</b>