



Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit

November 30, 2023

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 October 26, 2023 to the December 7, 2023 Board Meeting for information. The topics discussed included ACAT's appeal committee and the newly sourced locations; discussion around changing ACAT's Terms of Reference to include an out of region member; the release of the new Wheel-Trans Mobile App; status of re-registration of legacy customers; and the motion to review the 2024 ACAT meeting times with new members.

The following is a summary of the main topics discussed at the October ACAT Subcommittee meetings:

Communications Subcommittee

A presentation was given to ACAT members by Information Technology Services regarding the website Chatbot, TTC E-Help Virtual Assistant. It will allow customers to ask frequently asked questions on the website rather than calling customer service and is expected to be launched next year. There were updates given on outreach for the upcoming Public Forum on Accessibility, the new Wheel-Trans Mobile App, and the newsletter release. New business that was brought up included a question on if the travel planner could reroute customers if there are elevators or escalators out of service at stations. In addition, accessibility directional signage is not consistent at the platform level in stations. The IT and Wayfinding teams will be looking into this and will have recommendations at the November meeting,

Design Review Subcommittee

An update on new buses and their features was presented. There are three new types of buses that include a new priority seat button that faces the window allowing individuals to press them and inform the driver they may require additional assistance or time exiting the bus. The buttons also include braille. On the new buses, the rear doors are touch rather than having the push bar and now include a triple chime prior to closing. The ramps will now hold up to 800 lbs. and the buses will have companion seats. There was a visit to Mount Dennis to review the new buses and positive comments were received.

Service Planning Subcommittee

Arlen Orellana, Wheel-Trans Travel Specialist provided a presentation on the current travel training program. Compliments from individuals attending the appeals process were given, as well as encouraging TTC to provide brochures to the appeals committee and distribute information on the training. Concerns with travel training included mobility focused training that had little focus on some disabilities such as mental health or sensory sensitivities. Prior work and assessment is needed to provide training for other disabilities, although TTC does provide it. New business items such as the possibility for tie downs on streetcars for wheelchairs, wayfinding at Kennedy Station, and mid-road streetcar platforms, were raised.

Wheel-Trans Operations Subcommittee

There was no October Subcommittee meeting.

Please refer to the enclosed minutes for further details.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anita Dressler
2023 ACAT Chair

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION
COMMITTEE MINUTES

APPROVED

Minutes of Meeting: ACAT General Meeting
Meeting Date: Thursday, October 26, 2023
1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Location: Virtual meeting via WebEx

Present: Anita Dressler, ACAT Chair
Gwyneth Dalzell, ACAT Co-Vice Chair
Erica Tanny, ACAT Co-Vice Chair
Howard Wax, SPS Chair
Lauri Sue Robertson, WTOS Chair
Betty Rivington-Law
Bobbi Moore
Frank Lockhart
Lavarnan Mehavarnan
Mei Hung
Rob Lackie
Nicholas Paterson, Pool Member
Jason Osborne, Pool Member
Tammy Adams, Pool Member

Regrets: Maria Marin, CS Chair
Wangari Muriuki
Valdo Tammark

Absent: Craig Nichols

Member of Public: Chris Stigas

TTC Representatives: Michael Atlas, General Counsel
Joanne DeLaurentiis, Vice Chair, TTC Board
Dianne Saxe, City Councillor, TTC Board
Cameron Penman, Head, Wheel-Trans
David LoPresti, Manager, Contracted Taxi Services, Wheel-Trans
Dean Milton, Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Wheel-Trans
Ross Visconti, Wheel-Trans Project Manager
Lodon Hassan, Divisional Manager of Customer Service, Wheel-Trans
Levenson Lincoln, Assistant Manager of Customer Service, Wheel-Trans
Heather Brown, Director of Customer Experience

Adrian Grundy, Senior Communications Advisor, Corporate Communications

Omar Jabbar, Program Manager, Wheel-Trans

Jeff Short, Senior Accessibility Planner

Chrisanne Finnerty, Director, Commission Services

Stephan Boston, Chief Instructor, Operations Training Centre

Alexandra Nicastro, Administrative Assistant, Wheel-Trans

Oma Okolocha, Coordinator, Human Rights & Investigations

Sneha Madhuri, Communications Advisor, Corporate Communications

Chantelle Dallas, Human Rights Consultant

Warren Rupnarain, Accessibility Consultant

Items Discussed

- 1/ Call to Order / Attendance
- 2/ Land Acknowledgement
- 3/ Declaration of Conflict of Interest
- 4/ Approval of Agenda
- 5/ Remarks from TTC Executive
- 6/ Remarks from ACAT Chair
- 7/ Review and Approval of September 28, 2023 Minutes
- 8/ Outstanding Items
 - a. Out of Region Member update in Terms of Reference
- 9/ Deputation: Nil
- 10/ Review of Correspondence: Nil
- 11/ Wheel-Trans Transformation & COVID-19 update from Cameron Penman
- 12/ Subcommittee Reports, Highlights and Updates
 - Communications
 - Design Review
 - Service Planning
 - Wheel-Trans Operations
- 13/ Other/New Business
 - a. Meeting Times Results from ACAT Recruitment for 2024
- 14/ Next Meeting – November 30, 2023
- 15/ Adjournment

1. Call to Order/Attendance

Anita Dressler, ACAT Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m., welcomed attendees and attendance was taken.

2. Land Acknowledgement

A member read the Land Acknowledgement.

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Nil.

4. Approval of Agenda

Betty Rivington-Law brought a motion to approve the agenda, Howard Wax seconded. Carried.

5. Remarks from TTC Executive

Michael Atlas, TTC General Counsel, thanked ACAT for welcoming him again to a meeting. He explained what areas of the TTC organization that the Legal Department is responsible for which include, lawyers (personal injury, labour/employment and corporate) Court Advocates, Prosecutors, Commissions Services and Investigative and Video Services. Areas of discussion at previous ACAT meetings that Michael attended included the communication gap as between Metrolinx, TTC and ACAT relating to the transit expansion lines and ACAT's concern that information from Metrolinx was not always provided in a timely fashion.

Questions and Comments from the Committee

Nil.

6. Remarks from ACAT Chair

Anita Dressler thanked the ACAT members for their continued work and stated that October has been a busy month, that has included outreach to all members regarding their preferences for meetings. This will be finalized in November or December. There were two appeal committee meetings, in which 17 people appealed their designation. They have also done a site visit for a location for the appeals that is fully accessible. However, it was not suitable, so they will be visiting another location in the East end on November 1, 2023. They are looking for one location in the East and one in the West to accommodate everyone. She thanked the TTC Travel Trainer at the on-site Public Forum on Accessible Transit, the staff were very accommodating, and Lauri Sue Robertson (and Mei Hung)

helped represent ACAT at the marketplace. It was well run with a marketplace for accessibility and presentations. Some items will be forwarded to the different subcommittees for input

7. Review and Approval of September 28, 2023, Minutes

Howard Wax brought a motion to approve the September 28, 2023 minutes as presented, and Bobbi Moore seconded. Carried.

8. Outstanding Items

a. Out of Region Member Update – Terms of Reference

Anita Dressler asked that all members reply to the recent email sent by Alexandra Nicastro, Administrative Assistant, Wheel-Trans, regarding the out of region member questions. She explained that as part of ACAT's Terms of Reference, members are required to reside in the City of Toronto.

Erica Tanny, ACAT Co-Vice Chair, explained that this was an issue recently when a member had to step down as it was found that they did not reside in the City of Toronto. There is a proposed change coming that would potentially open a spot for a member who does not reside in the City of Toronto, to be included in ACAT. This would allow for people that use parallel services that cross over to the TTC or commute into the City of Toronto to provide their perspective. It may come as a motion or a discussion.

Questions and Comments from the Committee

A member suggested that getting this alternative perspective sounded like a good idea, and might provide ACAT with a clearer view of the issue of transferring between services.

A member asked for Michael Atlas' input on the matter, as it might be a conflict with the City of Toronto and TTC. Michael Atlas stated that if ACAT agrees to this, then it will go back to the TTC Board for approval, but only if ACAT agrees through a vote.

A member provided a counter perspective, stating that while it is important for the voice and perspective of non-Toronto residents to be heard, they do not know if ACAT membership is the appropriate way to handle it and wondered if there is an alternative way. They worried that giving non-residents of Toronto a seat on ACAT is privileging them over a Toronto resident and worried that they would be unable to offer much more than that narrow perspective. They can find a way to bring that voice forward, without delegating a spot on ACAT.

A member commented that they appreciate the diverse perspective, greater regional integration and a lot of TTC users form a perspective from outside of the Toronto region. They felt this could be a great addition to have this perspective, the question

of what that would look like as they move towards greater integration with other systems, will have to be seen. This would be a great addition to ACAT for accessibility.

b. Honorarium

This will be discussed at the November ACAT General meeting.

9. Deputation

Nil.

10. Review of Correspondence

Nil.

11. Wheel-Trans Transformation & COVID-19 update from Cameron Penman

Cameron Penman, Head of Wheel-Trans, provided a Wheel-Trans update. Workshops have begun with a consultant in order to develop the Request for Information for the new Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems. These will be followed by a Request for Proposals for the new systems which are expected to be issued next year. Regarding phases 5-8 of the Reservations, Scheduling and Dispatch software upgrades, Cameron explained that internal discussions continue regarding a way forward based on the recommendations from the solution assessment.

Cameron explained that the Wheel-Trans Mobile App was released and there have been over 2000 downloads already. It offers many of the same features as the Self-booking Website with the convenience of being on your smart phone.

The re-registration of legacy customers is ongoing, and Cameron advised that this year close to 5,000 customers have re-registered, with just under 6,500 customers remaining.

With respect to the Wheel-Trans fleet, there are currently more than 100, new 7 metre ProMaster buses in service, with only a few of the Friendly buses left to replace.

Cameron thanked everyone from his team, the ACAT members and ACAT Chair for attending the Public Forum on Accessible Transit on Monday night. He noted there was important information exchanged that they would endeavor to act on to improve accessibility with transit in Toronto.

For the COVID update, there was little to update, but noted that Wheel-Trans will continue to monitor the public health environment over the coming months and will re-implement safety related COVID policies if deemed necessary by local public health officials and TTC Safety.

Questions and Comments from the Committee

Nil.

12. Subcommittee Reports, Highlights and Updates:

Communications Subcommittee (CS)

Heather Brown, Director of Customer Experience provided a summary of the Communications Subcommittee meeting was held on October 5, 2023.

Chetah Sutrisno, Systems Analyst in Information Technology Services made a presentation to the Committee regarding the website Chatbot that will be named TTC E-help virtual assistant. This will give customers an opportunity to ask the virtual bot frequently asked questions via a web chat, instead of having to call customer service. They expect this to launch by the end of the year.

Sofia Rizzo, a new member of the Customer Service team updated the Committee on outreach for the Public Forum on Accessible Transit. Sneha Madhuri, Communications Advisor updated the Committee on the launch of the new Wheel-Trans Mobile App, the newsletter release, and the preparations for the upcoming Public Forum on Accessible Transit. Two items were brought up for new business, including a question on whether the travel planner could automatically reroute customers if there are elevators/escalators down at a station so they can go to an accessible station. Heather Brown explained they are looking into this with IT, Service Planning and Elevating Devices teams. It was also raised that the accessibility directional signs are not consistent at the platform level in stations and Ian Dickson and his Wayfinding team will work on this and have some recommendations by the November meeting.

The next meeting will be held on November 2, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

CS Meeting Highlights:

- TTC E-Help Virtual Assistant presentations
- Updates on the new Wheel-Trans Mobile App and Public Forum on Accessibility.

Questions and Comments from the Committee

Nil.

Design Review Subcommittee (DRS)

Jeff Short, Senior Accessibility Planner provided a summary for the Design Review Subcommittee, held on October 10, 2023.

Staff provided an update on the new buses and their features. The buses included the Nova 40-foot, New Flyer 40-foot, and New Flyer 60-foot articulated bus. Some of the features include new priority seat buttons that face the windows at the priority seats. These allow people to press them, and the driver knows that the person might need extra help or extra time to exit the bus. These buttons now include braille. The rear doors include low effort touch bars, rather than push bar. The New Flyer buses have a single chime to open and triple chime prior to closing. The restraint belts to secure personal mobility devices are Q'straints, which remove the mechanism and belts off the floor and are a one button release. Staff confirmed that the ramps will now hold up to 800 pounds, which is up from the current 600 pounds. The 40-foot New Flyer buses will have one companion seat and the 60-foot will have two side by side companion seats. There was a question on whether the TTC has a standard stop request button size, as they are smaller on the Nova. It was explained that the larger buttons on the New Flyer are the preferred size, but they didn't want to discount one of the suppliers for the size of the buttons.

Jeff noted that Craig Nicol prepared an outstanding action items list, which included the ongoing issue with pre-boarding announcements, and an update will be provided by the team working on it. They are working on escalating the updates to the software on the PRESTO fare gates. Staff will investigate any updates to the Bloor/Yonge expansion, due to the reduction in clear platform width with the addition of the platform edge gates. They were to take this back for recommended changes, and nothing has been heard. Staff will investigate the status of the audible messaging at the Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS), as they are waiting for the City. The concern was that when the new Light Rail Transit lines start up, they will have to be ready to do them all at once. The Committee asked for clarification on third party entrances, for both the power doors operators as well as snow removal and lighting. Staff will come back with a clear answer. The Committee suggested ensuring TTC Standards were being used for the floating bus stops implemented by the City and staff will take this back for discussion.

Jeff talked about the October 18 visit to Mount Dennis bus garage to review the buses presented at the October 10 meeting and thanked current and retired ACAT members for attending so that they could test out and see the bus features. Some of the comments provided included that the front door ramp has good traction, chair seats don't flip up too easily and touch bars on the back doors are very responsive.

The next meeting will be November 14, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

Questions and Comments from the Committee

Nil.

DRS Meeting Highlights:

- Presentation on three new buses and their features.
- An outstanding action item list was prepared which included.

Questions and Comments from the Committee

A member commented that Mount Dennis site visit was very informative, but the trip with Wheel-Trans was very unorganized. Contracted taxi drivers were not sure of the drop off and pick up areas, that were relayed to them incorrectly. Cameron Penman thanked them for their feedback and will make sure this does not happen again.

A member commented they had the same experience with Wheel-Trans drop off and pick up location confusion and it makes it difficult for the end user. The TTC need to be clear on their instructions of locations.

A member asked if they could elaborate on the snow removal discussion. Jeff Short stated that it is related to third party accessible entrances that lead to the TTC and who is responsible for clearing the snow. TTC staff discussions are underway. This is a topic that requires a more dedicated discussion at an ACAT subcommittee meeting. Anita Dressler commented that this was also brought up at the Forum on Monday.

A member commented that it is not just snow removal at these third-party entrances, but also about automatic door openers. They are often not working and there is no information and no one to answer who is responsible for fixing it. They suggested putting a sticker on the doors to tell people who to contact if it is not working. They also suggested that the wave to open door opener seems to work better than the button. Jeff Short explained that these wave-activated openers can cause difficulty for people who cannot see where to wave their hands. There are alternatives that the TTC is looking at.

A member thanked the other members for bringing this up as they have also experienced issues with doors and openers. They asked TTC staff to investigate specific doors at Union, that are partially propped open. Jeff Short will look into this and get back to the ACAT members at the next General Meeting.

Service Planning Subcommittee (SPS)

Howard Wax, SPS Chair, presented about the SPS meeting held on October 3, 2023.

Arlen Orellana attended the meeting to provide the current travel training information. Questions from the members included compliments from the people attending the appeals process on Arlen Orellana's training and approachability and encouraged the TTC to provide brochures to the appeals committee to distribute information regarding the training. Arlen Orellana confirmed that two people attended the September quarterly event. A member commented that the drivers should have knowledge of the training and Dean Milton, Manager of Strategic Initiatives will pass this along, as well as to David LoPresti, Manager of Contracted Taxi Services and his team. A member asked if there is training on empty streetcars and subways similar to the bus, and Arlen explained that the bus entry and exit provided the most difficulty, so they do not provide this training on the streetcars and subways. Concerns included mobility focussed training, with little focus on other disabilities. Dean explained they are also training for other disabilities, there may be some

prior work or assessment required first. There were a few suggestions on additions to the training that included location of emergency assistance and what to do if your vehicle doesn't show up.

Another concern voiced by a member was with only one travel trainer if all interested customers are being served. Dean confirmed that they are. It was also noted that any issues that are noticed by the travel trainer are brought to the correct team to deal with it, whether infrastructure, driver complaints/compliments, etc. One member suggested that Arlen could have a page in the newsletter that could include FAQs and tips and tricks. A few new business items were raised including the possibility for tie downs on streetcars for wheelchairs, wayfinding at Kennedy Station, and mid-road streetcar platforms.

The next meeting will be November 7, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

SPS Meeting Highlights:

- Arlen Orellana, Travel Trainer attended to provide updates on travel training.
- Members raised some concerns on focus of training and made suggestions.
- Suggestions included having the Travel Trainer do a page for the newsletter.

Wheel-Trans Operations Subcommittee (WTOS)

There was no WTOS meeting held in October.

The next WTOS meeting is scheduled for November 8, 2023.

13. Other/New Business

- a. TAAC Motion
- b. Event and Wheel-Trans Drop off areas.
- c. Meeting time results from ACAT recruitment 2024

a. TAAC Motion

This was deferred to the November meeting.

Questions and Comments

A member asked if the TTC had given any consideration to a suggestion from another member regarding honouring Sam Savona, late ACAT Chair and founding member. Cameron asked that they leave this with him and recommended adding this to outstanding items.

b. Event and Wheel-Trans Drop off areas.

A member commented that when the City of Toronto closes off an area for an event, it is often closed for many kilometres outside of the event. Recently, they were trying to get to Union Station while the area was closed for such an event. At the time, the

vehicle operator seemed unable to determine how to get to the destination, until they were able to convince the driver to ask a police officer. The police and transit have alternate accommodations to allow them through organized through their group and the City of Toronto. They recommended that TTC should be doing the same thing, especially for Wheel-Trans customers, as leaving them three kilometres from their destination is not acceptable. It did not appear that they had a plan or policy during events. Cameron Penman thanked the member for the feedback and will take this back for discussion, although he assured the members that the TTC does have a plan for events. This will be taken back to WTOS where they can have further discussion.

c. Meeting time results from ACAT recruitment 2024

Anita Dressler followed up on the motion put forward about the 2024 ACAT meeting times that they would ask all new applicants being interviewed, what time they would prefer to meet. Two people preferred the morning, 10 the afternoon, one evening, one no preference and one no preference depending on medical appointments. The high ratio of applicants preferring afternoons supports that the meetings will continue in the afternoon as per the motion.

14. Next Meeting

The next ACAT General Meeting is scheduled for November 30, 2023 at 1:00 pm. It was noted that the December 14, 2023 meeting will be held in person and it is hoped that many of the members can attend.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Betty Rivington Law and seconded by Howard wax at 2:19 p.m.

Cindy Edwards
Recording Secretary