



Winnipeg Transit Plus Winnipeg Transit Master Plan

Customer Discussion

January 13, 2020
January 14, 2020



Agenda

- Overview and purpose
- Program Overview
- Select Topics and Policy Analysis
- Initial Recommendations

About Winnipeg Transit

- A modern Winnipeg Transit that provides accessible mobility options for all residents
- Different options for different abilities and trips

Conventional Services:

- Provides service throughout the City and the network is undergoing a review
- Buses are low-floor and have accessibility features
- Winnipeg Transit and City expanding accessibility of key bus stops and stations

Transit Plus:

- Door-to-door transportation for persons unable to complete their journey using conventional services
- Opportunity to reshape the program to better serve customers

About Transit Plus

- Service for persons with disabilities and mobility challenges
- Provided nearly 400,000 door-to-door trips in 2018
- Trip requests are made ahead of time by calling Transit Plus and booking the trip
- Customers must meet eligibility requirements to qualify for Transit Plus service

Purpose of our review

- **Evaluate** how Transit Plus is doing and compare to best practices in North America
- **Respond** to main findings of Ombudsman's Report
 - Assess eligibility criteria, trip prioritization and no-show policies; contrast with industry best practices
- **Align** with upcoming Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) legislation related to transportation
- **Modernize** the program by making it equitable and sustainable for those who truly need it
- **Integrate** accessible conventional fixed route services into our service delivery strategy

Setting the Context

Framing our discussion

- Winnipeg's population is aging
- Ridership and demand for Transit Plus services is growing exponentially
- We need to comply with new Accessibility for Manitobans Act legislation
 - Remove and prevent barriers to accessibility
- The need to update Transit Plus for equity and based on our changing society

Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (1/2)

- Passed in December 2013 to proactively plan for accessibility, remove and prevent barriers
- Transportation Accessibility Standard Discussion Paper released in October 2019
 - Not yet proclaimed into legislation
- This includes elements like:
 - Accessible vehicles, with features like priority seating, mobility device securements, grab bars, etc.
 - Fares that are the same as conventional services
 - Pre-boarding, on-board, and other auditory announcements
 - Lighting and signage that is appropriate for persons with low-vision
 - Accessibility training for staff when providing service to persons with disabilities
 - Accessible information, such as large type maps, high-visibility information

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (2/2)

- Also directly impacts:
 - **Eligibility** – three new categories
 1. Unconditional – unable to use conventional services for all trips
 2. Conditional – able to use conventional services for some trips
 3. Temporary – unable to use conventional services for a limited period of time
 - **Booking** – provides for same day service requests, or up to three hours before end service on day before travel
 - **Trip prioritization** – eliminate trip prioritization and trip restrictions
- Winnipeg Transit Plus participated in developing and shaping the transportation standard to protect its customers

Modernizing Winnipeg Transit Plus

A modern, equitable, and accessible service

- Winnipeg Transit Plus recently rebranded from previous Handi-Transit
- We need to go further—society has changed, our norms have shifted, we need to respect everyone and provide equitable service
 - Go beyond complying with Accessibility for Manitobans Act
- Important aspects to consider beyond Accessibility for Manitobans Act
 - No show policy—current outdated and a cash penalty is not what most transit agencies do
 - Family of Services delivery—combining conventional and Transit Plus service to enable **freedom, flexibility and dignity**
 - Lowering the cost of service by using all available transportation options—Transit Plus can be the go-between or coordinator to find the necessary transportation, regardless of the transportation provider

Eligibility

Current eligibility criteria

Prevailing eligibility criteria were approved and adopted by City of Winnipeg council on April 26, 2006, and later modified in 2010 to include Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias, and serve as the basis for eligibility determinations:

- 1. Requires the use of a wheelchair or scooter**
- 2. Unable to walk 175 metres (575 feet) outside**
- 3. Has 20/200 vision or less, or a visual field of less than 20 degrees in both eyes (legally blind) not corrected by lenses**
- 4. Has Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) which interferes with the ability to use the regular conventional transit system with an equivalent level of independence and safety (assessment of cognitive ability to use public transit required).**

Current eligibility categories

- Individuals are required to undergo a **functional assessment**
- Based on eligibility and assessment, individuals accepted are categorized as:
 1. **Unconditional** – able to use Transit Plus for all trips
 2. **Seasonal** – able to use Transit Plus during winter months only (October 15 through April 15)
 3. **Temporary** – able to use Transit Plus for a limited period based on a temporary medical condition (e.g. hip replacement) or for dialysis treatment
- The table below shows a breakdown of eligibility categories

| Eligibility Category | Number of customers | Percentage of total customer base |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Unconditional (3-Year Rolling Term) | 6,454 | 86% |
| Seasonal (Winter Only) | 260 | 4% |
| Dialysis Only | 265 | 3% |
| Temporary | 432 | 6% |
| Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias | 82 | 1% |
| Total Customers | 7,493 | 100% |

Assessment of current eligibility practices (1/2)

- Transit Plus processes and policies no longer align with industry best practices
- Designed at time when infrastructure and vehicles were not physically accessible – but that has started to change
- “Blanket approach” to all persons with disabilities and mobility challenges
- Does not fully take into account a person’s level of ability which many have varying degrees
- Current eligibility criteria exacerbates demand
 - Use of wheelchair = “automatic” unlimited eligibility
 - Vision impaired = “automatic” unlimited eligibility

Assessment of current eligibility practices (2/2)

- Does little to keep the program equitable and sustainable
Opportunity to align eligibility with effectively providing service and upcoming legislation
- Focus on the ability to use conventional services together with Transit Plus
- Consider how to work with other transportation providers in Winnipeg where overlapping situations present
- Enabling barrier-free lifestyles needs to be the future

Trip Prioritization

Trip prioritization

| Priority Ranking | Trip Purpose |
|------------------|---|
| Priority 1 | Work, medical, education, therapy and transportation terminal (airport/bus terminal) |
| Priority 2 | Essential shopping, support groups, self-development courses, personal business, advance ticket events, other prescribed therapy, religious services and volunteer work |
| Priority 3 | Recreational activity, grooming, dining out, shopping (non-essential), and all other trip purposes |

- Outdated practice that creates difficult situations
- Discriminatory practice this is not fair and equitable
- Goes against City of Winnipeg's 2011 policy framework which is based on mobility for all Winnipeggers
- The pending legislation won't allow it
- Properly functioning eligibility process regulates the demand for service
- Practice needs to be eliminated

No-Show Policy

No-Show Policy

- Commonplace across North America to ensure that service is not abused and available for customers who truly need it
- No-show at Transit Plus when a customer:
 - Cancels a trip within 30-minutes of scheduled pick-up → *late cancellation*
 - Cancels or refuses a trip when the operator or vehicle arrives → *cancellation at the door*
 - Is not ready for the pick-up
 - Has too many parcels to accommodate or cannot be safely secured in the vehicle

No-Show Repercussions

- Each no-show incident results in a letter explaining the incident, and fines are charged as a customer accumulates more no-shows (within 6 months)
- In 2015, Transit Plus collected \$28,201 in charges related to no-shows.
- No-shows were a major complaint in the Ombudsman's Report

| Incident | Penalty |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1st no-show | No charge |
| 2nd no-show | The equivalent of one fare |
| 3rd no-show | The equivalent of two fares |
| 4th no-show | The equivalent of three fares |
| 5th and further no-shows | \$15 |

Peer No-Show Policies

York Region Transit Mobility Plus

- Graduated ‘demerit’ point scheme
- For cancellations within 2-hours of pick-up
- Late cancellation – 1 pt; no-show or at the door cancellation – 2 pts
- 12 points, 2-day suspension; 30 points, 60-day suspension and phone interview to review service needs
- No financial penalties

Toronto Transit Commission Wheel-Trans

- Late cancellation within 4-hours of pick-up
- ‘Life Happens Points’ – provides each customer with 8 points
- Late cancellation – 1 pt; no-show and cancel-at-the-door – 2pts.
- Using all points within a 6-month –twice results in a 7-day suspension; four times results in 30-day suspension
- No financial penalties

Peer No-Show Policies

New York City Transit Access-A-Ride

- Customers have 7 points each month
- No-show if customer doesn't board within 5-minutes – 1 point
- Late cancellation within 2-hours of its scheduled pick-up – 1 point
- Multiple violations (running out of points) results in suspension
- No financial penalties

Grand River Transit (Waterloo, Ontario)

- GRT provides a clear explanation of no-shows and why no-shows need to be addressed
- Similar definition to Transit Plus
- Three occurrences in one month violates policy, next time results in a one-month suspension
- No financial penalties

No-show summary

- Point-based systems are most common
- All point-based systems involve service suspensions for repeated no shows or cancellations
- Financial penalties are now uncommon

Considerations for Transit Plus

- Eliminate financial penalty – it is not changing behaviour
- Increase allowance for number of no-shows over a defined time period (one ‘freebie’ within 6 months is too restrictive)
- Expand cancellation window to 2 hours to align with industry norms and improve unaccommodated rate – ride cannot be redirected within 30 minutes of a cancellation
- Clarify no-show appeal process to be transparent

Booking Times and Trip Delivery

Current requests and delivery

- When a customer requests a trip, an exact pick-up time is given
- This provides unrealistic expectations due to traffic and other conditions:
 - Impacts customer satisfaction
 - Clogs the call centre line with customers checking on their trip (and reduces the ability to book new trips for other customers)
 - Reduces the ability to share trips

Considerations for trip requests and delivery

- Most peers use a **booking window**
 - Customers are provided a 30-minute time frame of when to be ready for pick-up (i.e., please be ready between 11-11:30 am)
 - When the vehicle arrives, a **pick-up window** allows the customer 5-minutes to get ready (i.e., if the vehicle arrives at 11:10 am, the passenger has until 11:15 am to meet the driver)
- This will impact the no-show policy

Empowering Mobility with Accessible Conventional Transit

The Family of Services

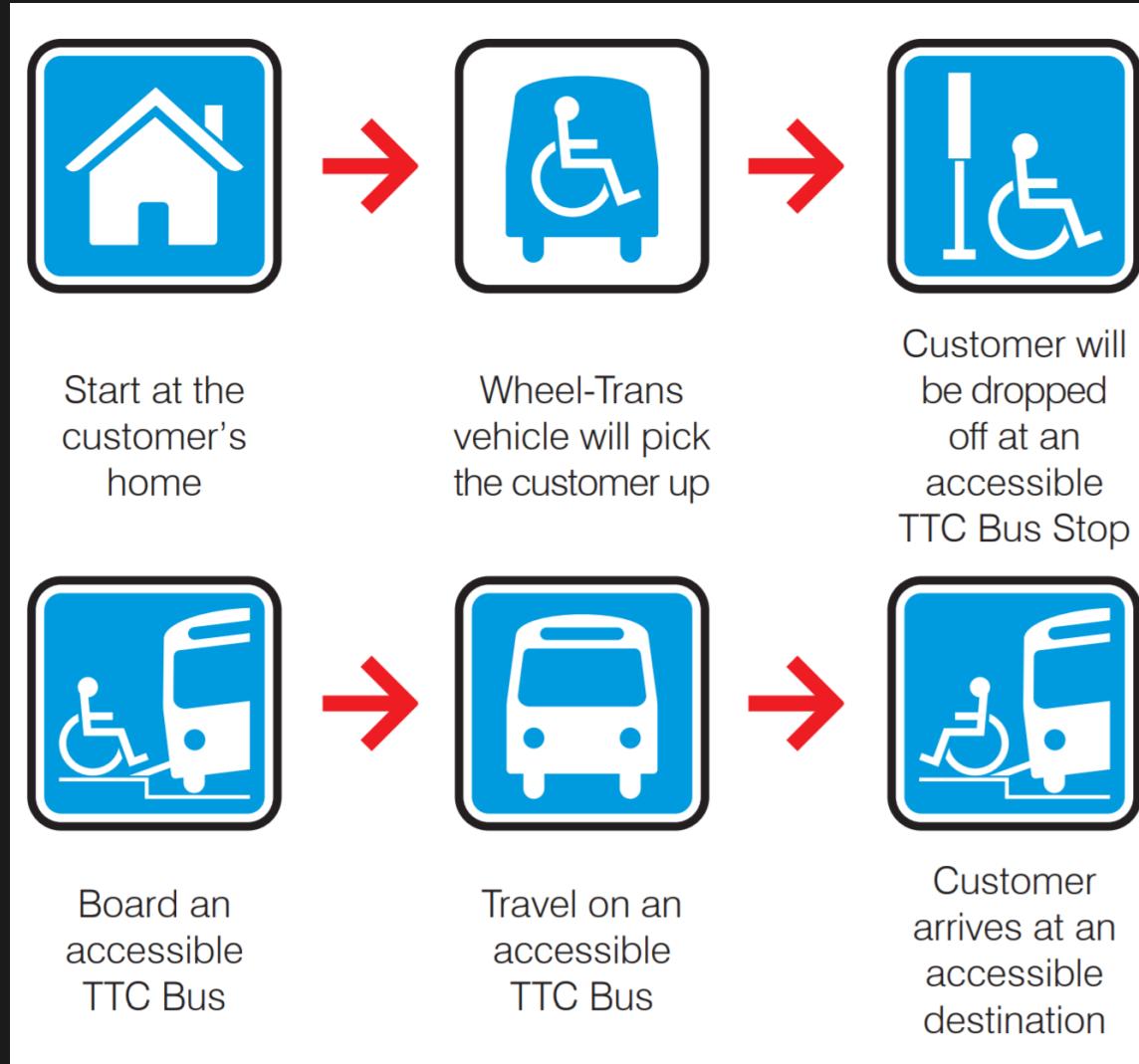
Family of Services – Mobility On Your Schedule

- Uses the investment in accessible infrastructure on conventional service to combine paratransit and conventional modes to deliver journeys
- Uses trip-by-trip eligibility, particularly conditional eligibility, to ensure that costly door-to-door service is used when truly required
- Same day service guaranteed if FOS trip requested
- Increases the flexibility and freedom to travel since it reduces the need to rely only on door-to-door



Image source: TTC

Case Study – Family of Services, Toronto



Case Study – Family of Services, Toronto

- Match right service to the customer
- Driver assistance from door to door
- Deliver 13,000 door-to-door trips per day
- Goal by 2025 that 50% of trips be delivered by FOS
- All modes of conventional transit are used – bus, subway and streetcar
- Many champions have emerged

Family of Services – Opportunities

- **Travel training** – teaching independence and empowering individuals to use accessible conventional transit service
- **Comingling** – more efficient use of Transit Plus vehicles and resources to transport Winnipeggers of all abilities on the same vehicle. This improves efficiency and effectiveness.
 - Requires customers booking a trip, like Transit Plus, and could be used to connect with high-frequency conventional service

Family of Services - Challenges

- Insufficient wheelchair securements on conventional bus fleet needs to be addressed
- Not all bus stops are accessible
- Inadequate sidewalk network in parts of the city
- Ice, snow and winter weather
- Internal and external buy-in
- Trip scheduling and coordinating transfers between services

Recommendations

Early Action Items (1/2)

Time Frame — Within one year

1. Eliminate trip prioritization – Not compliant with legislation and not equitable
2. Change the no-show policy
 - Provide an allowable number of no-shows within a rolling time frame
 - Adopt a 2-hour no-show window
 - Provide education and information about no-show policy
 - Develop a clear list of what is a no-show to clarify the appeal process
3. Implement booking and trip delivery windows
 - Provide a 20-minute time window
 - Provide a 5-minute pick-up window

Early Action Items (2/2)

Time Frame — Within one year

4. Implement fare parity – offer the same fares and fare products as conventional services
5. Develop an Accessible Transit Tactical Implementation Plan – to develop an action plan to implement Accessibility for Manitobans Act regulations, and recommendations from this study

Mid-Term Action Items

Time Frame — 1 to 2 years from now

1. Revise eligibility categories to be consistent with legislation and best practices
2. Update eligibility criteria to be consistent with best practices
3. Expand service boundary to the city boundaries of Winnipeg—not only within 500 metres of a bus stop

Long-Term Action Items

Time Frame — 3 to 5 years from now

1. Recertify all existing customers as per the new categories and criteria—this would happen over a 3-year period
2. Adopt a Family of Services delivery model
3. Expand Travel Training program
4. Investigate feasibility of providing only return trips from dialysis appointments
5. Transition to a model whereby Transit Plus is a mobility coordinator that matches all transportation options with customers (such as volunteer programs, hospital transport, etc.)

Questions and discussion