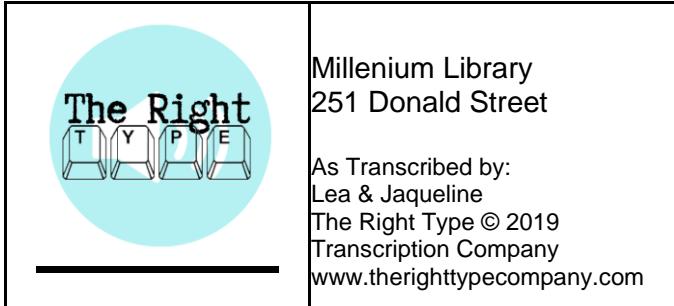


Winnipeg Transit Plus: Winnipeg Transit

Master Plan Customer Discussion

Carol Shields Auditorium, January 14 @ 1:00pm



Speakers:

Kevin Sturgeon, Program Manager
Sasha Pejcic, StanTec Representative
David Verbich, StanTec Representative
Various Audience Members

[Start]

David Verbich: Hi everybody, we're going to start in a couple of minutes if you wanted to grab a coffee or a snack. Then we'll get started. We'll have transcription and ASL on this side so if anybody needs to move to get closer to those services, please feel free to do that right now.

>>>Is there anyway you can enlarge your images?

David Verbich: Sure, that's what we're trying to do now. [Image adjusted] Is that okay?

>>>What about the text on the other side?

David Verbich: Yes, we'll figure that out too. If not, there is also lots of room here at the front on this side. If anyone would like a hardcopy, we also have some available.

[Break]

Kevin Sturgeon: Alright let's get started here. Thanks everyone for coming, my name is Kevin, and I'm the project manager with the Winnipeg Transit master plan, this is phase 2, as you know these sessions focus on Winnipeg Transit Plus and this project started about a year ago, we hired StanTec to help us with the project. The Winnipeg Transit Plus master plan covers all the services in

transit and Transit Plus. In April and May, we had phase one engagement. Did anyone participate in this last spring? Just a few. We had a few 1000 comments. Since that time, along with some data, we've been working on changes to the conventional system as well as Winnipeg Transit Plus. In Fall, November, we had the first part of phase II engagement where we released plans for a conventional network. And we recommend overtime we change the transit to something new.

In that proposed network, we have what we're calling the primary transit network, so that is a network of routes that are high frequency and all hours of transit and cover all the major roads of the city. So that primary service will be all the mainlines and that will be something to keep in mind throughout the presentation for later on. This session today will mark the end of phase 2 for public engagement for this project; there are three phases, so in March we will be back with information with final recommendations for the project with Transit Plus, as well as conventional and rapid transit. Today Sasha is here from StanTec. He will go through some of the ideas that we have to consider with the significant changes to Transit Plus. We'll start with a 45 min presentation, please hold your questions to the end to make sure that we get through all the materials and then at the end we'll have time for comments, questions, and discussion and we'll be out of here at the latest by 3:30pm. If you have rides scheduled for earlier, feel free to exit when you need to, which is why we need to get through the presentation so we have time for questions after. Thank you for coming and I'll turn the mic over to Sasha!

Sasha Pejcic: Thank you for coming out today! My name is Sasha Pejcic and I'm a consultant with StanTec. I've had the pleasure of working with big and small communities working with their systems and I've been all over North America assessing all types and sizes of cities. We review small programs in towns, all the way up to our big clients in larger cities like Toronto TTC. We also look at rural programs and different programs in different stages of maturities, but it's a great pleasure to be here and to have this opportunity to review the Transit Plus program, and the way it's set up and how it operates. It's time to catch up the city's agency to do something different, and to make sure that we are operating at best practice.

Sasha Pejcic: I spent two days riding at the beginning of December on Winnipeg Transit for two days. I was a mystery rider and I posed as someone with a disability, but one that wasn't visible - so that there wouldn't be an influence of other people trying to help out or anything. I wanted to see the experience of someone that didn't have a visible disability, so that I could get a

fuller picture of what some individuals have to go endure just to transport themselves around their city. I have respect for everyone and what you go through everyday, so I wanted to make sure I got the full experience of what that is like for some folks. What we're going to do today, is go through a dialogue of everything that our company has assessed in terms of your transit and transportation systems in the city, but we want to understand from you the public, at the end of the day, is what is working, what is not working, and how we can make the system better for you. We'll also talk about the Accessibility For Manitobans Act - it's legislation that will set certain ground rules about how services are given that even Winnipeg Transit must follow. Then we'll talk about how we can level the playing field for everyone and provide a service that is equitable and sustainable for the future. We have to make sure that we can accommodate everyone in this new system. We're here today to talk about not just the stuff in phase 1, but to present some of the findings that we have through our judgment and other programs in order to test some initial recommendations - and we'd like you to tell us if we're on the right track. It's also to provide some feedback about what others have done in other industries and what's helped in the redefining of their programs. We'll also talk about the program itself and respond to select topics - mainly as a result of the ombudsman's report last fall, in which we were asked to address certain important issues. So let's get going!

Sasha Pejcic: So the goal for this project is to define a modern Winnipeg Transit system that is accessible to all people in the city - and when I say "all" I mean *all* Manitobans. Be it a mobility challenge or a disability, we have different options for different abilities in order to accommodate everyone. On the conventional side, I've mentioned that we've done an entire review that my colleagues have worked on diligently. We're presently doing bus stop audits around the city to see which stops are accessible and which aren't, and we're going to over 1200 stops that come from the recommendations and the rooting review where there are high frequency transit work and, if done properly, will get people to move from the Winnipeg Transit Plus Service to the conventional service.

We're coming at a time where the policies that were set before came from an entirely different time. The busses before, if you remember, were high-floor and you had to go up three steps to even get on and people who were in wheelchairs couldn't get on. Things have changed since then, and now on busses, they are low-floor, people can get on and off via mechanical ramp, but even though times are changing in terms of the accessibility of the conventional service, the way that we run it hasn't. On the plus side, we provide door-to-door

transport for those that cannot do conventional service entirely, and we are looking for the opportunity to shape the program to bring those two together and do a better job of bringing that service to people who need it.

Sasha Pejcic: So about Winnipeg Transit Plus itself, it's for individuals that have disability and mobility challenges, and we know that most people wouldn't leave their house without this service. Even though I know there are issues with securing rides, we know that they provided 400,000 trips last year - so the fact that there are that many trips, it's extraordinary. To book trips, as you know, this is done ahead of time and there are certain eligibility requirements that must be met. The purpose of our review is 5-fold; the first is to see how Transit Plus fares in comparison to best practices in North America. This is common in most cities; we share lessons between each case and see where we can improve in a way that we know works. The second is to respond to the ombudsman's report and the topics areas it requests, here being: the eligibility criteria, trip prioritization, and no-show policies. We need to align with the upcoming Accessibility for Manitobans Act, that's not discretionary, that's a must - so to prepare the program for the future we need to have those rules and modernize the program by making it equitable and sustainable for those that need it. There's some people that, no matter what, will need a door-to-door trip for every trip, and that's not going away, so they're going to get that trip, but we need to broaden the service for all people with different kinds of challenges. And then finally, bringing the two services together and making those connections seamless and helping people navigate throughout the city as needed.

Sasha Pejcic: So let's set the context for our discussion today. Whenever we have an aging population, we also have an increase in disability and mobility changes. Ridership and demand grows exponentially; we get more requests for rides, but there are only so many rides and much money out there, and agencies try to do the best with the resources they have. We need to comply with the Accessibility for Manitobans Act's legislation. Its real intent is to remove barriers that exist for everyone - so that means if you want to go and live your life and go out, you should be able to do that without any issues, just like everyone else.

Sasha Pejcic: The view of what a disability is has changed - this used to be something of a challenge, but now it's seen as an empowerment, which I think is a great thing, and that's where the industry is going - to level the playing field and access services in the same way. Let's talk about the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, or the "AMA", the act itself is - I'll go through some data - it was passed in 2013, we planned to remove barriers, in Ontario we have something

called the Accessibility for Ontario Act, which I'll call the AOFA, and that act starts progressively planning legislation, but doesn't speak to just transportation. There was a transportation standard paper that was released in October 2019 that gives us an idea of minimal requirements, and the expectations on the agency to do things like, on the fleet side: the vehicles need to be accessible, there needs to be a priority seating area, that seating area must be identifiable, set aside for those with accessibility needs, and if anyone's occupying that space that doesn't have those conditions, they must be willing to leave and free up the area. The securement bars for mobility devices also need to be highly visible and easy to operate. There are also requirements for pre-boarding: there must be audible stop messages throughout the route, auditory announcements outside the vehicle before you get on, and once you're on, announcements for the next stop as well. Fares - right now we have some challenges and disconnect between the conventional and specialty services, there are things that are available on each side that the other does not have, and that needs to change. Lighting, signage, and significant training for staff and for anyone that provides services - I mean, we've heard numerous stories over the past few days about operator conduct and misconduct, and the need for change in training. Also the need for accessible alternative types of info: we need to be able to provide large scale maps, large print text, audio tools available, and having accessible information available for all disabilities.

Sasha Pejcic: Where the AMA specifically impacts this service and program is the three categories of eligibility. When you register for the program you are matched with one of those categories that determines how you access services from Winnipeg Transit. The first category is *unconditional*, this means that for every trip you need it is door-to-door. The second category is *conditional*, wherein the individual has a certain condition or disability during certain situations, and that when it presents itself they're unable to use conventional transit. The third and last category is *temporary*, such people with surgery, who've had a knee replacement, or have a broken limb, who are unable to use the transit system, but just for a short specified time. They would perhaps require door-to-door services while they are healing, and then once better, would go back to conventional services. Legislation also speaks to booking, like same-day booking. If you require a trip on the same day you call for a request, Winnipeg Transit must accommodate. And with trip prioritization, we've heard quite a bit of extensive dialogue on this, but the new legislation eliminates that requirement, so something which will have to go away automatically. And Winnipeg Transit Plus fully represents all its customers, and from a perspective of protecting the customers, making sure you're spoken for in the process

Sasha Pejcic: So let's talk about modernizing Winnipeg Transit Plus. Our goal is to make a modern, equitable service for all. As many of you recognize, we made it from Handi transit, to Winnipeg Transit Plus. And this program is a different one than the one from past years. So, going in a different direction. There is much to be done, as society is changing, norms are shifted, so we have to respect everyone out in the community who require the services, making it equitable. All disabilities, etc. What we're doing here is setting up to go beyond bare minimum. It's the starting point, and we can do a lot better. So looking at different things, like no-show policy. What goes on there? There's complaints from the Ombudsman report, like people being charged financially for no-shows, and we were asked about the Family of Services [FOS] system, a system which we've worked with other agencies, combining fixed transit and conventional transit all into one. So say you're going from one spot to another, you'd be requested to do a fixed route, and you may do a different trip the next day, where you'd do door to door. So depending on your eligibility, where you're going, and looking at the start and end point of that trip.

Sasha Pejcic: The service overall is costly, and every trip Transit Plus delivers costs \$26 - So it's costly and not that we're trying to minimize costs but there's a need to maximize the pot of money. So looking at different transit options to lower the costs and to expand the program for it to be eligible to more people in the city. So, right now eligibility was set in April 2006, and later modified in 2010 to include people with Alzheimer's and individuals with dementia. So, right now, if an individual requires use of a wheelchair or scooter, they're eligible. If they're unable to walk 175 feet or down a city block, they are eligible, and if they have 20/200 vision, they are eligible.

Sasha Pejcic: We have 3 categories now, similar to where AMA is going, some are different. When people submit an application, they have to go via Winnipeg Transit Plus office, to see your mobility. Now, customers are accepted to 3 categories: [first] *unconditional* - which is the same as the category prior, meaning you're unable to use Winnipeg Transit Plus for all trips and the individual requires exclusively door-to-door transportation. [Second] *seasonal*, meaning that the need for door-to-door transportation might be only applicable during winter months, or certain times of the year, and conventional transportation use can be used the remaining months. And [third] *temporary* - for temporary or medical issues. Most customers are unconditional; so all trips delivered are door to door via Transit Plus. So something that's - it's - so when we look at eligibility practices, comparing and contrasting with others, they no longer are in line with the policies. Transit Plus was much in line with industry, however it needs to be moved to other ways of business. Firstly, it was

designed when infrastructure was accessible - that has since changed. My criticism now, is that it's a blanket approach - not looking at the individual person and their individual level of ability. From my perspective, and anyone can correct me if I'm wrong, but if you require a wheelchair, that grants you unlimited accessibility to specialized services. Some might agree with me, but others find that discriminatory. There might be instances where I'm able to get to a bus stop if it's clear of snow, shoveled properly, and has a bench for me to sit and rest on while I'm waiting. So how these services are provided - again, at the individual level required different accommodations depending on each case. And with vision impairments - it doesn't respect that individual person's ability - some individuals are independent and can get through transporting themselves around the city just fine. So rethinking the fact that it's a blanket generalization where if you have *this*, then you're in whatever category, but I could technically use conventional transit if the conditions were different.

Sasha Pejcic: There's no plan on how to bring things forward and keep it going. The fact we have the AMA is setting the minimum, but it's also allowing us to align with where the industry is going and also responding to the feedback to integrate it into the service delivery model. So we want to facilitate that and make it happen, and work with other transportation/ services in Winnipeg. We don't want to duplicate other services, but integrate other services for this program. It means letting Winnipeg Transit Plus be the mobility coordinator. So, that means that you could have situations like "today you will ride with *this* partner, and tomorrow, when the weather is better, you'll ride with this *other* service". So, changing the way we coordinate trips, and enabling these varying lifestyles - that was the approach we carried out.

Now with the trip prioritization policy, we've had some interesting discussion. Again this was at a time some sort of ranking was needed because there was too much demand for the service. But it's not fair for someone to say, "I need to go to a medical appointment" and another person says, "well I need to go buy food, why does that trump your medical appointment?" It sets us up for failure and goes against the city's own framework. It's also you know, outdated anyways, so it's something that has to go away, if we get the eligibility process right, we don't need these justifications anyways. There's a potential that over the years, the investments that have been made, if we get this process right, the trip prioritization isn't needed anymore. Winnipeg is unique, this doesn't happen anywhere else in Canada. It was common once upon a time, but most agencies have moved away from that.

With the no-show policy, this was an area of concern. These are common across the industry and are required because it controls the potential misuse of the program, typically they are habitual people and not cancelling their rides on time and tie up services that could be taking away a trip from someone else who really needs it. That's very important to have. Most of you know, if you cancel within 30 mins of a scheduled pickup, that's considered a late cancellation. If you're not ready when the vehicle arrives or if you have too many parcels to be in the vehicle is a no-show. With the 30 mins, there just isn't enough time to redeploy that ride to someone else, but it still costs the city of Winnipeg \$26 to set up that ride. So it has a multilevel impact, and the policy that we have today isn't working. Most of you know that our current policy, we get one freebie over 6 months, but then we have financial penalties that increase severities as the occurrence of no-shows increased. Some people said, "that's a lot of money!" But no it's not, because they've collected some money back through fares, however it's just a lot more money that's spent by the city with no trips given.

Sasha Pejcic: So there are policies that I've worked with personally, the York region is north of Toronto, and the way they do it is they have demerit points, every month you have points and if you do something like a late cancellation it costs 1 point. After the accumulation of 12 points, then it's a 2-day suspension and so forth. It's not to punish people that wake up one day and don't feel good, but the people that don't respect the system at all and are frequently cancelling or no-showing for trips. The TTC, in Toronto, has a 4-hour pick up window, so you'd have to cancel the trip within 4 hours or else it would be considered a no-show, thus losing points in your favor. They also have a "Life Happens" policy in their point system, so that every month, every customer gets 8 free points added back into their account. Meaning that those points against them get effectively erased without penalty. Every month you get new points, in order for people to have some freebies along the way. If you use all your points within 6 months, then you have a 7-day suspension from the program as a punishment. No financial penalties involved.

Sasha Pejcic: I don't want to get into details for every one of them, but every system has points given at the start of the month and doing things gets them taken away and it results in having services taken away. No one is a administered financial penalty. I'm only aware of Ontario Trans Health that still does financial penalties. In terms of the summary all systems are point based and they all involve some sort of service suspension and financial penalties are uncommon. So some considerations for Winnipeg Transit Plus, eliminate the financial penalty, increase the number of no-shows over a period of time, the 1-time-over-6-months is too restrictive, that needs to change. In exchange for that,

that we expand the cancellation window to 2 hours, no one does 30 mins, it's too restrictive, with 2 hours we might be able to reroute the vehicle at least. There was also a request to have a no-show appeal process, it's unclear that if you call up an appeal a no-show, what happens, but it's something to look at. In Ontario, there is a process that is laid out about what is considered a no show and what is. If your doctor is running late and can't make the appointment and you are late for your ride, they know that's not your fault.

Sasha Pejcic: When you call Winnipeg Transit, they give you a pick-up time period, and it's treated like a window to expect pick up, but this creates an issue since unrealistic expectations come up there. Maybe someone takes longer to get in and out of the vehicle than others, and it impacts customer satisfaction since people will try to call to check and see where their rides are, and it clogs up the phone lines. This magnifies the problem and it's a knock-on effect, and the way that we give those trips - I didn't share a trip my entire two days, I almost didn't see an entire person for the two days that I was transporting myself around the city. It's just not efficient. Why aren't we doing these single passenger rides? In other programs that we've done this, most trips are shared rides and that fact that we have the prioritization in place is what also prevents us from making effective trips, because if someone calls with a priority 1 category ride, then we can't go down the list and do other trips before that one is done. So, that just further magnifies the issue and tells us we need to reconsider how we do things. So what we suggest is using a booking window in place of a single specified time. Instead of saying, be ready at 11:00am we would say, please be ready "between 10:45am and 11:15am", or maybe "in 20 minutes", or please be ready between "10:50am and 11:10am". So there's some give and take in that time, and what happens is we'd have a pickup window to make sure that the customer would be ready and not surprised when their ride arrives. Let's say your ride arrives at 10:50, which means that vehicle would wait 5 minutes, and if the individual does not board the vehicle it's a no-show. This poses a problem for individuals that, let's say, have to walk down a front lawn to get to the car, or maybe, have to be escorted or helped. We don't have any specific definitions on how to suggest what would be a good booking window, but it sets up better delivery for the customer.

Sasha Pejcic: So I'll talk about Family of Services, or we'll call it FOS. We like to label this service as a "mobility accommodation under your schedule", and it changes the way you interact with transit. It leverages the city's infrastructure and the fleet and provides the conventional modes to deliver the journeys. With TTC in Toronto, we've been working with them for the past 7 years. They deliver 14,000 trips a day, which is about 10x the amount Winnipeg Transit does. The

way it works, is that it's called "trip-by-trip eligibility", by looking at the condition, looking where you're coming from, where you're going to, and matching the trip for you that day, and if it's a FOS trip request, it's something the committee would deliver upon. They get about 2000 same-day requests they try to scramble and fill. From some people, and I spoke with many personally, it's enlightening and changing and appreciative of their personal struggle, but it's also opened up life for many people. In one case, Daniel, a 17-year-old student, was homebound. He wasn't out in the community or interacting with friends since he wasn't able to transport himself around the city since he needs a wheelchair to get from start to end. Working with him and his mom, we taught him how to ride conventional streetcars and how to request for other rides during circumstances like if there was a change in weather. And now we're pleased to inform you - that he's always out! His mom's now upset that he's never home because he's always at the mall or with friends! [Laughs]. So it's a life changing experience and especially with TTC, we want to be your advocates. They've helped us with marketing campaigns on how they, too can use these transits.

Sasha Pejcic: So, in terms of one example of how this would work, we'd pick you up at home, the method of transport would depend on where you're going, but they'd pick you up in an accessible vehicle and take you to a nearby accessible bus stop. You'd travel on that bus to your intended destination, so it's all streamlined and as we move from one service to another, we'd make sure it's integrated together. So say the bus arrives earlier and you happen to miss it, then we'd wait until the next one arrives, which if our recommendation of increased service is included, means that the next bus comes in ten minutes or so rather than an hour. So it's a seamless experience

Sasha Pejcic: We're matching the right service to the customer, and we're not wanting to throw people off the program, but matching them so that people who need door to door, will continue to receive door to door. That part of the service won't go away, and people with severe disabilities - there are people on Wheel trans Toronto, this wouldn't work for them - will be able to access service just as easily as the people that require that door-to-door consistently. Aside from the door-to-door, it sometimes can be transported from your home-door to the bus stop also, if that's all that you require help with. So for Transit Plus vehicles this means making sure their wheelchair area is secure and safe in the vehicle, and making sure there's no movement during the drive. The goal in Toronto, is that they want 50% of all rides to be done by FOS by the year 2025. And it's a lot of work to get there but it's rewarding work - to see the smiles on people's faces and having them say "You've changed my life!" They're champions between the

TTC, and encouraging us to continue on in our work. So it's very rewarding feedback to hear.

Sasha Pejcic: So, for FOS to work, we have to support the program. The main support is travel training and helping people how to ride conventional transit. I've had people say, "I'd love to ride the bus but I'm afraid to!" or "What if the wheelchair accessible area is full what do I do?" In Toronto, we had vehicle exploration days where customers can actually get on board and touch the bus, see different accessible features, practicing getting on and off, all while it's not in service so that there's no rush. So it's interesting how these are implanted in the vehicles, and it's something we advocate.

Also who rides the vehicle? There's been a stigma that it's a service for another type of person. One service that we helped out in Ontario, we commingled with other people inside the vehicle. Say there's someone next door who isn't disabled, but needed a ride - we devised this solution where we didn't have enough people who rode in the conventional route so we used their vehicles - for example the caravan. So we used their caravan, rode in the community, picking up individuals with disabilities as well as customers not disabled where we'd link them to major transit terminals.

Sasha Pejcic: There are challenges to implementing FOS that we need to address. One of the main ones is the conventional busses themselves don't have tie downs. All I've seen is a lap belt and that's not really safe. People in a wheelchair could get jostled or tip over. So the newer buses have tie downs that are the four-point buckle system and can't jostle anyone, but also it doesn't damage the wheelchair. Obviously, we have an issue with bus stops and their accessibility, we're out evaluating 11,000 of the most used stops to see what can be done. That'll be in our final report. So we know exactly which of those primary networks - what we're trying to do it to - we're going to have some high routes, so we have customers that are Transit Plus users can maybe use those high frequency blocks that don't miss their ride.

There are also parts of the city that have no sidewalks. Obviously, snow, and winter weather is a big challenge here in Winnipeg. I hear that you're going to get a lot of snow tonight even! There always seems to be snow here when I stay overnight! [Laughs] And also, more benches, more accessibility benches, and ones that you can lift yourself in. There has to be buy-in, not just for the people that use the service but for the people that are providing the service too. In Toronto we changed something that was designed for a certain period, but they realized how much better it was for the community. Intuitively it's the right thing

to do and making transit accessible for everyone. I mentioned this briefly, trip coordinating is something to look at, like in the York Region system, we are timing the busses so that we know that there is someone in their mobility vehicles and to time it with a bus so that there is minimal wait times.

Sasha Pejcic: So we'll get into recommendations and nothing is set in stone at this point. Priority number 1, early action times - so things that should happen in one year, eliminate trip prioritization, that should be the first time it's not compliant with legislation and is not equitable. We also need to change the no-show policy; the 30 mins is too restrictive and we need something like the TTC's "Life Happens" policy, but we'll ask to adopt the 2-hour no-show policy so that we can send that vehicle for someone else. It's also going to be a person that is providing info and education about how the policy affects them rather than just an automated system, and also advocate that the agency develops a clear list of what is considered a no-show and what is not. We would also advocate for the implementation of booking and trip implementation windows and to provide time windows since exact ones are not likely to happen. We think that 20-min windows are good enough with 10 mins before and 10 mins after a specified time and then with a 5-minute pick up window once the driver arrives. Over the year we'll also implement fair parity, so that the fares between conventional and Transit Plus need to be the same. Also we need a tactical implementation plan to develop this a step further and figure out how to change these things progressively over time without an interruption in daily operations. There is a lot of planning that is needed.

Sasha Pejcic: So for mid-term action plans, this is a list of goals that we have set for 1 to 2 years from now, [they are]: revisiting eligibility categories - but since the AMA requires this anyways it's not really a voluntary choice, updating eligibility criteria to be consistent with best practice - so aligning with what your peers are doing across the country, and expanding service boundary to the city limits rather than 500 meters from a bus stop - which is what it is now. This is going to require change from the city perspective.

Long-term action items, once all the other things are in place, we need to recertify existing customers into the program, so you would be re-evaluated and placed into the new categories of the program. That would happen over a 3-year period, and once that happens we would suggest a FOS delivery model be adopted. We really think that is the future here in Winnipeg, it's not for everybody, but we think that there are a lot that would benefit from something like this. We would also like to expand the trip model and the potential of that program. We would also suggest looking at dialysis trips and how they are

provided across the industry. Often I've heard from individuals that they feel okay going *to* dialysis, but the issue is going *home* and that they don't feel good afterwards. So then maybe that's where the return trip option can be provided by Transit Plus. It's a real strain and takes away the ability to provide trips, so we need to look at partners that we can work with. I also mentioned the ability to be a mobility coordinator where Winnipeg Transit could look at volunteer programs and senior centers that have a van, like live-in senior centers that could be partners in the program. We think that would work really well because we could have someone that needs a trip right now in real time and instead of trying to formulate a same-day trip within the system, we could have a list of communities people that have access to a vehicle that could provide that last-minute trip instantly. It seems complex, but it works well in communities that have mastered it. So that is the end of the formal program, I'll open the floor to comments and questions, and to see if we are on the right path in the program?

>>>I was here earlier in the morning, but I am coming from the perspective of a healthcare provider in dialysis, so speaking from a personal bias for my patients. Earlier there was a comment about prioritization for them, and it was hard to accept, since we are not prioritizing medical trips. So as a provider, I care about these patients and why is this being taken away? Dialysis is a life sustaining therapy and how can we meet in the center that prioritization should be taken off to empower everyone and have equality, but at the end, going home, it's when patients have symptoms, it's when they feel the worse, and in rare cases, they might be fluid overloaded and have to be transported to another hospital for more intense treatments.

Sasha Pejcic: I appreciate the concern. Myself, I'm a champion of mobility and getting people to places where they need to be. I understand the concern, and in programs, it works fluidly. As mentioned, the prioritization policy is an artificial rule, hindering from optimizing trips. Now, the program works where people who have priority 1, get matched first, but people in 2 and 3 could be accommodated. However, because of this priority system it's handcuffing us to pretty much *only* being able to serve those in priority 1. So once you take that policy away, it will let the program do what it does, move and group people in a way that in the future, people that require trips to dialysis won't have to worry about finding transportation because there are many more options for them to get there and home.

>>> I guess you're saying that being realistic, even if it's just a trip, as a safety net, is there going to be a safety net established for medical needs? What about students? But for medical means?

I understand and at the same time looking at legislation with AMA, we have to be equitable for everyone. I understand if something goes wrong and you don't feel well, you need medical services, but anyone else that maybe want to go out and is not experiencing a medical emergency want to enjoy their life too, and shouldn't be hindered in transportation either. Furthermore, I read an article that talked about individuals that were using the system and booking rides saying that they were for doctor's appointments, so they would secure a ride, but then going to their doctor's office in Wal-Mart, so that they could go shopping after. So they were in a sense, lying to get their rides secured by using the prioritization.

>>>I'm going to but in here, but I'm sorry, you're talking too much. You're not saying much, and you're just talking. To answer your question, I've found improvement in what they're doing right now. Once they used to say that you couldn't go to support services since it was therapy, but people need to go to that in order to get better. If you don't go then you end up sicker and what's the point then?

I'm trying to answer his question, so I don't understand -

>>> So I see what you are attempting to do, but from the perspective of a customer, I see that they are trying to improve in that area, because they do not ask - they do give you support services now, but that's just reason, there are a lot of changes that have taken place, so I'm taking those off - but at the same time they haven't gotten it 100% correct yet. They are progressing, but we are in the position of getting impatient. Some of us here have been fighting with Winnipeg Transit for more than 7 years.

Okay. I'm here to help. I understand the frustration and have reviewed the system myself. I'm just trying - we're all on the same page. I think everyone can agree we need to improve, which is why we're here today. Yes, sir?

>>>Hi, I'm a recent dialysis patient this year and I've noticed that this scheduling of the trips, with the pickups and drop offs and so on, I've had transporters dead-headed from Transcona, go to my place in the west, and then zigzag down to Fort Garry to pick them up, then come up and

pick someone else up. I'm usually in the car for an hour before I have to get to dialysis and if I'm lucky, I'll get there on time, and if I'm not, then I have to wait for them to open up another dialysis bed and then that delays my pick up. My problem is, I drove a taxi and worked dispatch for 33 years in the city. I can keep in my mind - I'm not a computer, but I can keep in mind 50 cars and match them in terms of their destination. So if I can do that as a human being, why can't they do that now, 33 years later, with a computer? The algorithms they are using, suck and are not based on a real-time system and they have specific targets and on the other end of the coin, 5 mins for us to meet our ride there is a little ridiculous, give us 10 minutes. Sometimes after dialysis, I have to sit and be on oxygen for a bit because my heart rate is high, and I might be a little late getting to my departure point so I have to book it *late* so that I can make it on time and it means that my whole day is shot. Getting picked up and taken to dialysis and then getting back to get home, I get home by 8pm sometimes and I'll be lucky because often times my driver will pick me up, and often at the designated times, but from the hospital they'll go to North Kildonan, then North End, then St. Boniface, but if I get home by 8pm, I'm lucky. I don't know how they manage to plan it like that, but other times I'm a sole person in a 30-foot bus - it just doesn't make sense! At some point the computer model they're using is wrong and they need to look at what the taxi models are using, it seems to be more effective.

Sasha Pejcic: Yes, I know this, and we're all aware. There are, as mentioned, artificial rules hindering the software, which is essentially what the trip prioritization policy was. And why *do* you have 30 foot busses and you're the only one on them? So, what's probably happening, is that you have software that you are putting restrictions on, and that software is trying to optimize what's going on

>>>But they don't take into consideration road conditions or traffic times. They don't take into account traffic and they give the drivers impossible times to do. I also feel bad for the drivers, because they also don't follow labour rules, they don't get morning breaks or lunch breaks or bathroom breaks. If you are working with the transit system you have to work with all of it. I've just learned how to get to a mall, but I can't do all of the things that you said because of things like street conditions.

Sasha Pejcic: Okay. thanks, and I'll respond, we've heard of all these magnificent things. At the end of the day, it's their employer forced to work - I'll

ask other people if they have questions, we need to be fair to other people. Yes, next question?

>>>Hi, so I work with a lot of newcomers and refugee families with disabilities and a lot of them live in the downtown area, so that would be the centennial region and main street, but not all families that live in that area are on the social assistance or welfare system, or the federal system, they are people that work and live on low incomes so if you say that a trip costs \$26 and they have to use Handi-transit regularly, that taps into their monthly budget. Has Winnipeg Transit looked into a prorated amount for low-income families?

Sasha Pejcic: Sorry, I think maybe you misunderstood - cost to provide a trip by Winnipeg Transit is \$26, but amount collected from the customer is \$2.95 or \$3.00. So the remaining \$23 comes from the taxpayer of the city to make up the costs. So when we're not delivering a trip, we send an empty vehicle and no one was picked up, but the system still has to come up with \$26 to pay for the services that went into making that trip. Next question?

>>>I have a real problem with prioritizing. If I phone in and say I am going to church, the first thing I get asked is, "For worship?" as if the other things going on in church are of lesser priority than worship, for me church involves the wholeness of a person, therefore, why ask "For worship?" I think that should not be a priority, but that church itself should be a priority.

Sasha Pejcic: Fair point. As it stands, with AMA, there will be no priority. If you need a ride, you'll get a ride, regardless of purpose. I think- back here, yes sir?

>>>I'm curious, with the 2-hr cancellation window, how often is a trip dispatched in other regions? I've used Handi-transit and I've never gotten a phone call saying "oh there's a trip cancellation do you want it?"

Sasha Pejcic: Yeah. I can't give you a specific percentage, but it's high! And sometimes we group another trip and pick up customers that need a last-minute trip. With TTC, they have a waitlist of 2000 people and can chop down that waitlist. It does happen. Now is it perfect? No, but it does eliminate a lot and helps deliver more services. I have seen it work.

>>>And is the rebooking user initiated or system initiated? Does a user call someone or does the system contact a customer to let them know that there is a trip available?

Sasha Pejcic: That would be dispatched via the agency. And Winnipeg Transit Plus is looking for availability to book trips online. So it would be real-time and you can see on your application that the trip has been granted. So we can do it dynamically as well via the software. Hope that answers your questions. Next question?

>>>I just wanted to say that I don't like the no-show policy because if you, okay... I've been in situations where I can't get to the bus fast enough and have missed my bus or ride, and I get really upset and really nervous trying to explain to the dispatcher why I missed my trip or ride. I don't know how I feel about that, because I have a lot of anxiety issues and I don't think it's fair that we get charged for a no-show, I don't think that's fair.

That's fair. I agree with you in terms of financial penalty. People can't afford it and it doesn't change their behavior. Things happen we understand. These are normal life circumstances. So with the new policy, we hope it allows some flexibility. We'll give you 4-5 chances, give you some freebees. Afterwards, you know -

>>>Also, both my husband and I are on EIA and we can't afford the no-shows. We can't afford it.

I agree. Which is why we're suggesting that we don't have the financial penalty system. We're recommending that it be taken away. We're on the same page. Thank you. Did you want to ask a question? Next question?

>>>Since, well I work with an organization that deals with older adults and I know that a lot of organizations enforce technology, and in this plan to roll out this tech, will you be working with a community to do that education? It's typically the access or use of technology, will there still be a focus on the non-tech piece? So the customer service piece? Because I think not everyone is trained to access that.

Sasha Pejcic: Of course. The whole limitation of the apps is outside this project. But when we're ready to deploy the application, Winnipeg Transit will help support that. And we recognize people who may not always use a cell

phone, so we have to make accommodations for that also. We did a similar on-demand pilot program in California, in Lancaster. There will be an application and as well for people who can still book a ride via phone. Next question?

>>>Hi, my name is Mary, I'm legally blind, and in your presentation you were saying when we use the service for a few days, I don't think it's enough. I've been using the service for three years and I have a guide dog and sometimes I've encountered drivers that are afraid of or allergic to my dog, or sometimes they don't like the dog close to them or they don't want to come close to me and put on my seat belt because of my dog. So the drivers in Winnipeg need more in-services about my dog, because they are trained, and the dogs are well behaved and some drivers to me, get in the wrong place about them. So I suggest that you have in-services every year about how to deal with individuals using service dogs.

Sasha Pejcic: Thank you. We heard a lot of comments about the need for driver training and it's something required to service the blind or visually impaired, and thankfully the AMA has that requirement as well. Thank you for your comment. Next question?

>>>Yeah, with the Family of Services, will it partially or fully alleviate the fact that you won't be able to get your schedule subscription? What's the benefit of it?

Sasha Pejcic: No. So, what we've done - so, typically what we do, you can still call the transit bus and say I travel every Tuesday, 8 am, for however long. They can be booked, no problem. I understand the system isn't super guaranteed if you have a subscription trip?

>>> No it's not, but what you're telling me is that with FOS, I will? What's the benefit? Will I be able to get all my trips?

Sasha Pejcic: I can't say definitively yes or no, but there is much more homework to be done after today. In TTC and other agencies, they guarantee a trip, and we suggest that Winnipeg Transit do the same. Real transit is actually delivering a lot of trips, but they're running short, so it just moves the vehicles a lot faster and responds to more people. It's also, there are some circumstances with the rapid way in the city, and there's no traffic there, so we want more of those throughout the city. So if you're trying to link up to that with the city, you might get a better distance than if you use Transit Plus or something else. And then it alleviates the need for you to plan around Transit Plus' schedule and you

can live your life the way that you want to. It's the empowerment for you to do what you want to do when you want to do it. Next question?

>>> Another question is about payment. What, do you have to pay double? How will it work? Because the way it is now, with Winnipeg Transit Plus, is the payment system is not married up to regular transit. Like, Peggo system. So, is that going to change?

Sasha Pejcic: Of course, it would be one fair. You wouldn't pay twice, that doesn't make sense. But we talked about the Peggo system and that the two don't talk to each other. So we would need that to plan it better. I would agree with you. The other programs would - because it's accounting based, what some would do if you buy a physical card, it would link up and draw from your account if you have a trip, but then also draw normal fares if you use the conventional trips. There might be some work needed to bring the two together. It would not be expected for you to pay twice. Next question?

>>> With FOS you mentioned, also. You mentioned working with other organizations like hospitals, vans, assisted living, volunteer services - how do you suspect to work with other organizations when they have their own policies?

Sasha Pejcic: Yeah I mean, it's if the vehicle is available. So it might be a van in a senior's home that's sitting there all day and no one is using it, so it might be them saying "we can provide trips during [these] times" and matching it. So it's about linking it up with people that need a ride.

>>> Because I work for an organization which has a volunteer program. And a lot of people come to us first because we don't have many volunteers, it is limited. So if they can't provide the ride, Transit Plus is there. And if they can't work either, it doesn't make sense.

Sasha Pejcic: Yeah, I mean, it's an equal system that works great in communities that are plugged into it, but I see what you mean.

>>> So you'd have to sign up as a partner, but you don't have to.

Sasha Pejcic: Right you don't have to, unless you don't want to. Unless you want Winnipeg Transit to schedule all your trips, then that's an option too. Next question?

>>> We touched on driver training. And that's an important thing to upgrade. Because we have contractors providing service, we need a

standard of labour for drivers because they have no scheduled breaks, and are expected to drive in shifts that are 12 hours long. And they just shove their whole schedule back in 2 hours and they're going back again driving through red lights - I've seen it happen, and they work holidays, and many of them are supporting families. So I'd like to see labour standards for subcontractors providing assistance to Handi Transit Plus. But how many people are going to die because of the fatigue of the drivers, before they realize it's a problem? I don't want to see it become a problem. All these people are new to the country, trying their best to make a living. And I've been hearing complaints where they're forced to buy a model of car, like a VW Golf. I don't know if it's just someone that has a connection with Volkswagen, but those things are so hard to get into! It has a deep wheel well that is really hard to get in and out of. Have you seen the backseat of those things?!

Sasha Pejcic: We've heard about the VW and the Prius' so we understand the challenges, and one of the recommendations that we gave to Winnipeg Transit is to get an opinion on the types of vehicles they buy. One thing is that, the city is not the employer, so they can't employ-

>>> But, they are the contractors. They have to keep in line with labour laws. Stat holiday isn't going to break anyone's backs. And when I do see drivers working, they're half asleep at the wheel.

Sasha Pejcic: Sure! I appreciate that and I'm sure that it's something that the city should have in their contract but their employer should be following-

>>> Inasmuch as - they're driving around handicap people and what training do they get? What happens if I pass out, what can they do? Are they trained?

Sasha Pejcic: Well they would probably call an ambulance - I mean, I can't answer that, but I'm assuming they would call 911 or - maybe a driver can answer to that one?

>>> Maybe the driver can answer the question. And when you take the city bus, I can't, while in my wheelchair, reach the pole because it's too high for me. And people who are short can't either because I've sat there long enough to see that happen. So if that's something, which the city can correct.

Sasha Pejcic: Thank you for that comment. Next question?

>>>The Family of Services and the - when people start getting, where is it, recertified for the new categories, will I have the choice of what I get to take that day, or am I forced to take the bus?

Sasha Pejcic: So, I mean, depends on how the agency decides to deploy the service-

>>> Because there are people who use the service who can't -

Sasha Pejcic: I understand that it's all about how the agency would like to proceed, with TTC it's mandatory, with YRT they tell you how you're taking the trip that day. It's dependent on that individual's ability, and if we get it right, there should be no problems. If we get that the individual can do *this*, but not do *that*, then they should get matched properly and that's where I've seen it work. Next question?

>>> That was my question but also: who is doing the assessment? Because I've heard people don't qualify or people are not being assessed properly. So I have concerns about who is doing the assessment. And tie downs, who is doing them? Are they trained?

Sasha Pejcic: Yes, in most transit agencies, usually the functional assessors in the agencies will do the assessment, or it's contracted to a third party, like occupational therapists or specialists, but we also need to consider as we look at the eligibility criteria, the cognitive disabilities, they also need an assessment tool to understand what the individual's ability model is. So there are tools that we would advocate for, and that really deals with assessors understand what a level of ability is, but typically that is done in house and I would recommend that it stays in-house. Some agencies have a doctor's notes and others do not? I like the dual system where you can have either an assessment or a doctor's input. It's not meant to be punitive or keep people out of the program but just matching people in the program with the service. Typically it would be a transit operator that is fully trained in doing that, Winnipeg does some wheelchair securement training, and the automated ARMs that pinch the wheels of a person's wheelchair that does that automatically. If it's a manual tie-down then it's the operator's job description. Okay, yes? Another question? Yes, sir?

>>> Okay. So, I myself am in a situation where I have to sort of lie to Winnipeg Transit Plus to get a ride. I have a walker, but it depends, if I bring it, it depends on what I'm doing. When the whole new

system came in place, someone decided to put me only as a walk - so when I talk to them on the phone, I have to bring my walker, because I've been told on the phone to either bring the walker or not take the ride at all. Would that be a discrimination? Because sometimes, I have to go to work and sometimes I can't bring the walker if I have another appointment -

Sasha Pejcic: Yeah, I mean unfortunately the way it works is that if you require a mobility device, then you fall into that category, it's going to come down to maybe that day if you do or do not need a walker, but it's looking at that circumstance and what you need to do to take that trip. Yes, next question?

>>> I want to say this as an example. This past Sunday I went to the Art Gallery and my trip was supposed to pick me up at 5:36pm, and I'm registered with oxygen, which lasts only 5 hours. The guy was late, by 6:16pm he had on this thing to pick me up, security guards were there to check if he was there and I was out of oxygen by the time he got there. So they should be scheduling trips for people who need oxygen - and you'll get more of us. The idea of getting picked up before we run out.

Sasha Pejcic: Yeah we heard from someone yesterday who had the same situation.

>>> Yeah, you had on the PowerPoint there, that people with disabilities is like a drain on society that costs \$26 per trip and that we are only getting \$3 back. I'm just wondering what is the cost on the regular citizen transit per person?

Sasha Pejcic: Sure. the intent is not to say what, not sure the cost of the conventional system?

>>> Fare is $\frac{1}{2}$ service costs on Winnipeg Transit.

>>> On a regular transit route?

Sasha Pejcic: Approximately \$6 dollars per person. My colleague helped me answer it. So, we look at, we're covering the cost, and Transit Plus, covering about \$7. And education, people don't understand the true cost of the system, it's hefty and we want to make sure it's there for people making it sustainable.

>>>Where are the busses coming from and why aren't we using Manitoba-made busses, and I don't think they come from this province because whenever they go over the roads with the bumps, the suspension is terrible and I can feel it, even in a wheelchair.

Sasha Pejcic: I understand. We had several comments regarding fleets, the composition of what vehicles we're making and the suppliers

>>>You've got good questions to answer now though!

Sasha Pejcic: Sure. A lot of them are vehicles bought and made in the United States, in Iowa - sorry Indiana.

>>>They don't have potholes like us!

Sasha Pejcic: Yes! Very nice potholes. Anyone else with comments? Questions? What do you think of what we're proposing? You think it's the right way of where we need to go?

>>>I think you're going in the right direction and I hope it's implemented soon because I don't want to wait another 3 years before we see anything.

Sasha Pejcic: Fair. and I speak from experience, I've worked with agencies and it takes time. Do it once, but do it right. We don't want to anger people and be on the front page of the newspaper where we botched it up. And it isn't overnight, so we're hoping by year 2025. I ask for patience and understanding that it takes time to get it right.

>>>So just another general question, but is there going to be another like, DART program where people can use the conventional service but just physically get to the stop as easily?

Sasha Pejcic: So I can't speak to that, so I'm going to use my phone-a-friend option! We'll have Kevin from Winnipeg Transit answer that question.

Kevin Sturgeon: So the question regarding the DART or the ride answer, which is conventional transit in some neighborhoods that can come pick you up at your house. So on the conventional side of the master plan, we're going to continue the on-request service areas, similar to DART but modernized in the way it's hailed. So right now you can only get it through phone and we'd like to expand it through to apps. Also we have to have the service areas be quite small since it's a small bus and a lone driver that you call directly and they come to get you. There might be one or two busses in a single area and whichever is

closer will pick you up. Sasha mentioned commingling, so maybe in areas where there are options to pick you up, then some bus customers might find that a convenient option as well. Next question?

>>> You never mentioned the computer system, which went down this past week. I've been waiting for them, so make sure to get a backup for what. I have a joke for that, they asked us to think of a name - Handi Transit Plus, but I'll also have lost weight since the new name came in, so I ask you how did plus come in when we people of bigger size object to that? Know what I'm saying? I just find it funny. It is funny.

Sasha Pejcic: I can't speak to how the rebranding was done, but I appreciate your comments. Next question?

>>> Just a comment, not a question. You've got several messages on the phones and one of them is, if you're in a wheelchair and if you have stairs you have to meet the driver at the bottom of it? It's just insanity.

Sasha Pejcic: Thank you for your comment. Anyone else? Next question?

>>>I'm finding it fascinating in April when they went through the system. I had more missed pick-ups to go to church on Sunday than the next 6 months than I have in the previous 15 years. And I knew - I knew that before it started, that immediately that the new system is going to be screwed up, and it was.

Sasha Pejcic: Yeah. I mean, sometimes there are quirks when you change software. I'm sorry to hear about your experience. It's common, can't say it's not, so I'm sorry that you've experienced that.

>>>And I am still even with the meeting today and I appreciate what you presented and the way it's presented and the screen over there with the words of what's being spoken. I can't hear all that well so it really helps that I can catch up to what's being said. It helps, and you know, and you're going to improve it, but when will I see it?

Sasha Pejcic: Yes, these services are great, and I know that those individuals have to type incredibly fast, so we really appreciate it, because as you said it helps bring service to a variety of individuals that might need it. These are great questions, and I'd love to see the new system tomorrow, but it's going to take some time, unfortunately.

>>> In my 80 years, how long will I have to wait?

Sasha Pejcic: I mean, I can't answer that, sir, all we can go is keep doing the work and moving forward. Next question?

>>> You mentioned the 400,000 trips that they did last year, but you didn't mention the trips that didn't get done because we didn't have enough drivers or fleet cars.

Sasha Pejcic: It's something, which needs to be expected. On accommodated trips, around 1% were not accommodated, which met industry standards. Transit is a dynamic beast, where vehicles break down, operators get sick. Life happens, and it's much of the industry norm, from my perspective.

>>> Okay, that's acceptable.

Sasha Pejcic: Anyone else? Any other questions? Otherwise I'll just mention that we do have an exit survey, it'd be great if you could fill it out and let me know how I did, hopefully I won't get fired! [Laughs] I would really appreciate the feedback, and I really enjoyed the discussion today. Thank you so much for coming by and I hope you all have a great rest of your night. Stay well and stay healthy!

>>> One last thing.

Sasha Pejcic: Sure!

>>> I object to the fact I can only get one bag of groceries on the dang bus, you know? We eat and we need more than one bag of groceries. We can't get all the meals because I'm only limited to one bag of groceries. Can't they find an extra space for us to hang them somewhere? Because at least you can hang them on the handles. Anyway, just a suggestion.

Sasha Pejcic: No, I understand and most agencies have a bag policy, it's common, usually it's two bags, but Transit Plus' policy right now is in line with what everyone else is doing.

>>> We don't want to be in line, we want the same stuff other people - they have an option, but we don't have one. Sorry, my opinion.

Sasha Pejcic: Thank you! Well thank you everyone, if there's nothing else it's been a pleasure. Thank you so much and enjoy the rest of your day! Oh, and I'll

mention that if anyone requires help to fill out the exit survey, there are people at the back to help you. Also, if you provide your email in the survey then you will receive a link to a follow-up questionnaire that talks about the overall feedback heard today.

>>> When will that come out? Will it come through email?

Sasha Pejcic: If you supplied an email address, you'll receive the survey in that email, but it will be available on all accessible formats as well. Thank you!

[End]

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