

Winnipeg Transit Plus: Winnipeg Transit Master Plan Customer Discussion Carol Shields Auditorium, January 14 @ 9:00am



Speakers:

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

[Start]

Kevin Sturgeon: Okay we'll get started! Good morning and welcome to this Winnipeg Transit Master Plan meeting. My name is Kevin Sturgeon and I'm the program manager for Winnipeg Transit. The Winnipeg Transit master plan started about a year ago. An all-encompassing big project, looking at all transit, including Winnipeg Transit Plus. This is the 2nd public engagement. First was in spring. That time we went to Winnipeggers asking what's good on Winnipeg Transit and plus. We had a lot of feedback, 1000's of comments, and we've had data, and we've had a combination of feedback to come up with ideas to come up with changes on it. On the conventional side, we had a public engagement in October. That time, we introduced proposed new transit. So as part of the Winnipeg Transit master plan we propose to redesign conventional design networks. So all routes exist, and there will be new routes. As part of that plan we introduced the concept of a primary transit network. A network of routes on major streets going in straight lines, some will have dedicated lanes, coming frequently. And that's an important concept, which we'll discuss later on.

Kevin Sturgeon: The 3rd and final phase of engagement will be in March. So after we hear what you have to say today in the other sessions yesterday and later this afternoon, we'll take that into consideration and modify some

proposals today if necessary and March, we'll let you know the final recommendations from the project. I'm going to turn the mic over to David. David's from StanTec who has been helping us with this project and we'll talk about some proposals for Winnipeg plus.

David Verbich: Thanks for everyone coming out today; we know the weather's been messy. So a few notes, I'm David from StanTec and we're working with Winnipeg Transit and the major component is Winnipeg plus, formerly known as Winnipeg Handi-transit. And looking at analysis, peer groups, actual performance, and engagement with you folks, in upcoming legislation.

David Verbich: So we work with a variety of transits, including Toronto. Did work in communities in Fredericton, in New Brunswick and I hope to share some lessons we learnt there today. We have lovely attendants at the back if you need help with coffee, or refreshments. And I'll try to keep this moving at a good pace but not touch on too many details, working on specific areas generated - made in Winnipeg recommendations.

David Verbich: So, you know, when making your comments, keep them brief so we can hear from everyone in the room and all your peers. So, the purpose of this meeting is to provide an overview and feedback and gathering more feedback on recommendations, and initial findings and provide some background on Winnipeg Transit Plus, provide concepts on where we're going and provide feedback to align with what your values are, and what Winnipeg Transit can provide

So here's the agenda for the morning. We'll look at the program, booking windows, fares and other topics to get into details and get feedback. Again, there is lots of detail in the slides, and they'll be available on the site for text readers. I don't want to get too much into them; it's to provide dialogue

So Winnipeg Transit provides accessibility for all residents, to be able to use it; regardless of bus, or transit vehicles. Winnipeggers to be able to move around the city. So it's for different folks. So as you're aware, conventional service provides it throughout the city, and route are being rationalized, and trying to do things like family services, looking at how we can make conventional transit, - sorry there's a phone going off -

David Verbich: Something, which perhaps isn't mentioned frequently, busses are loaded with accessible features. The program design was made at a time, where you had a few steps you had to climb up, and it wasn't made for accessibility. That's changed in recent years and it's helped provide recent collaboration. And more to the point, Winnipeg Transit is making the city more accessible - the flashing lights, knowing when to cross, where there are sensors to open doors. So investment in making the city more accessible is really about expanding it on Winnipeg Transit. And Transit Plus or Handi-transit is the door-to-door option for people who are unable to make their journeys. And what we want to get there is - so we want to talk about issues, the impact and we want to look to the future. Understanding your ideas, and explaining our concepts to you so you have a voice in shaping it in the years to come.

David Verbich: So, Winnipeg Transit Plus did about 4000 trips, which is a sizable amount for a community this big. Trips are made ahead of time by calling. And to be eligible, customers must meet eligibility requirements. So, the purpose of our review was 5 fold. To evaluate how Transit Plus is performing with respect to other peers, across Canada and the States. We've been asked with respect to the Ombudsman report, regarding trip criteria, no-shows, looking at how to best align that with the report. And the AMA, legislation intended to improve accessibility across Manitoba. And it's a working draft, so what's in the works, and the Winnipeg Transit staff has had input on that. And making it equitable and sustainable. We mean, it's a limited resource, we don't have all the money in the world and we need to provide service to the folks who need them. So matching supply with demand. And integrating conventional services, which are undergoing redesign. There are still ways to go with bus stop accessibility and integrating that with Transit Plus

David Verbich: So Winnipeg's population is aging, and that's not unique to Winnipeg. As population ages, mobility and independence decreases and increases demand for transportation services like Winnipeg Transit and Transit Plus. And we need to comply with AMA, which is to remove barriers making sure we live in an equitable and just province. So because society is changing and folks who 20-30 years ago were relegated to not travel are encouraged to, all need to enjoy and dignity to enjoy, we need to modernize the program to change the habits of society. So I don't want to get into the

details, but AMA is legislation for the province passed in 2017. Looking to improve aspects of life, including mobility. And there was a paper released in 2013 and the idea is that the province is still accepting feedback working to finalize these. It's to follow a separate standard to provide services, which are accessible and equitable.

David Verbich: Like having accessible vehicles, which all Winnipeg Transit vehicles are. As well as priority seating and having operators trained to serve folks, grab bars. Transit fares need to be the same as other fares. So fare should be the same for Transit Plus as Winnipeg Transit. And outside of busses, there will be announcements like where it's heading. And on board announcements, like, "next stop is Sergeant [Ave]", what have you. And lighting, appropriate for persons with low vision. Accessibility training for persons with disability - so learning how to work with customers by being compassionate, respectable, and providing the help they need for their disability. And large types of maps, so folks with low vision can read a map and do their trip planning.

This AMA also impacts eligibility, and we'll touch on that. The criteria is supposed to consist of three categories: the first is unconditional, which means that you will always have access to Transit Plus, conditional is a new one that we'll touch on for a bit, like perhaps, some folks can use conventional services on certain days, like with good weather, but perhaps the same trip in the winter months where there is ice, that trip would be door-to-door trip using Transit Plus. So that's similar to what exists now with the seasonal, but I'm sure there are other examples we can think about like with pain disabilities. And then there is temporary, which is when some folks are unable to use conventional services, like if they break their leg, and there is a set time where they cannot use those services. So the practice of booking ahead of time, at least 24 hours, the legislation seeks to have same-day booking, or at least before the end of service on the previous day. So increasing flexibility to match lifestyles. This also ends trip restrictions like prioritization, which is a contentious issue we've been hearing a lot about lately.

David Verbich: So some of the driving forces behind modernizing Transit Plus, we mentioned is a rebranding from Handi-Transit, which is good since it is more inclusive. That's a really good venue for folks to voice their opinions, but we need to go further society has changed, so our norms have shifted

and we need to provide services that comply with the AMA transportation standard. We need to see what our peers are doing like with no show policies, and with changing lifestyles and how we are getting along in society nowadays. So one thing might be to look at Family of Services, which you'll hear a lot, but this is like looking at bus stops that are accessible, or with the Winnipeg Transit Plus service, to implement freedom to give you the dignity and quality of life. That's what we're supporting and advocating for. This could help lower some of the cost and demand for Transit Plus, because this is looking at other services whether it's for hospitals or other places in the city, to partner up regardless of who is operating the vehicle and seeing how transit plus is a go-between in these services.

David Verbich: So, I'm not going to get into too much detail, but as many of you are aware, you have to be eligible for Transit Plus to use the system. One is that if you use a wheelchair or a scooter, you are automatically entered, if you are unable to walk 175 meters, if you are blind, or Alzheimer's disease or early dementia. What happens is that the AMA has these three new categories, but they are somewhat similar, there is unconditional, seasonal, and temporary - but you'll see on the screen is a table of how many folks fall into each criteria and you'll see that over 80% are unconditional, but this was taken back when the busses weren't low floor or had auditory announcements and a lot of the infrastructure wasn't made for accessibility. We need to update that. There is also the ability for some folks to say that on certain days, I can use conventional services. For example, some of the ideas that we're having is that these practices no longer align with the industry and this blind approach of all persons with mobility challenges are unconditional isn't accurate because it drives up demand and makes it so that providing trips is difficult. We need to see the ability for people to make the trip and not necessarily just the disability.

David Verbich: So the idea of, some folks that need Transit Plus all the time, and to continue providing for those folks, but also those folks that can use conventional services on certain days or trips depending on their level of accessibility and then doing things like FOS to integrate the conventional and Transit Plus. We also are auditing about 1500 bus stops across the system to see the accessibility from the customer's point of view. Are they shoveled? Is there broken concrete? So that's to look at the accessibility of the environment so that they can use the services or Transit Plus. Hopefully the

changes to the conventional network will enable you to have more freedom and let you do the things you want to do and live the life you choose on your schedule. So, I'd like to open the floor to some discussions, what have been your experiences and what do you think about the proposals?

>>>Do you mean eligibility for transit or regular busses? For regular busses they should have all sidewalks cleared to get to them, and they haven't been, and increasing the amount of buses. I've gotten injured so many times on the bus, people crowd and push, I've been injured, people get mad at you, you're taking up space, bus drivers attitudes towards people with disabilities, they don't want to lower the thing and when you ask for the ramp, they give you attitude.

David Verbich: Can I pivot towards eligibility, we're going to have more discussion about that in a bit, but that idea of a mobility device grants you eligibility unconditionally, and we address the issues, which you have, that'll make sense.

>>>If they were in effect, maybe, but I've been refused rides because I could fit in, I've relied on friends to help me out, but I only want rides to doctor's appointments and things. So I don't abuse it, but the things - because I can understand things like grocery shopping, I rely on family members and things like that.

David Verbich: We'll touch on that too, if the conventional service had more frequent busses, then there would be more room for mobility devices, but the idea is that part of your trip would be a conventional bus and part would be Transit Plus, but some of the ideas are to look at travel training and showing people how to be more comfortable taking the bus.

>>>And with the walking distance, they should look into the doctor's verification. My issue is muscle weakness, so it's not just about the walking bit.

David Verbich: Okay, yes?

>>>There are people with cognitive and developmental disabilities that might be able to walk and talk, but that doesn't mean that they can function on a totally usable transit system. I know a case

where a woman that doesn't go after 3:30pm because the system changes and she got lost, or other people that fell and the driver's don't want to help them, or for those that don't have a worker with them, but some people don't qualify for 24hr funding, like for a worker to be with them.

David Verbich: You bring up a great point that I missed-

>>>And some people can't access a cab either.

David Verbich: And the other point I forgot to mention was to come up with that list of disabilities, but it's basically three categories, but what it entails, that list that we've started appreciating isn't just physical disabilities, but opening it up to many agreed up disabilities, which of course, increases the demand and is one of the reasons why we need to improve the conventional as well, so just to have all the accommodation of all the folks that need the service. It's trying to focus on who really needs it and who can use conventional services for certain trips.

>>>Can you give me an example of how the eligibility is going to work? What would that look like?

David Verbich: So that is part of the review, so when you go for a functional assessment, it will be considered then whether it's an unconditional or seasonal requirement, but it's a bit of a gray area when we talk about good days and bad days, which is why we really look at medical professionals to tell us and help us sort into these different categories.

>>>So will the assessment program change as of now because right now it's just a group of individuals that make the decision?

David Verbich: So that's a work in progress right now. Yes, ma'am?

>>>When you're discussing eligibility and you bring up the cognitive and anxiety and stuff, there is also - when you are using the conventional system, they don't always have the voice on to hear the streets, and that's not something that you can plan ahead of time for the driver to have.

David Verbich: That's an excellent point and that's something that we'll note here, that's something that *has* to be on. That's not - unfortunately it happens where it's in disrepair.

>>>Or if there are people having conversation, then you can't hear them.

David Verbich: Winnipeggers, they like to yell on the phone. And with the stroller policy is something else that we've heard also

>>>And some strollers are way too big for public busses, because you can't change the size of a wheelchair, but some of the newer strollers are way too big for a normal bus. And I've had people tell me that I should get off because they have the right to be on the bus.

David Verbich: Yes, that's unfortunate. I'm going to keep pushing along. But the next thing I'm going to talk about is trip prioritization which is outdated, but it's inequitable and unfair, to give trips based on the purpose, so if you're going to school/work/therapy, that's priority 1, but if you're going to shop, support groups so development courses, that's priority 2, and finally, recreational and social activities are priority 3. We're going to try and get rid of that, it's not functioning well, some folks try to work around this by "massaging" the purpose of their trip. So the idea is to have no trip purpose but to manage this based on conditional eligibility.

So allocating trips based on service, not so much the trip purpose. I'd like to get some feedback from folks who haven't spoken yet

>>>In the past, I've taken some trips and these trips, sometimes get but sometimes don't get. So it depends where I'm going and what time I'm booking. And for some odd reason, I still don't get them. I don't understand

David Verbich: I can't speak to your case, but with this whole modernization is to help folks who can use conventional service, transition to that, and more accommodation can be made for those who need door-to-door transportation

>>> And lack of vehicles isn't the only case...

David Verbich: So it's lack of vehicles, operators and is an expensive service to provide and the city only has so much money to provide for it. Yes ma'am?

>>> Many times I have a problem giving me a seat on the bus. Because I have only the support of a cane, not - summertime, I have the white cane and I fall off the bus. So, people don't just ignore me that I can't see. So many times, all the way to Fort Garry I have to stand on the bus. And people ask me to move, because a stroller comes. So I have to go. And especially the university students with a backpack. Even they offer me a seat. So they whack me on the head or their shoulder. So it's hard for a blind person to be on the bus. And I'm showing them my CNIB identification. So, the bus driver will ask can someone give a nice seat to this lady? And many times a bus driver will tell me to wear dark glasses to see and be more visible. So yes on a sunny day I'll wear them. But I still have some vision, if someone is close to me, but I can't read the bus sign, I have to ask and I listen to the bus on where is my next stop

David Verbich: That's a great point, and the Toronto, TTC, our big clients; they have provided folks with disabilities pins with, "please offer me a seat". There has been a large ad campaign on busses, targeted saying, "Hey, if you see someone who needs a seat, offer your seat". And there are seats with different colored fabric saying, "If you have a disability or if you don't, please give up the seat for those who do"

>>>Some people don't always respect that, because me, being in a wheelchair, they can't always see other disabilities, or if I have a friend with me, there are some visual ones, but others are just dumb. And if you ask them to move, they get mad or kick us off the bus. It's very rude actually.

>>> Yeah that's my problem too. If a wheelchair comes. Yes, I Understand.

>>> We can all go to Assiniboine Park right now [inaudible] because one looks different or smells different.

[Crowd inaudible]

David Verbich: So we want to hear from everyone. [Crowd quiets]. Yes ma'am

>>>Just a - bus drivers I've been taking the bus for 40 years, I've always asked the city to have more busses in the south end and they say that they have no money. So busses in the last 40 years have been packed to the rafters, but what really annoys me is that bus drivers get worse and worse of their attitudes, and I guess it's because of the stabbings and they don't want to confront anyone, so they don't even say to people, I mean there are some that say "Move to the back of the bus" why do they crowd around the disabled people at the front, there could be 10 people and the back half is empty?

David Verbich: That's a mystery I've not solved yet in all my years of using Winnipeg Transit

>>> Bus drivers shouldn't do like they did years ago. Everyone I'm going to move to the back of the bus, otherwise I'm not leaving

David Verbich: That's uh, that's a good point! I see, Kevin. Did you want to... address anything?

Kevin Sturgeon: I just - I'd like everybody to hold your questions till the end please. I see you've had your hand up for awhile. So if you can ask your question. Let's let David finish the presentation first. We still have a lot of content to go through. So once you all know what we are proposing for Winnipeg Transit Plus. So just one question

>>>Regarding your proposal for the trip prioritization change, what do you propose they change it to?

David Verbich: No priority based on trip purpose.

>>>Because for me I was attending physiotherapy but the WRHA changed my program and my therapist gave me a list of machines and exercises to do at the YMCA, but then that meant that I had to change in my trip prioritization.

David Verbich: So, the idea is to remove that priority and focus on persons with disability. Either conventional, or Transit Plus. And that's how we can manage demand.

[Pause]

David Verbich: Turning to no show policy, it's important because it helps manage the resources we have to folks who need it. So you cancel your trip or don't show up, that could have helped someone else who has wanted that trip and it's too late because it's already been deployed. So if you didn't cancel within 30 minutes that's late and if the operator cannot find you, that's cancellation at the door. Also if you have too many parcels. If you have no-show, you're allowed one no-show within six months; otherwise you will get a financial penalty.

And so, this is one of the main issues in the ombudsman report. We're looking at 2015, Transit Plus collected about 28,000 dollars in no-shows. And this isn't practiced in other agencies, and we need to modify that as it's not encouraging folks to be more responsible. And we're looking to increase flexibility.

David Verbich: So, on the next few slides we're looking at 3-4 examples from Canada and States, looking at how they handle no-show and it's on the slides. What I just want to bring out is that these agencies have a nice system where they allow folks to have a no-show to a certain amount. So what they do is they have a point-based system. So in the six months you can use points. So a no show is 1 point, leave cancellation is 2 points. And then it's suspended. You have 2-3 days where you don't get service. That's to encourage folks to be more responsible and life happens. Toronto's program is called Life Happens. It's to respect what things happen in life, and there is spontaneity and so that the system isn't abused.

Something else we'd like to talk about is to clarify the appeal process. So, if you've been dinged with a no-show you can ask for clarity and info regarding what that means and how that process is handled. And the transit in Waterloo provides that information and clarity, so they can make the right decisions. So we encourage Winnipeg Transit to adopt such a report.

David Verbich: Next topic is booking times and pick up windows. And so, when a customer books a trip an exact time is given, while that may be a good strategy it provides unrealistic expectations because traffic is perfect in Winnipeg - but we have traffic, we have folks getting on/off vehicles who need more help and can delay the car or van getting to you and the time specified. And consequences where people call up and tie up the phone line asking where's my car it's not there. And Transit Plus is to be shared, in other words more than one person in the vehicle. And it's to increase the amount of trips. So we'll have a booking window, to give you a ½ hour time window. So for example you'll request a ride or reservation and when you make a request on the phone, let's say we'll give a window from 11:00-11:30. And we'll update you when the car comes in 5 minutes. And drivers need to be more cognizant of persons with disability issues, letting them know when they arrive. And this will have impact on the no show policy, taking into account and looking at the points system and to reflect wash a no-show system is.

David Verbich: The next thing we'll talk about is Family of Services, and this is working with conventional services to have more frequent, direct services with shorter travel times. Investments into curb cuts, sidewalks that are well maintained, shelters, bus seats, auditory announcements, and I've work with Transit Plus trip booking and making software so that you can have a trip that's seamless and that leverages both conventional service and Transit Plus. And so on the screen is a photo from our work in Toronto where our work is riding a conventional low-floor bus and is using the ramp. What we do there is work on a trip-by-trip eligibility, so depending on the person being able to make the trip, because as I kept saying, it's a limited amount of money and trips to meet the demand that's growing. And the TTC has done something where they guarantee a same-day trip request if you agree to FOS services. So that's part of the trip being with FOS and part being in Transit Plus - in Toronto it's called WheelTrans. And of course we have to address a lot of the conventional issues raised before also.

[Slide: Case Study - Family of Services, Toronto: graphic displayed shows icons with directional arrows depicting steps of transportation arranged by Family of Services, taken by a client starting at their home and ending at an accessible location]

David Verbich: So this is an example of a FOS trip. So you'd start at your home, boards WheelTrans vehicle which is the same as Transit Plus, you get dropped off at an accessible bus stop - and what Toronto is doing is investing in mobility hubs, which are larger stations that are heated and can fit mobility devices, or have a bench and shelter where they can wait, you can then board on an accessible conventional bus, and then arrive at your final destination. So that's one way of how it would work, we feel like this is a way forward for Winnipeg Transit to deliver more trips and flexibly. So in Toronto they do about 13,000 trips a day which is a lot, and that's why they integrate the FOS to try and get that done. Their goal is by 2025, to have 50% of trips delivered by FOS. They're investing to make sure their modes are accessible, like busses, subways, and streetcars. The idea is that things like the Rapid Transit ways would have accessible features as well. We found that in Toronto the champions have really been the customers, sure there have been hiccups, but it's about engaging with the customers and refining the system.

David Verbich: So to have FOS work we need a couple of things, one thing is travel training, so working with customers to show them how to use the conventional services, some might have issues navigating the service, but showing them how to plan a trip and reach schedules, another example is to have co-mingling, so trying to use the resources as best we can. You probably had a colleague that rode Transit Plus and were alone, but we should try to make that better. Why don't we have folks come on to the Transit Plus bus to get to a hub that improves frequency? So just trying to maximize how we use these resources and deploy them around the city.

But we have to acknowledge the challenges of FOS. One large challenge is the insufficient wheelchair securements on conventional busses. Again we're doing an audit of bus stops around the city to see if they are accessible and to improve them in the short and long term. We know that there is an inadequate sidewalk network in parts of the city, and ice and snow in weather makes it tough to deliver this service on certain days. And of course we also need buy-in from customers like yourselves and help from the officials in the city. This is where technology and other innovations can help to provide these trips.

David Verbich: So... in the last few slides we'll talk about a few recommendations. By looking at your data and comparing it to peers across

Canada and the US. The feedback that we got is that - and again nothing is set in stone, it's just to help us refine some of these recommendations. So within the first year, our recommendations are to eliminate trip prioritization by trip purpose, as it doesn't adhere to legislation and is not equitable. To change the no-show policy, and instead work on how many is acceptable within a certain time frame, adopting a two-hour no-show time period, so now if you call at least half an hour is not a no-show, but we are looking to extend that to 2 hours since half an hour is not long enough to redeploy the trip elsewhere. And again they implement a life-happens policy to assist in no-shows, and we're recommending a time window and booking window be used for trips. And then once the vehicle arrives, the 5 min pick up window before being a no-show.

David Verbich: We're also looking at fare parity, that's a must with upcoming legislation. Something we talked about earlier was a seamless fare experience between conventional and Transit Plus, especially with FOS, you need some sort of transfer system to take that. That's going to be part of our recommendation, and also have an accessible transit tactical implemental plan, so just a plan to implement that using the AMA and the recommendations from the study. In the midterm we're proposing to revise categories to meet best practice and that's going to be the conditional/unconditional/temporary categories, but the criteria for each is still up for debate. And another thing is to expand the service areas across the city of Winnipeg, not just within 500 meters of a bus stop. The service should be within the city boundaries.

In the longer term, we recommend that Transit Plus transition everything to a new category, and we have to do this over a 3 year period, we can't do it all at once since you've seen that there are 8000 users. So it would be rolled out a bit at a time. Having that ability to leverage both conventional and Transit Plus to have a service that is more responsive to the lifestyle requires expanding the travel training program and the operators of Transit Plus and conventional busses to work with folks with disabilities who need more time boarding or assistance to make a trip.

David Verbich: Something else we've seen and looking at here is providing dialysis trips as a return trip only - the reason being that individuals are okay

with making trips there with a friend or other means, but on the way back that they receive a door-to-door trip. And finally to lower some costs, to look at how Winnipeg Transit Plus can be a coordinator between mobility producers throughout the city of Winnipeg. So trying to find the right service, whether it is a clinic that has a van service, but to maximize the ability to give trips, and looking at all the other services and coordinating that for the customers. So now I'd like to turn it over to you folks to see your comments on your input, we'd like to hear about the future vision for Transit Plus.

>>>I like the fact that there is integration between the two transit systems, because there are sometimes where I do take the Transit Plus because it stops two doors from my house or across the street, I have to walk three quarters or the block and then stops here in city place for my doctor's on a day where there is no plan, but the trips for shopping, two-bag limit, you can't get a lot in two-bags, which means we're booking frequent trips and using more in the system. My suggestion is that if you tell them you are shopping, they can book you on a bus, which is bigger, and you can bring more bags.

>>>One of the things we've done is have subscription shopping trips, so if you do shopping on Wednesday, we pick up 12-15 people, but they are on there. And we have these vehicles, which would accommodate the amount of shopping bags.

>>>It's the same with Winnipeg harvest, if you go there, they might give you lots of bags and if you're low income, you have to turn away food because it's a two-bag limit, and the Winnipeg Transit people have said to me "you have more than two bags" but the use of Winnipeg Harvest already means that your funds are limited, and then you get charged for a no-show as well, even though it's not your fault! Also another thing is the timing for booking. When you book the time, I understand it's hard to navigate everyone into the same time, but for example, I had a job interview yesterday at 4pm, I requested to be there for 3:45 and they dropped me off with 3 mins to 4pm. And then they didn't pick me up until an hour after, and it's just really unprofessional.

David Verbich: It's something we're hoping to address. Yes ma'am?

>>> Will there be a common system? Because we have a Peggo card, and Handi-Transit bus pass. And when we go on the city bus, we have to pay

David Verbich: Yes, ideally that's what we're working towards, is having a seamless system and the consistency between Transit Plus conventional services, whether it's a pay-go card or...

>>> And with the no-show. For someone to be suspended for a month
-

David Verbich: No, I think that's if you are a repeat offender. So if you have 8 points already, then that's when the suspension starts, that's different from the financial penalty, but it's too disincentives the behavior no-shows, but if life happens, then you have that margin of wiggle room.

>>> We'll work with somebody and we don't know what happens, like sometimes it happens 10 minutes before. Will that be taken into consideration and not be penalized for that no-show?

David Verbich: Yes, so that's a good point, it's important to look at what the responsibility is and having that clarity of the no-shows.

>>>But for me it does count as a no-show now.

David Verbich: In the current system, yes it would. [Pause]. Yes ma'am, in the back?

>>>Appreciate the futuristic look. Sounds great, and I appreciate the service even though the wait times. My main concern is safety. And, basically, comfort for people with disabilities. I have a painful muscle disability and have stress in my arms and legs to stay balanced in going over these bumps. And the new busses are horrendous, have no shocks whatsoever. I'd go home crying many days because my muscles are hurting from having to hang on so much. There are no grab bars only in the vans - there are only straps. But on the big busses there is nothing to hold onto. I

always have to sit back so I can hold onto the seat in front of me - grabbed a woman's hair by accident. And there's one driver who dropped us here today - just throws them on the side, throws him in there - says, " you have to move for me to get these out" and he leaves them, they leave the walker behind their seat, in the van, and open the side door and hook it. So there's nothing on my feet and this guy hooks it, and this is touching my ankle and I asked him to move it and he says, "well this has to be in your way". So that has to change. Most of the guys are wonderful. But safety and secure feeling needs to be there too.

David Verbich: For sure. Thank you for that comment. Yes, sir?

>>>Yes, so I appreciate the system here, but personally I appreciate the chances here, but my comments are about the pick-up, you mentioned the early pick-up, sometimes has to work from 10 to 8pm, and on top of that, my pick up could be an hour and a half and then another hour after. I usually put my GPS on, especially when you don't know the drop off, but someone the driver picks up someone on the way and that person could be from an apartment, but in my opinion I should be dropped off first because I am going to work and the other might be going to the mall. But then all of the sudden, the driver will change direction, and when I asked him he said, "I have to pick up this other person first". Could we not make it better to drop off people that have to be somewhere first? But the drivers say that's how the system is and maybe that's not what they have to do, but it's so crazy and it doesn't make sense, and that happens more, not just once or twice. I usually use my GPS because I knew there would come a time where I would have to say this. Early pick-up also, you now sometimes if I start my job at 10, I have to say to be there at 9:45 but at the same time, if I have to be there at 10, they'll come to pick me up at 9am, yet if I want to be there at 11, sometimes my pickup is earlier than *that*. So, I know they try to accommodate me, but it's hard to change my schedule, and the no-show, another thing - the driver I think sometimes we have to wait 10 mins until the driver is there and it takes 20 mins to get there to see that they are not there, so half an hour has gone by - making me late for work.

David Verbich: So this is a scheduling issue -

>>> It's very frustrating

David Verbich: Winnipeg Transit is aware; it's a work in progress. Thank you for your comments. Yes, in the back with the question?

>>>I was just going to ask what training there is for Winnipeg plus drivers.

David Verbich: So I'm not aware of programs at the moment, maybe there are.

Teresa Platt: We do have a four-day training program for our drivers, like disability awareness, assisting individuals up and down ramps and stairs securing individuals in the vehicles.

>>> Yeah it just seems like what I'm hearing is that the majority of drivers are great but there is an inconsistency with how the drivers are operating.

David Verbich: And even on the conventional side, working with folks with disabilities, on trip planning is a major theme we see in other agencies.

>>>Is the city planning to do any kind of review or editing of the snow removal policy?

David Verbich: Yeah. That's a good question, which is out of scope of this project.

>>> And transitioning into being a coordinator - is there anything in work with the Parking Authority? Because they're developing a way to make taxis more accessible?

David Verbich: Possibly, I mean, any avenues to have those trips would be for the greater development.

>>>I have a couple of questions. You mentioned right now, to book the day before, but now you said I have to book the day before travel?

David Verbich: That was an example.

>>> Okay. So, you're proposing you want to get rid of that window?

David Verbich: No we're proposing that you can book your trip anytime. So let's say tomorrow, instead of your trip being at 11:15, your point of pickup will be from 11:00-11:30. And once the vehicle gets there, there's a 20-minute window. And that's another thing: what's a good window? How many minutes? 20?

>>>20 mins is good?

>>>But if you're getting there and then having to wait another 20 mins, that's like a half hour.

David Verbich: Right. A lot of time. Does that address your question?

>>> Yes, and well, my next question. Someone told me there would be an application for trips, to book trips instead of calling. You can use the application, or whatever?

David Verbich: That's in the works yes, it takes the pressure off the phone line and it makes it easier for folks that would rather use the app.

>>> Is there a timetable for that?

David Verbich: Not at the moment, but stay tuned.

>>> So, I have to dial the number, and wait 15-20 minutes for someone to answer. But, they told me, if I have a doctor appointment, for example, next Tuesday. I have to book the trip today or tomorrow. And the day before, after 3:00, confirm. But sometimes, if I have pain, I'm new to this system because I have to learn as much as I can. So I have a very bad toothache today and I want this appointment Friday. So I have to take a taxi or some other trip? Or can I still ask for that ahead of time?

David Verbich: So the idea is that we're going to move to a system where you have same-day booking or the day before a trip. So that might come up rather than booking way ahead of time.

>>> Another one, quickly. I hear people take Handi-transit for - I'm new to this system so I never have - for example, from Fort Garry I want to go to Saint Vital mall, and I have to take 2 busses. So, I wait 2 hours or 3 hours where they pick me up to drop me off?

David Verbich: Yes! Yup.

>>>Okay, good!

David Verbich: Sasha will bring you then! [Laughs] Yes, Ma'am?

>>>The two hour cancellation window I don't agree with, I think you should start with an hour or two in the morning, like for example today, I don't get up this early, but this week, I wasn't feeling well and if that happened and I want to cancel, you only have an hour to cancel your ride. Maybe in the morning cut that down, and then in the afternoon or after 12, and then make it longer.

David Verbich: So, the idea is to cancel the trip for someone to accommodate.

>>>Like this week I had to cancel three times because I was dizzy and wasn't well, and I wanted to see how I felt for the next day before I decided to cancel. So I cancelled within the two hours, but maybe on another day, if it's the morning, I might not have gotten that in. and then you'll be penalized.

David Verbich: Right. So, that's what we're working with the points, Life Happens points. Having a certain amount of cancellations allowable. So if you're feeling ill and you decide you can't do this, we understand.

>>>I think the morning is the hardest time.

David Verbich: So, the trade off is to make it as simple as possible for folks. So if you say an hour before noon, 2 hours - there's a lot to keep in one's head. Trying to make it simple.

>>>And I also just want to ask, why did they end up with the new cars, why are the back seats so small and when you get in, they're lower. So

people with bad backs, knees, can't bend and it's difficult to get out. It's like someone decided this and they don't have any disability.

David Verbich: So, a few things. There are few options for accessible vehicles in the industry. That's one issue, and other, is that folks - they're [accessible vehicles] usually higher right?

>>>A little higher is better than lower.

David Verbich: So there is the advisory committee that I mentioned earlier in the meeting that is comprised of people that ride Transit Plus and provide input to policy decisions and I encourage you to be a part of that committee because there are folks that provide input to the agency when it comes to service standards

>>> I don't know how to get involved. I knew only about this meeting two days ago.

David Verbich: We'll touch base in a bit and I'll let you know how to get involved.

>>>If you are asking people to spend for trip justification, that cuts into their funding, and for myself and for others in a similar situation, I have disabilities but I don't qualify for 24-hour workers, and if I want to go somewhere it's limited. So I can use the bus if I can get to it or get on it, but sometimes if I get there, there isn't anyone to help me fasten my wheelchair to the bus and when I get to my destination, they don't want to unsecure me from the bus, and then they give me shit for not having a worker. There are only a few people that qualify for funding and have workers with them all the time. I'm lucky to get 4 to 5 hours of care a day, and so that has to be taken into consideration. Also, if I have a friend or someone to come with me, then they need to have a system where that person doesn't have to pay fare, or else they won't have money to put aside to pay for fare. I used to have a worker that would come with me to my doctor's appointment but now I don't have that funding. There are people with disabilities that should be using I guess, a taxi system because they might have high medical needs and there are some that don't even qualify

even though they need it. So if social services say one thing and Transit Plus says another, I'm caught in the middle. And because of my physical or financial limitations, I can't have services.

David Verbich: Thank you for raising those issues

>>> You wrote it down already - but- he went to the doctor's clinic and what he told me, was Handi-transit would drop me off - at the bus stop. And he had to go through and what Handi-transit does would take me to the parking lot at the door. And they dropped him off at the snow bank. And that driver told him, he has to go over himself over the snowbank and I don't think that's right. And, this is where you had to be dropped off; and I don't think that's right for him to do that. They all drop you off at the parking lot, but he had to go over the snow bank. He's got it written down here - so. Shouldn't he be -?

David Verbich: We'll definitely review that, I mean, there is a call-in line, an email address, of course we have to hear about these things to address them. Anyone else?

>>> I was at that clinic, the reason they didn't go into the parking lot was because I was on the bus, and so they made me go off the side and up the ramp. But I said to the bus driver, you're coming with me. It's snowing, these tires aren't snow tires. My understanding is the driver is supposed to take you to the door, isn't that correct? I want to hear why they don't come and get you especially when these changes take place. I don't have a cell phone, so they tell me they're 5 minutes away. Come and get me, I'm responsible, I go downstairs and I'll wait. And if he's late or even if he isn't, they're supposed to come and get us.

David Verbich: And that goes both ways, they expect you to be ready, and so yes, you should expect them to come out the door.

>>> And other things on training - do they all not get trained, do they not have to be trained? To get out of the bus, come to the front door? My building is very accessible and I'm always waiting for them. So today I'm here late, 1/2 hour late. I'm on my phone figuring out where my ride is. And my ride's here, I see him, but

he doesn't come out. So, is it part of the training they are to come out, and get us, take us to the door?

David Verbich: Yes, and then to the door of the building.

>>> So I take it you're not responsible for that, so is there anyone here? You can't vouch that they do it because that would be a lie. So when I phone and say that doesn't happen, what happens? And it continues to happen, so what kind of investigation. I've been talking a long time about this

>>> I don't know how to say, I don't want the driver to be the problem. I went out, no one was responding, so I went back to the apartment. And I know the car is there so I ask if the car is out front? So how can I be sure, when I'm visually impaired? And if they're trained - most drivers are good, still.

>>> I wasn't finished by the way, but also, why are they talking on the phone when they are driving? They come out, and it's personal phone calls, I mean, I don't talk to them, but I don't care that they have Bluetooth, distracted driving is distracted driving. You know that? Then why aren't you doing anything about that?

David Verbich: I mean - we're not part of that group-

>>> What group are you a part of? Because I've been on this since 2015. I don't care, you're there for me driving. I care about myself and distracted driving is an issue for everyone

David Verbich: We see that in other places, and that's a policy, which is unacceptable.

>>>But why don't they - who are they accountable to?

David Verbich: You have to do spot checks. So, Transit Plus [did one] back in December and one employee took it.

>>>You took it? Was he disabled?

David Verbich: He was mystery disabled.

>>>If the person that is going to be checking on them, they know they're being checked on, then they aren't going to do it-

David Verbich: No, the operator was, it was a mystery ride.

>>>So since 2015, why are they still doing it?

David Verbich: So we're taking notes, and we want to give everyone a chance. So was that your last point?

>>>I think so, those two were big ones!

David Verbich: Okay, yes sir?

>>> So, I take one of the new vehicles, they look like mini-buses, and this one driver, are they required - because they have a seat belt on the bus, right, but every time I go on the bus, they don't put on the seatbelt, is that not - is that not what they are trained for? To put the seat belt on? Like when they put down the ramp?

>>>He's asking if they are required to secure his wheelchair before they drive off.

>>>No when I get on the ramp, there is a little seatbelt in order for me to not slide off the ramp, like on the lift itself, and the driver refuses to put on that seat belt for that lift.

David Verbich: And it's just that one driver? The others do it? Okay so that's - we'll, we'll record that note. I just want to pivot, what we're looking for is more - feedback and understanding about the things that we presented today and what we have to change for the future. We understand that there are issues with the system now and these are common in a lot of places we work, but we want to hear your thoughts about the things we have planned for the future or if you have other ideas or thoughts about, or if you are aligning as a community in terms of transportation.

>>>I'm wondering, if you are talking about same-day booking, how can you make sure that you are getting a ride?

David Verbich: So the other systems, it's not one thing that is prepared for an agency or things like that, so for example, having accessible conventional services so that there is a family of services so that someone can take a trip without Transit Plus and that frees up a spot for someone that needs it. To account for all the trips to different places can also be done online and not just rely on one resource like the phone, so to shift that and have different ways, and also to recruit and have operators for the services. So there are a few things that we need to be able to implement same day booking.

>>> And where you said they pick you up from home, so can you arrange when they can pick up from home, or?

David Verbich: Right, and in the reverse it works as well so that we can have a service that is more frequent and more reliable, so it looks at fares, how we deliver service and how we can really improve the system so that things like FOS works. So if a bus comes every 10 mins, and you have a trip to a bus stop, then you're only waiting 5 mins for the next bus rather than an hour or 30 mins. So that relies on frequent busses on main streets and corridors and the cards and things like that.

>>> An integrated system -

David Verbich: Yes, like the Peggo cards. Yes, Ma'am?

>>> She has a car, and someone -

David Verbich: That's a specific case, I cannot comment on. Sorry?

>>> That was one of the questions I was supposed to ask

David Verbich: But, do you like some of the ideas we've been proposing? Okay.

>>>Not everyone has funding for personal cell phones or computers. Again, going back to most people live off 300-400 a month. And keep in mind, some people with developmental, learning, cognitive or head injuries have a hard time going from one system to another unless they have training because they won't have abilities to figure that out. For example, from the library

at portage place it's pretty simple. But it's hard for some people to figure out, taking a cab one way -

David Verbich: Right, and so that trip might not be for everyone.

>>>I'm just making a really valid point though. Because we have people who are in their 20's to 40's who have this.

David Verbich: Great, thank you. Anyone else? There is an exit survey for everyone to do to comment on how good or bad I did and-

>>>I think it's great but you have to work with the city and change that first and *then* come in with our changes.

David Verbich: Right, it goes hand in hand, yes sir?

>>>So you were saying that we can make same-day bookings, so that's for example, if I book a wheelchair ride, I can book Winnipeg Transit Plus for that exact time on that exact day?

David Verbich: That's the idea, given eligibility, family services, that's what we're working towards. Will it happen tomorrow? No. But, that's what we're trying to do.

>>>I like the comments about the same day booking and the two-hour cancellation, but is there anyway that someone can keep the 30 min cancellation, or book ahead of time and keep their cancellation on the day of. Like for example at my job, if my client cancels, then I'm done for the day but I can't cancel my ride, but if I book it the day of I could get a ride?

David Verbich: That's an idea, yeah. It's still the resource, which has to be - the bus has to be shuffled around. So, we are - we have an exit survey - yes ma'am

>>>I very much appreciated all the -

David Verbich: Sorry - [to other audience member] it will be to your right, sorry sir - come this way. Sorry, ma'am. I'll get to your comment and question. Okay, yes ma'am?

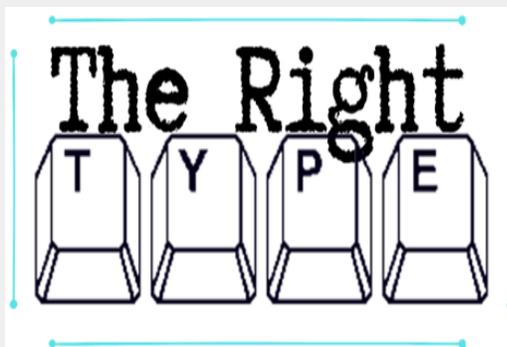
>>>I appreciate the presentation, looking forward to the updates and progressive nature of this survey. Without it, I wouldn't be getting around anywhere.

David Verbich: Thank you for that, I'm sure the Winnipeg Transit staff appreciates your comment! But we also have this exit survey, if you need help go to any folks at the back, but there will also be a follow-up survey done online if you indicate that you want them and you can propose more changes to the recommendations we have. We appreciate you for coming out, we are still here to answer questions one on one, but let us know if you need help filling these out. Thank you!

[End]

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