



# Winnipeg Transit *PLUS*



## Winter-Only Service Overview

Access to Transit Plus service is based on eligibility criteria that has been approved by Council. All applicable accessibility legislation has three categories of eligibility, one of which is 'conditional eligibility.' The category of conditional eligibility is designed to accommodate individuals that can reasonably be expected to use conventional transit under some circumstances. "Winter-only" customers using Transit Plus have been assessed as being unable to use the conventional service due to accumulation of snow and/or icy conditions.

The winter-only dates have been modified since the implementation of a paratransit service for Winnipeg. Initially, winter months for Winnipeg Transit Plus service were defined as October 1 to March 31. The Manager of Client Services has always had the authority to begin or extend the winter service based on weather conditions and snow accumulations. Over time, the definition of winter months changed to start on October 15 and end on April 15 and customers with "winter-only" eligibility were restricted to using the service only during this time frame.

A 2019 review of data from Environment Canada found Winnipeg has not had a significant snowfall that has stayed on the ground longer than three consecutive days in October in the previous ten years. According to Environment Canada statistics there has not been any significant snow accumulation until approximately mid-December in the last ten years. Therefore, it was determined that it was reasonable to change the eligibility period to better coincide with the weather and snow accumulation in Winnipeg.

To better align with the onset of winter conditions, on January 30, 2020 Council approved a change to the dates for "winter-only" eligibility to start no later than December 15 and end no earlier than March 31. Recognizing that "winter conditions" or winter weather events (accumulation of snow that stays on the ground for three or more days consecutively) can occur earlier or last longer than the defined period, the Manager of Client Services would continue to have the authority

to adjust the beginning and end dates based on weather conditions, events, and snow accumulation.

There are approximately 392 customers that have eligibility for service during the winter months. The changes to the winter eligibility dates help to ensure that the resources are available to those with the highest need for door-to-door service as they are unable to use the conventional service.

On November 10, 2020 the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure and Public Works requested a further evaluation, passing a motion to have the department conduct a review of the winter only policy and engage the community to discuss the existing policy and possible changes. This involves reporting back on a **policy for determining when winter Transit Plus service should begin based on a measure of "appropriate conditions of our roads and sidewalks based on ice and snow and or other conditions worthy of consideration for safety."**

When looking at what is done in other Canadian municipalities, we found a number of different approaches to providing service during the winter. The majority of municipalities we looked at tended to have pre-determined dates for the beginning and end of winter-only service, but like Winnipeg Transit, most agencies allow for flexibility in the start and end date based on environmental factors. Additionally, at least one agency determines "conditional eligibility" based on current and/or forecasted weather conditions, meaning conditional eligibility can effectively be instated or suspended as needed.