



**SPECIAL GENERAL ISSUES COMMITTEE  
ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES REVIEW  
MINUTES 16-006**

9:30 a.m.  
Friday, February 19, 2016  
Council Chambers  
Hamilton City Hall  
71 Main Street West

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**Present:** Deputy Mayor T. Whitehead (Chair)  
Councillors T. Jackson, C. Collins, S. Merulla, M. Green, A. Johnson, D. Conley, M. Pearson, B. Johnson, L. Ferguson, A. VanderBeek, J. Partridge

**Absent  
with Regrets:** Mayor F. Eisenberger and Councillor J. Farr – Vacation  
Councillor Pasuta – Personal

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**FOR THE INFORMATION OF COMMITTEE:**

**(a) CHANGES TO THE AGENDA (Item 1)**

The Committee Clerk advised of the following changes to the agenda:

**1. DELEGATION REQUESTS (Item 4)**

- 4.1 Aznive Mallett, Paula Kilburn, Terri Wallis and Tom Manzuk, of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) (no copy)
- 4.2 Jessica Brennan, DARTS Transit
- 4.3 Sandra Walker, CUPE 5167

**2. GENERAL INFORMATION / OTHER BUSINESS (Item 10)**

- 10.1 Correspondence from Sharon Colville and other Residents respecting the Potential Sale of DARTS (This document contained 30 signatures.)

**(Pearson/Ferguson)**

That the agenda for the February 19, 2016 Special General Issues Committee (Accessible Transportation Services Review) meeting be approved, as amended.

**CARRIED**

**(b) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 2)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**(c) DELEGATION REQUESTS (Item 4)**

- (i) Aznive Mallett, Paula Kilburn, Terri Wallis and Tom Manzuk, of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) (Item 4.1)**

**(Pearson/Merulla)**

That the delegation request submitted by Aznive Mallett, Paula Kilburn, Terri Wallis and Tom Manzuk, of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD), to appear before Committee today, be approved.

**CARRIED**

- (ii) Jessica Brennan, Chair of the DARTS Board respecting DARTS Transit (Item 4.2)**

**(Pearson/Merulla)**

That the delegation request submitted by Jessica Brennan, Chair of the DARTS Board, respecting DARTS Transit, to appear before Committee today, be approved.

**CARRIED**

- (iii) Sandra Walker, President of CUPE Local 5167 (Item 4.3)**

**(Pearson/Merulla)**

That the delegation request submitted by Sandra Walker, President of CUPE Local 5167, to appear before Committee today, be approved.

**CARRIED**

**(d) PRESENTATIONS (Item 5)**

- (i) Accessible Transportation Services Review (PW16015) (City Wide) (Item 5.1)**

Dave Dixon, Director of Transit, addressed Committee respecting Report PW16015 – Accessible Transportation Services Review. The presentation included, but was not limited to, the following:

- Roles and Responsibilities
  - **City - Accessible Transportation Services (ATS) is responsible for:**
    - ❖ Ensuring the City is Compliant with AODA Legislation and the 2004 Human Rights Settlement
    - ❖ Managing the Eligibility and Registration Process
    - ❖ Contract Administration
    - ❖ Purchasing All Capital
    - ❖ Customer Service
    - ❖ Taxi Scrip
  - ❖ **Disabled and Aged Regional Transportation System (DARTS) is responsible for:**
    - ❖ Reservation, Scheduling and Dispatching Customer Trips
    - ❖ All On-Street Services through City Supplied Buses and Sub-Contractor Vans
    - ❖ Supervision of Sub-Contractor
    - ❖ Bus Storage and Maintenance
    - ❖ Fare Management
    - ❖ Complaint Investigation
  - ❖ **On Street Service Delivery:**
    - ❖ DARTS Bus: Can carry all mobility devices and multiple devices at once (4 wheelchairs and 6 ambulatory)
    - ❖ VETS Non accessible van: limited capability of carrying only walker and ambulatory customers (5 ambulatory and 1 walker)

- Why are we here?
  - Expenditures have increased almost 40% over the past 5 years
  - Expenditures are being driven by rapidly increasing ridership as a result of implementation AODA Eligibility requirements.
  - Opportunity to transition to lower cost service delivery.
  - Audit Services Recommendations:
    - ❖ DARTS may have capacity on existing vehicles to transport additional passengers.
    - ❖ Cost savings of any magnitude may only be possible by changing how services are provided to passengers (i.e. greater use of sedan taxis, adding lower occupancy accessible vans).
    - ❖ The Driver Collective Agreement between DARTS and CUPE 5167 contains specific clauses limiting the number of trips that DARTS may subcontract to another service provider.
  
- Opportunities
  - If Van capabilities were maximized (~60% of all rides), ~\$1 million in savings could be realized based on 2015 data.
  - New “vans” capable of carrying all mobility devices are emerging on the market; however, capacity is limited:
    - ❖ To Measure Effectiveness
    - ❖ Validate Best Practices of the Accessible Van
  - Pilot Demonstrated Positive Results
    - ❖ Fleet Expanded to 6 MV-1’s
  - Travel Training
    - ❖ In October 2011, ATS staff initiated Bus Travel Training for persons with developmental disabilities.

- ❖ Cost of the program to train 100 trainees is approximately \$175,000 annually.
- ❖ The City benefits socially and financially by continuing the program and moving customers away from DARTS.
- Next Steps
  - Provide DARTS with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to shift rides from buses to lower cost accessible and non-accessible vans, with a targeted budget reduction of \$1 million by the end of 2016.
  - If successful, develop a plan with DARTS that will ensure the full realization of potential savings (additional ~ \$1.6 million), prior to the renewal/extension of the DARTS contract (expires June 30, 2017).
  - If unsuccessful:
    - ❖ Work with all parties to complete the transfer of DARTS reservation, scheduling and dispatch to the City.
    - ❖ Issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the delivery of Bus, Accessible Van & Van/Sedan Service
- Recommendations:
  - DARTS be directed to aggressively expand the accessible and non-accessible van fleet, and correspondingly reduce the bus fleet at a rate and in a manner approved by the General Manager of Public Works with a targeted budget reduction of \$1 million by the end of 2016.
  - If DARTS is successful, develop a plan with DARTS that will ensure the full realization of potential savings, prior to the renewal/extension of the DARTS contract (expires June 30, 2017).
  - Should DARTS fail to achieve the targeted budget reduction by the end of 2016, the General Manager of Public Works be directed to:

- Complete the transfer of DARTS operations (reservations, scheduling and dispatch) to the City engaging the appropriate parties as required; and,
  - Complete a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the service delivery of ATS customers in buses, accessible vans and vans/sedans noting the DARTS contract expires on June 30, 2017.
- ❖ That Council direct the City Manager to explore options with the Province of Ontario to fund a portion of the City's specialized transit service in light of the increased cost pressure placed upon the City, as a result of AODA legislation.
- ❖ That Council permanently fund the Travel Training Program on an annual basis with a commitment of 100 trainees per year at a cost of \$175,000.

**(Pearson/Conley)**

That the presentation respecting Report PW16015 - Accessible Transportation Services Review, be received.

**CARRIED**

A full copy of the presentation is available on the City's website or through the Office of the City Clerk.

**(Collins/Merulla)**

That staff be directed to provide a clear template that all parties understand and are in agreement with on a go forward basis, as it relates to the assumptions that Committee will be using to determine the savings that they will eventually approve.

**CARRIED**

**(Jackson/Conley)**

That Report PW16015, respecting Accessible Transportation Services Review, be referred to the February 26, 2016 General Issues Committee Budget meeting.

**CARRIED**

**(e) DELEGATIONS (Item 6)**

- (i) Aznive Mallett, Paula Kilburn, Terri Wallis and Tom Manzuk, of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) (Item 6.1)**

Ms. Mallett's comments to Committee included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Like you, we need reliable and accountable transportation for work, education, entertainment, grocery shopping, picking up medications, and attending medical appointments.
- Initially, we were encouraged by the creation of 16 new taxi licenses, which were to provide taxi services for persons with mobility disabilities. Sadly, the 16 accessible taxis have not made a significant enhancement as an option for better service.
- The parallel transportation service is also not meeting our needs.
- The survey results reported to the Hamilton Spectator, ACPD members and many others within the community cannot recommend the services.
- The 7 day advance booking, the 30-minute pick-up window, lack of spontaneous rides, disturbingly long waits, to mention just a few, make the lives of people with disabilities extremely difficult.
- People on dialysis endure unconscionable long trips when they already feel so ill after treatment, and people with mobility disabilities and seniors cannot tolerate long waits in extreme weather conditions.
- What most people don't talk about is the fact that it takes them so much longer to get dressed, use the bathroom, etc. They wait for the bus to arrive, they wait on the bus while it makes numerous stops, they wait again for the bus to return them and, again, they wait while the bus makes more stops before reaching home.
- We need thoughtful and compassionate planning and feel that, as the main stakeholders, we should be involved within our advisory role (as ACPD) in the planning, development and implementation phases of the new plan.
- I would also appreciate the City use the term "power wheelchair" instead of "electric wheelchair"; and, that you no longer call us "users" of accessible transportation and now call us "passengers".

Ms. Kilburn's comments to Committee included, but were not limited to, the following:

- I would like to provide you with some examples of problems passengers have when trying to organize their lives.

- You get a call early in the morning asking you to attend an important meeting on the next day, and you say you will be there. Now you start to panic. You turn on your computer and go to the DARTS website to book a ride, you fill in all the information and you get a message saying “no rides available”. So now you go to the phone to call DARTS reservations and you are informed you are caller number 22. 45 minutes later, you get a person who says they are able to get you a ride there, but not home. What do you do?
- A friend calls and asks you to go for lunch that day; you tell them maybe if you can get a ride. You call DARTS and they find you a ride, but it will get you there a ½ hour or more early, but again – there is no return ride to go home. What do you do?
- You have a ride to a meeting and a return booked. After the meeting, while you are waiting, the security guard tells you that DARTS will be 10 minutes late and she will keep an eye out for them. She tells you the van is in the parking lot, but the driver tells you she is not able to leave the van, as she is not permitted to leave the passengers unattended in the vehicle.

Ms. Wallis’s comments to Committee included, but were not limited to, the following:

- I have spoken with many DARTS clients and not one of them has been satisfied with this service. I have heard complaints for lost reservations, extremely long on board times, denied trips and many other complaints. Yet, according to a report to the Spectator, a survey conducted with 399 passengers who were asked their opinion of DARTS service stated the majority of passengers were satisfied with the service.
- People are tired of complaining, many are afraid of possible repercussions and others don’t have the capacity to complain or are simply too timid.
- All these factors need to be taken into account when determining the efficiency of the DARTS service.
- The “where’s my ride” feature is unreliable; not having an accurate “pick up” or “on board” time. Also not all DARTS clients have access to a computer or smart phone.



- If you book an earlier pick up to compensate for the 15 minute after part of the window, you could end up arriving half an hour early and have to wait outside in the cold. The same is true for your return trip if you don't want to risk leaving the event early you can end up waiting half an hour outside on your own.
- If you live in a high rise apartment building, you may have to wait down in the lobby for 30 minutes or more worrying every second that you may need to use the washroom. Going back upstairs to do so would cause you to miss your ride. For many seniors and persons with disabilities, going before you go down isn't the answer. This adds stress and uncertainty to your trip. Waiting for 30 minutes in heavy winter clothing doesn't help either.

Tom Manzuk's comments to Committee included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Given the trials and tribulations you have now heard, our mutual goal should be to provide a trip safely, comfortably, and with dignity, all accomplished in a timely fashion. How difficult can that be?
- Recommendations in the ATS Report include more efficient use of buses, the acquisition of MV-1 vans, redistribution of ambulatory passengers to more appropriate vehicles, improved software for reservations, scheduling and dispatch, as well as "on-demand" service, are but a few of the recommendations that ACPD has been trumpeting for over a decade. Kudos to Public Works.
- We respectfully remind Council that ACPD is a great resource. There are many bright minds and creative thinkers around that table that you should continue to utilize.
- While we understand that these proposals are intended as cost saving measures with an anticipated annual savings of \$1 million, we are concerned that these savings may still not result in improved service. Therefore, we respectfully recommend that a significant portion of the savings be reinvested in ATS to continue improving service, and to meet the demands of increased ridership due to an aging population, as acknowledged in the Report.
- We understand that these are difficult financial times, and that as Councillors, your inclination is to see things as they are, and ask why? Our challenge to you is to dream of things that aren't, and ask why not?

**(VanderBeek/Collins)**

That the presentation provided by Aznive Mallett, Paula Kilburn, Terri Wallis and Tom Manzuk, of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, respecting Accessible Transportation Services, be received.

**CARRIED**

**(ii) Jessica Brennan, Chair DARTS Board (Item 4.2)**

Jessica Brennan, Chair of the DARTS Board, addressed Committee respecting DARTS Transit. Ms. Brennan's presentation included, but was not limited to, the following:

- Expansion of Service
- Demand has increased 33% while the cost of the ride has actually gone down.
- Encourage the Reduction of Cancellations
- Reducing Costs
- Connecting with the Passenger

**(Pearson/Ferguson)**

That the presentation provided by Jessica Brennan, DARTS Transit, respecting DARTS Transit Service, be received.

**CARRIED**

A full copy of the presentation is available on the City's website or through the Office of the City Clerk.

**(iii) Sandra Walker, CUPE 5167 (Item 4.3)**

Sandra Walker, President of CUPE Local 5167, addressed Committee respecting DARTS. Ms. Walker's comments included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Ms. Walker was in attendance to speak on behalf of the 200 front-line workers that CUPE Local 5167 represents at DARTS. Workers who proudly serve city of Hamilton residents with physical or functional disabilities or health conditions.
- From our mechanics who maintain the fleet, to our schedulers and dispatchers who organize the rides, to our drivers who safely transport the passengers from door to door, these dedicated DARTS employees are there every day to ensure our community's most vulnerable get to their destinations in a friendly, efficient and courteous manner, in all weather conditions.

- As the City has told us in their report, the demand for DARTS services has grown significantly over the years and, with changes to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) legislation, more relaxed eligibility guidelines, and an increasing aging population in Hamilton, the demand for DARTS services will continue to grow.
- With this increased demand, there will be added pressure for the DARTS service to offer more rides to more passengers, while still retaining the customer service standards.
- It is surprising to front-line workers that, instead of providing extra resources to meet the increased demand, the city is proposing to slash \$1 million dollars in the 2016 DARTS operating budget with another 1.5 million after that. This does not make any sense.
- Instead of looking for cost effective solutions that will efficiently meet the demands of the increased services, the City is proposing budget cuts that will severely impact our community's most vulnerable residents who rely on DARTS.
- It makes sense that Accessible Transit services needs to be reviewed and assessed just as every public service should. Reviewing and implementing cost savings as a result of changes to services is fiscally responsible. Every public service should regularly step back and see how they can provide service in order to get the most value for their dollar while maintaining or improving service.
- I am confused as to why these conversations only started happening very recently. Why was this not something that was completed well in advance in preparation for the 2016 Budget Process?
- What is also very concerning to me are the conditions being imposed regarding this year's cost savings demands. The expectation is that DARTS realize \$1 million in savings in 2016. Or else. It's already into February.
- The ability to "aggressively expand the fleet" isn't going to happen overnight.
- Logistically, there is a lot to figure out in regards to scheduling these vehicles, which ones can accommodate what passengers and optimizing their use all while maintaining quality customer

service. I guarantee there will be bumps along the way, trial and error. As well as re-educating the passengers about keeping DARTS up to date on their accommodation needs.

- On top of the proposed cuts, the City is now threatening to contract out DARTS service with a priority being the “lowest cost provider”.
- What is the real cost here. The City will reward an employer by awarding a contract to someone who will create more jobs... low wage precarious jobs. An Employer who will be eager to drive costs down to win the contract and put more money in their pockets at the expense of the worker? At the expense of vehicle safety?
- DARTS has much to offer the City of Hamilton:
  - Less turnover – Long term employees who know the passengers
  - Professional drivers who know the city and services
  - They take pride in their work and in serving their passengers
- As an employer, DARTS offers steady shift schedules, a fair living wage that isn't overpriced, a proven ability to deal with demand spikes and absences including those of the sub-contractor, safe and reliable vehicles and one stop seamless service in dispatch, driving and maintenance.
- It appears to me that the City is pushing to lower the cost of providing Accessible Transit to the detriment of service. The City should instead be elevating the service, especially now when there is an increased demand.
- What kind of message is the city sending to DARTS' users?
- Our community's most vulnerable rely on the dispatchers, the mechanics and their drivers on a daily basis. DARTS workers know and understand the community and their needs – they've been doing it for 40 years – slashing \$2.5 million from the DARTS budget will have a severe impact on the services that DARTS employees provide to our community's most vulnerable.
- This should not just be a bottom line-driven agenda, but a plan to lift the DARTS service up to meet the increase demands of the service.

- I am urging members of the General Issues Committee to invest and build the service that our community's most vulnerable rely on – don't bring DARTS down – help build it up – our community deserves better.

**(Collins/Pearson)**

That the presentation provided by Sandra Walker, of CUPE 5167, respecting DARTS, be received.

**CARRIED**

**(f) MOTIONS (Item 8)**

**(i) Formula, Criteria and Evidence – DARTS Findings Report (Item 8.1)**

**(Merulla/Collins)**

That staff be directed to report to the General Issues Committee with the formula/criteria and all of the evidence obtained to determine the results of the City of Hamilton Customer Survey for DARTS: Findings Report, as it relates to the 90% satisfaction rate.

**CARRIED**

**(g) GENERAL INFORMATION / OTHER BUSINESS (Item 10)**

**(i) Correspondence from Sharon Colville and other Residents respecting the Potential Sale of DARTS (This document contained 30 signatures.) (Item 10.1)**

**(B. Johnson/Conley)**

That the correspondence, containing 30 signatures, submitted by Sharon Colville and other residents respecting the Potential Sale of DARTS, be received.

**CARRIED**

**(h) ADJOURNMENT (Item 13)**

**(Pearson/B. Johnson)**

That, there being no further business, the General Issues Committee, be adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

**CARRIED**

Respectfully submitted,

T. Whitehead, Deputy Mayor  
Chair, General Issues Committee

Stephanie Paparella  
Legislative Coordinator  
Office of the City Clerk