




INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Public Works Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	April 3, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	ATS Eligibility Audit Management Response Report (PW21055(b)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Michelle Martin (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2765
SUBMITTED BY:	Maureen Cosyn Heath Director, Transit Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

At its meeting on November 18, 2019, the Public Works Committee approved the following (Item 10.6):

WHEREAS, the number of riders has increased by 78% since 2013;

WHEREAS, 17,000 clients are registered and about half use the service;

WHEREAS, in 2019, 787,226 trips were taken, so the average person uses it 87 times per year;

WHEREAS, cost has increased significantly in recent years;

WHEREAS, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), requires we only charge the same as a bus fare; and

WHEREAS, since the service started in 1975, we have done no reassessment of any of the 17,000 clients, which AODA permits.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the City Auditor General be requested to complete an eligibility audit of clients registered for the Disabled and Aged

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

**SUBJECT: ATS Eligibility Audit Management Response Report (PW21055(b))
(City Wide) – Page 2 of 7**

Regional Transportation Service (DARTS) and report back to the Public Works Committee in Q1 2020.

Audit outcomes (AUD20009) were presented by the Office of the City Auditor to the Public Works Committee at its meeting on December 7, 2020. At this meeting, the Committee approved the following (Item 9.1):

- (a) That Appendices “A”, “C”, and “D” of Report AUD20009, respecting the Accessible Transportation Service (ATS) Eligibility Audit Report, be received;
- (b) That the Management Responses as detailed in revised Appendix “B” be approved; and
- (c) That the General Manager of Public Works, be directed to instruct the appropriate staff to have the Management Responses implemented.

Following presentation of PW21055(a), the Public Works Committee approved the following at its meeting on April 22, 2022 (Item 8.1)

- (a) That the Director of Transit be given delegated authority to create and administer a Policy for applications to Accessible Transportation Services (ATS) services, including making subsequent revisions to the Policy and associated forms and ancillary documents in their reasonable discretion as may be required, so that ATS can conduct a records management exercise for the safety of its clients, expected to conclude by June of 2023.
- (b) That no eligibility re-assessments be undertaken during the above process as set out in (a).
- (c) That the Director of Transit be given delegated authority to update and revise the existing 2005 Accessible Transportation Services Policy entitled Trip No Shows, Late Cancellations and Excessive Cancellations (Appendix “A” attached to Report PW05051 – Policy 2005-01) on an ongoing basis in their reasonable discretion.
- (d) That staff be directed to report back to Public Works Committee and the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities on a quarterly basis respecting Accessible Transportation Services (ATS).
- (e) That staff be directed to undertake a (Re)envision-based voice of customer consultation process to consider service design and customer experience for users of Accessible Transit Services (ATS) and that this

consultation will include broad stakeholder engagement, including, but not limited to, existing ATS registrants, DARTS, ACPD and SAC and any other applicable groups.

INFORMATION

This report will highlight key steps taken to date to implement AUD20009 recommendations (revised Appendix “B” attached to Report AUD20009), related consultant recommendations (Appendix “A” attached to Report PW21055) and the directions from Public Works Committee as outlined above. A more detailed summary table of AUD20009 recommendations and progress to date are found in Appendix “A” attached to Report PW21055(b).

The continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, including the reassignment of three ATS staff to the city-wide COVID-19 vaccination effort, has resulted in a delay to implement some AUD20009 recommendations, as has the unplanned work undertaken by ATS in support of the Auditor General as they investigated both contractor vehicle safety (AUD22007) and misuse of the Taxi Scrip program (AUD22009).

Demand for ATS trips remain well below pre-pandemic levels, and at the time of writing, sit at approximately 54% of 2019 demand, and approximately 79% (454,617 trips completed) of the 2022 budget. It is therefore anticipated that all expenditures outlined below can be accommodated in the existing 2023 budget.

In Q3 of 2023, ATS will present an update to this report regarding the recommendations from AUD 20009 and related consultant recommendations that will impact the 2024 budget. These include:

- increase the trip conditions that are applied when making determinations of conditional eligibility;
- upgrade existing scheduling software and software training to enable effective application of trip conditions when determining eligibility for individual trips according to client functional ability;
- allow for in-person, on-site evaluation of functional ability to use transit;
- reassess all existing clients at regular intervals;
- pilot integration of specialized and conventional transit on two HSR corridors; and
- implement an in-house, expanded travel training program to support improvements to conventional transit accessibility.

Application Process

Eligibility for Accessible Transportation Services is determined through an application process. As described in PW21055(a) - Accessible Transportation Services Eligibility

**SUBJECT: ATS Eligibility Audit Management Response Report (PW21055(b))
(City Wide) – Page 4 of 7**

Audit Management Response, ATS has implemented some immediate improvements to its application form, including:

- more clarity around the nature of the door-to-door service provided;
- updated language in notices regarding the collection and sharing of personal information, and in the sections where consent is signed;
- the removal of Recreational Therapist from the list of care providers who can sign Part Two of the application and the addition of regulated, licensed Social Worker (Master of Social Work); and
- a shorter version of the application form for residents of Long-Term Care facilities, as residents of LTC are unconditionally eligible.

Prior to the release of the updated application form last spring, ATS customer care representatives received training on privacy, confidentiality and consent with the City Corporate Privacy Specialist. Procedures for staff to support contacts with clients, and/or their healthcare professionals and agencies, including follow up with incomplete or outdated applications, were created (AUD20009 Recommendations 5 and 14).

Once applications are received and prior to approval, there is an occasional need to have the application reviewed by a third party for assessment purposes. Following the end of the contract with the previous vendor in 2020, and through a request for proposal procurement process in 2022, ATS has contracted to Bayshore Healthcare (Bayshore) to provide third-party functional assessments for ATS eligibility as required, where information from the application form is insufficient to allow a determination of eligibility. Bayshore has just begun the work of clearing the backlog of approximately 100 ATS applicants flagged for assessment since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, who were assigned temporary eligibility status until in-person assessment could resume. Once the backlog is cleared, Bayshore will begin assessing new files as they are received (AUD20009 Recommendations 1, 3, 5 and 6).

Now that Bayshore is on board, a second revision of the ATS application forms will happen in consultation with the expertise of the Occupational Therapists employed by Bayshore, once they have used the current application long enough to identify any further gaps or opportunities for improvement (AUD20009 Recommendations 2 and 14). ATS is targeting Q3 of 2023 for the next application form update.

In October of 2022, ATS hired a Supervisor of Accessible Transportation Services with a background in disability supports and assessment, at no impact to budget. The ATS Manager and Supervisor oversee referrals to Bayshore and validate invoices for this service. ATS will also implement a formal internal application processing quality control procedure to be overseen by the ATS Supervisor (AUD20009 Recommendations 3, 4, 6, 12 and 14) in Q1 of 2023.

**SUBJECT: ATS Eligibility Audit Management Response Report (PW21055(b))
(City Wide) – Page 5 of 7**

ATS has been able to allocate internal resources to update existing records through a reapplication process to begin Q1 of 2023, and its internal procedure for this purpose aligns with the Public Works Committee direction above that no eligibility reassessments be undertaken during this exercise, at this time (AUD20009 Recommendation 7).

Travel Training

Travel training is a program designed to support people to use accessible conventional transit successfully, and focuses on how to safely board, alight, transfer and use HSR schedules and travel applications. In Q1 of 2021, ATS contracted the development of a virtual and streamlined program during COVID, within the existing 2021 budget and at a lower cost than the previous contract which focused on intensive, in-person training for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Overall, results of this virtual training program were inconclusive, with a total of 28 participants completing training out of the 50 who attended classes, and not enough participants completing both pre- and post-questionnaires to adequately assess whether knowledge gained would effectively divert trips from ATS to conventional transit on the HSR.

Though ATS is not renewing this contract, we are providing direction to the vendor in Q1 of 2023 for their continued use of the City-funded curriculum they developed under the terms of the original signed agreements, to continue to support individuals with intellectual/ developmental disabilities to review community safety and travel skills as part of their own suite of services, rather than as a program funded by the HSR.

The report prepared by Dillon Consulting had recommended bringing oversight for travel training in-house and tying it to the introduction of integrated transit and training for applicants who can execute part of their trip on accessible, conventional transit (Appendix “A” to Report PW21055). ATS is targeting Q4 of 2023 to review options for travel training delivery as part of an integrated transit pilot (see below) (AUD 20009 Recommendations 8 and 11).

Integrated Transit

HSR will develop a pilot for integrated transit in 2023. This pilot will identify potential on-demand transit zones and transfer points suitable for integrated trips, determine the specific vehicle requirements needed to deliver them, and identify next steps to implementing an integrated service delivery plan (AUD20009 Recommendation 8). To this end, HSR has applied for Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) funding to acquire smaller accessible transit vehicles for deployment in potential geographic zones where integrated service can be piloted (PW19083(a)/FCS18048(b)), including the purchase of accessible Supervisor vehicles to support emergency and incident

**SUBJECT: ATS Eligibility Audit Management Response Report (PW21055(b))
(City Wide) – Page 6 of 7**

management, as recommended by Dillon consulting (Appendix “A” to Report PW21055).

ATS will also investigate using this fleet as part of a contingency plan to support the delivery of specialized transit when contractor service is interrupted, as part of our response to AUD22007 (contractor vehicle safety) recommendations.

Trip No Shows and Late Cancellations

HSR is currently working with our contractor for specialized transit, DARTS, and our software provider, Trapeze, to install an updated service infraction application to track late cancellations and no shows according to the points system outlined in PW21055(a) to apply policy as directed by Council, above. The goal is to improve scheduling efficiency and, through this, increase the availability of trips on the existing service and the potential success of the integrated transit pilot (AUD20009 Recommendation 8).

Trip no shows and late cancellations occur based on the client’s actions when they are unable to keep their pre-booked trips, which can happen for a multitude of reasons. However, no shows and late cancellations lock up trips which cannot be offered to other clients and make the overall service less efficient. Individual circumstances beyond a client’s control will be considered when applying the points system and including an appeals process.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s)

At the April 22, 2022, Public Works Committee meeting, the Committee moved that ATS undergo a (Re)envision-style exercise for specialized service. ATS will use an external consultant to align customer satisfaction work with the HSR (Re)envision Guiding Principles to shape future service options based on the voice of the customer and inform the planned integrated transit pilot.

ATS has reported performance indicators quarterly to the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities and the Public Works Committee (PW22079 and PW22079(a)). At time of writing, reporting to date includes 2019-21, and Q1-Q3 of 2022.

The Transit Division is working to move all KPI reporting for both conventional service and specialized service to an improved format. Meanwhile, reports continue to be pulled manually each month, including to track application turnaround times and completeness (AUD20009 Recommendation 13).

**SUBJECT: ATS Eligibility Audit Management Response Report (PW21055(b))
(City Wide) – Page 7 of 7**

It should be noted that the Office of the City Auditor has not completed any work to validate the current status of the Management response to AUD20009.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report PW21055(b) – Detailed Summary of AUD20009
Recommendation Response Progress as of 2022