

Audit Of Greater Sudbury Transit - Handi Transit Services

By: Brian Bigger, Auditor General
On: August 9, 2011
To: Audit committee

Objectives

- The audit was conducted as a program audit from the approved annual audit plan which provides audit resources to review Transit related activities.
- The primary objectives of this audit were to assist Council with an independent evaluation of the quality of stewardship and opportunities to enhance value for money in operations through more effective, economical and/or efficient management of Transit services.
- According to the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan, April 2003, it was the City's goal "to integrate as many riders as possible on our accessible conventional transit system while providing a parallel system for those citizens who cannot access our highly accessible route system".
- With Transit Management's input, the Auditor General's Office developed a ranking of inherent risks to determine the higher risk areas within Handi Transit. These risk areas were included in the scope of the audit.

Audit Methodology

- The audit methodology included the following:
 - Conducted interviews with Transit management;
 - Conducted interviews with employees of Student Transportation Inc.;
 - Conducted an interview with the Chair of the Accessibility Committee;
 - Reviewed and analyzed relevant background information and operating information;
 - Reviewed bus stop design standards
 - Reviewed and discussed findings with management.

Brief History of Handi Transit

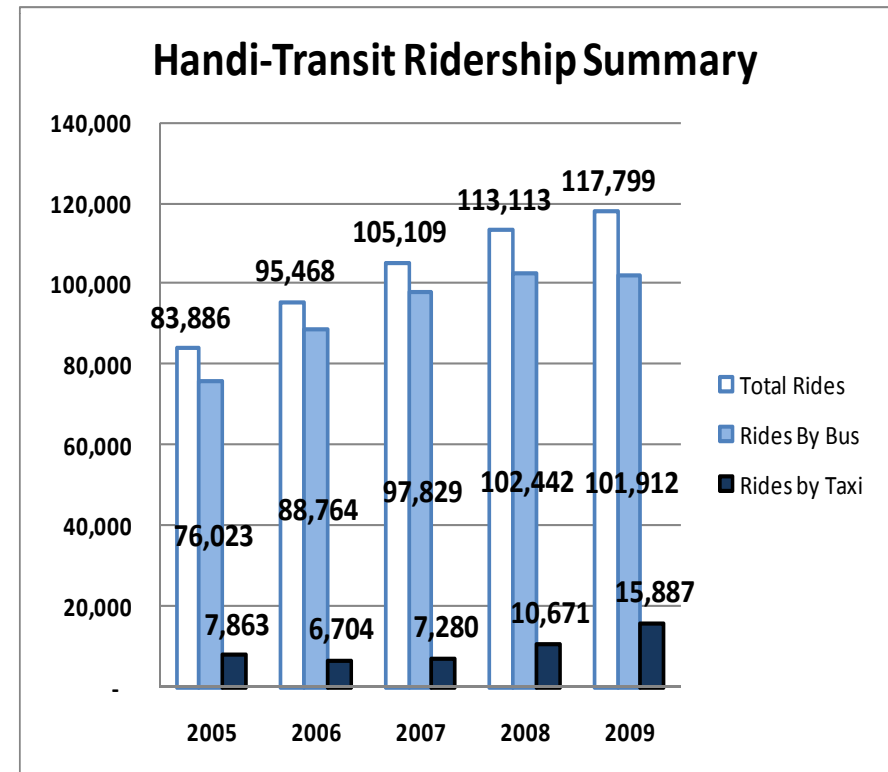
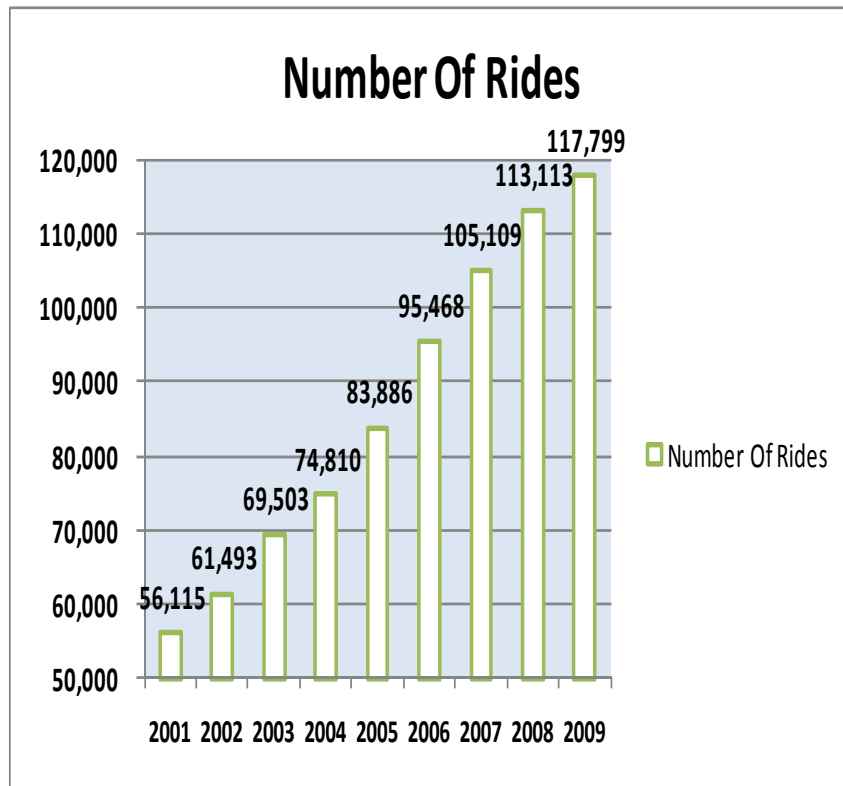
- Sudbury Transit was established in 1972
- In 1993, the former City of Sudbury introduced a Full Accessibility Plan for Sudbury Transit with a goal of ensuring “easier access”. At that time, Sudbury Transit began acquiring buses with accessibility features.
- Prior to the current contract, Handi Transit Services were delivered through a number of independent contracts, each limited to service within boundaries of the former City of Sudbury and former outlying municipalities.
- In 2001, Council approved a 5 year harmonization plan between Handi Transit and Conventional Transit Services that sought to remove these geographic boundaries.

Brief History of Handi Transit

- In 2002, Council approved the removal of the Handi Transit boundaries and adopted a central dispatch system.
- In 2004, Council approved the addition of two new Handi Transit buses to meet ridership demands.
- In 2005, Handi transit became fully harmonized with the conventional system.
- In 2011, Handi Transit will operate with fourteen specialized accessible buses, (supplemented with conventional taxi services) and all sixty Conventional Transit buses will provide low-floor accessible service over regular transit routes.

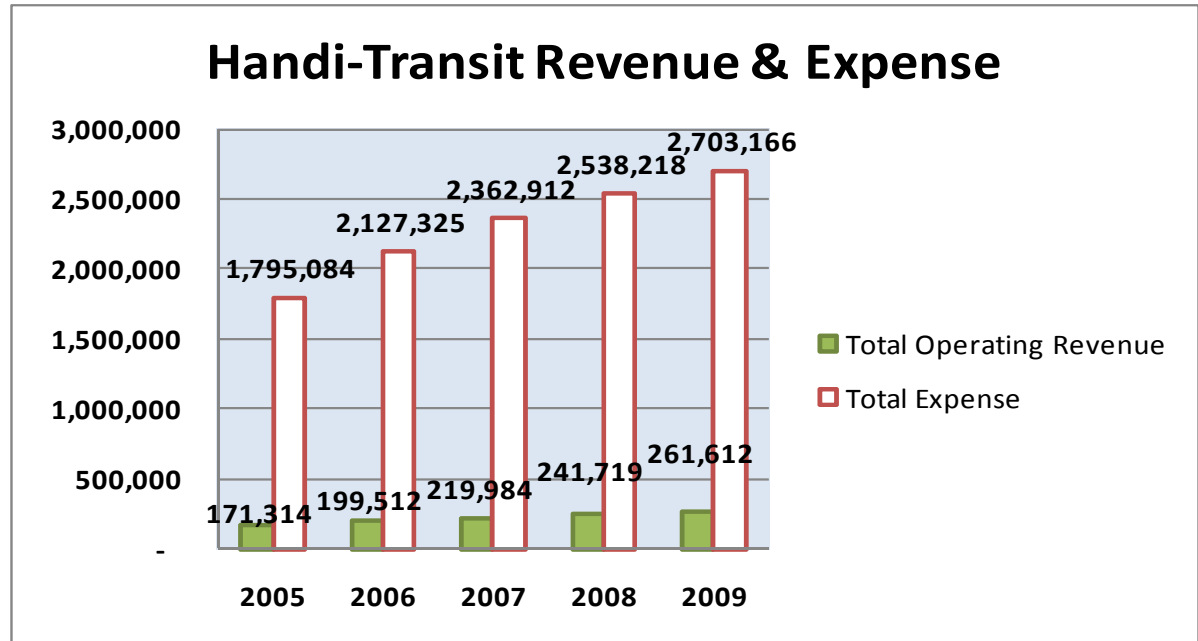
Historical Performance Measures and Operating Trends

- In fact, The City of Greater Sudbury's Handi Transit services have been so successful, that demand has grown by 40 percent since 2005, to deliver 117,799 rides in 2009.



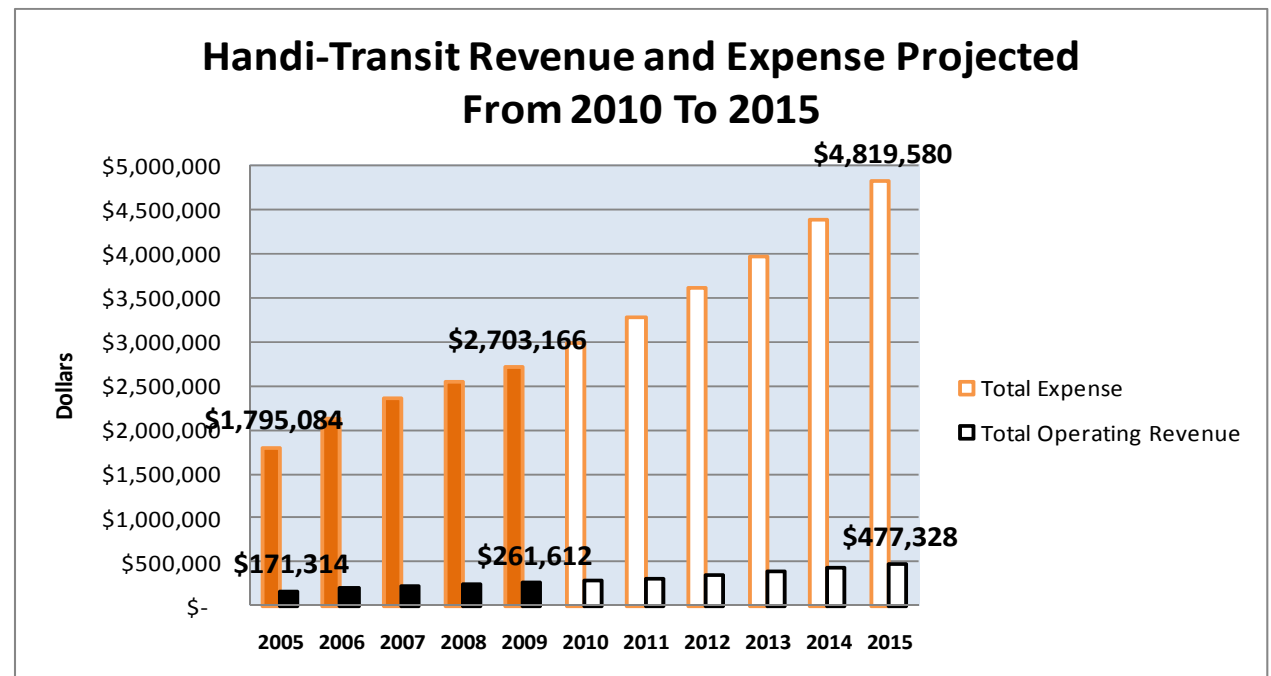
Historical Performance Measures and Operating Trends

- Over the same time period, operating costs increased by 51 percent (\$908,000), averaging ten percent per year.



Historical Performance Measures and Operating Trends

- The Auditors have noted that the Total Operating Cost of this program was \$1.8 million in 2005, however, if the rate of growth observed between 2001 and 2009 continues, this program could cost in excess of \$4.8 million per year by 2015.



Recommendations

- **Improvements In Planning Required To Demonstrate The Achievement Of Value For Money**

1. Transit should put together a long term strategy for Handi Transit that considers the impact of the continuous growth in demand for Handi Transit Services on future costs. Expected long term outcomes, desired levels of service and funding needs for this program should be clearly identified to enable an evaluation of the achievement of value for money.

(From Transit Committee minutes and Council minutes, this trending information had not been provided by management to Transit Committee minutes and Council)

- **Initiatives To Encourage Persons With Disabilities To Use Conventional Transportation Services**

2. Transit Services should offer free ride incentives (limited trials), and bus transfers (to conventional transit), to encourage riders eligible of Handi Transit. This will encourage increased use of, and familiarity with the conventional transit system.

Recommendations

- **Review of Eligibility Requirements**

- 3. With Transit's fleet comprising of 100 percent low floor buses by mid 2011, Transit Services should take the opportunity to work with the Accessibility Committee to revisit the eligibility requirements for Handi Transit, and to evaluate the possibility of offering seasonal passes.

- **Analysis of Rider Pick-Up / Drop off Locations and Routes**

- 4. Management should collect the pickup and drop off data for all Handi Transit rides from the Handi transit service provider. This data can aid management in future route planning and bus stop placement decisions on the conventional transit system.
- 5. As it is current Transit policy that drivers can make a special request stops, this information should be communicated through Transit's website, and other information sources.

Recommendations

- **Focus On Accessibility of Bus Stops Nearest Handi Transit User Destinations**
 - 6. Management should collect the pickup and drop off data for all Handi Transit rides from the Handi transit service provider. This data can aid management in future route planning and bus stop placement decisions on the conventional transit system.