

Background

As per the Miscellaneous User Fee By-Law (<https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/by-laws/pdf-documents/user-fee-2017-24/>), Handi-Transit Cash Fares, 5 or 10 Ride Cards, and 31 Day Pass user fees are equal to the conventional fixed route fare structure. Photo I.D. cards are not required for reduced fare usage on the Handi-Transit system. The 5 or 10 Ride Cards and 31 Day Passes are non-transferable between Greater Sudbury Transit and the Handi-Transit systems.

In 2015, Greater Sudbury Transit's average cost per passenger for specialized transit services was \$25.82, as compared to an average cost per passenger of \$4.59 for conventional transit in the same year. (CUTA Factbook, 2015) Due to the costly nature of providing specialized services, measures should be in place to ensure that only those who require specialized services are requesting trips, thereby reducing capacity constraints and ensuring a proper level of service for those in need.

As the conventional fixed route system consists of a 100% accessible fleet, the barrier for a mobility restricted user to choose this system as their mode of transportation is generally based on their ability to arrive at a bus stop. Where the ability to do so is not restricted by environmental factors, the conventional fixed route system provides the flexibility to travel spontaneously without having to book a trip two days in advance. The conventional fixed route system thereby becomes a more convenient mode of transportation.

Measures should be in place to ensure that only those who require specialized service are requesting trips, reducing capacity constraints and ensuring a proper level of service for those in need. Removing the condition means the transition from specialized to conventional service will be facilitated by removing the financial barrier on the individual user.

Impact of Current Practice

The most cost-effective ways to manage specialized transportation costs is to encourage mobility restricted users to take conventional transit. As per our current practice, non-transferable passes limit travel choices for individuals who use the Handi-Transit system extensively.

For example, an eligible Handi-Transit user who requires daily transportation will buy a 31 day pass. Should the user prefer to utilize the accessible conventional fixed route system for travel requirements, the user is currently required to pay an additional fare for each trip.

The current practice creates a barrier to shifting mobility choices toward conventional fixed route travel, as it poses a financial constraint to the user. This practice also contributes to capacity constraints within the specialized transit service, leaving some trips un-accommodated for those who require the service.

Operational Considerations

There are no significant operational requirements implicated in allowing eligible Handi-Transit users to take the conventional system. Two operational considerations will be required:

- Handi-Transit buses are not equipped with Electronic Fareboxes, and as such require a custom fare media card system. On the conventional system, operators will be required to manually record the rides in the electronic farebox.
- Only Handi-Transit passes would be transferable onto the conventional fixed route system. Passes for the conventional system cannot be accepted on Handi-Transit, as they are not equipped with fareboxes.

AODA Transportation Standard – Fares, Support Persons

Greater Sudbury Transit is currently compliant with AODA Transportation Standards as it relates to Support Persons.

As per the AODA Transportation Standard section 38 (1), Fares, Support Persons; no conventional transportation service provider and no specialized transportation service provider shall charge a fare to a support person who is accompanying a person with a disability where the person with a disability has a need for a support person. Further in section 38 (2), it is the responsibility of a person with a disability to demonstrate to a transportation service provider described in subsection (1) their need for a support person to accompany them on the conventional or specialized transportation service and to ensure that the appropriate designation for a support person is in place.

- **Handi-Transit Support Person Application Requirements:**
When completing the eligibility application, the applicant must identify the requirement for a support person which is recorded on their Handi-Transit profile. A Support Person Assistance Card is not required; however, all trips must be taken with a Support Person without exception.
- **Conventional Support Person Application Requirements:**
The Support Person Assistance Card applies only to Greater Sudbury Transit and is issued to the holder who, because of a disability, requires support to assist with their travel needs. The application process requires a health care professional to confirm the applicant's eligibility for the card. Applications are available through the Transit Kiosk, Citizen Service Centers and www.greatersudbury.ca/transit. Once completed and approved, a card holder can travel on the conventional fixed route service with a Support Person - the Support Person does not have to pay a fare.

Conclusion

It is recommended that the condition of non-transferable passes be removed from the Miscellaneous User Fee By-Law. The operational requirements as described in this report would be considered in the implementation, and a system is currently in place to ensure that an individual requiring support to travel can do so without having to pay two fares. These changes in practice would provide flexibility for the user in choosing the right service provided by Greater Sudbury Transit for their unique travel needs. In turn, the shift from specialized to conventional transit will alleviate some of the capacity issues being experienced in the Handi-Transit system, and increase ridership on the conventional fixed route system.

Next Steps

Greater Sudbury Transit will continue to look for ways to encourage mobility restricted users to choose the accessible conventional service as their mode of transportation.