



# Wheelchair Accessible Transportation by Taxi and Inter-city Bus in British Columbia





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

British Columbia's population is aging and growing. The percentage of people with a disability is rising. These trends are projected to continue for more than two decades. They have implications for accessible transportation services.

The Passenger Transportation Board ("Board") is an independent tribunal. It approves licences in British Columbia for taxis, limousines and other small passenger vehicles as well as inter-city buses.

In March 2011, the Board published a Discussion Paper called "Accessible Transportation in British Columbia". The Board wrote the paper to:

1. Improve its understanding of the transportation needs of people with mobility challenges
2. Improve its understanding of vehicles, services and strategies for meeting those needs
3. Assess marketplace opportunities, as well as the challenges, for enhancing or expanding wheelchair accessible services

The Board received 46 responses to its paper from a broad range of stakeholders. Many were from associations or agencies representing seniors, persons with disabilities, and community organizations. As well, we received comments from taxi owners' associations and drivers.

This report documents what the Board learned and what it sees as key issues. It focuses on:

- Wheelchair accessible vehicles; and
- Vehicles within the Board's regulatory scope (i.e. taxis and inter-city buses).

The report acknowledges that the term "accessibility" is broader than wheelchair accessible vehicles. This report addresses some issues that relate more generally to the transportation of people with disabilities. For example, it describes some innovations for assisting persons with a visual impairment.

Section A of the report is on “Licensing and Accessibility”. It reviews licensing and regulations for wheelchair accessible taxis and inter-city buses. The section reviews the Board’s mandate and application policies and procedures. The move by some jurisdictions to set customer service standards for taxis is discussed. Standards may help regulators determine the percentage of accessible taxis that are needed to achieve a desired level of service.

This section lists actions that the Board is taking on service standards, application requirements, flip seats and an expansion of the Taxi Bill of Rights.

Part B deals with training. This is an important part of a taxi company’s operation. Taxi driver training was raised as a concern by many people who responded to the Discussion Paper. Safety was a key concern. The report outlines training programs in British Columbia and identifies key training issues. Outside the Lower Mainland there is little, if any, driver training through a training institution. A number of individuals and groups stressed the importance of providing drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis with hands-on training. Certification of these drivers might be beneficial. Regardless of location, drivers of accessible taxis should receive specialized training that includes such things as theory with respect to disabilities, hands-on training, standardized curriculum and delivery methods, testing and certification, and periodic retraining. Also, drivers of conventional taxis should be trained to provide service to people with a range of disabilities. A number of organizations who responded to the discussion paper displayed an interest in helping to improve training. The Board encourages training institutions, interested groups and taxi companies to develop training plans and programs that can be delivered in many parts of the province.

Section C addresses the financial challenges and opportunities associated with wheelchair accessible taxis. These vehicles cost more to run than conventional taxis. This is due in part to the cost of converting conventional vans to accessible vans and the higher cost of fuel. The report provides a menu of options that governments, communities and companies could implement to address cost issues.

Section D discusses customer service. Taxi associations indicated that many companies have a policy of “door to door” service. This benefits seniors and people with disabilities. The Board encourages taxi companies to adopt this policy. Municipal parking restrictions in some cities may impede a taxi’s ability to load or unload a person with a disability near his or her location. The Board encourages the taxi industry and stakeholders to work together to address these issues. The lifts and interior of wheelchair accessible taxis have size and weight limits. Some wheelchair and scooters may exceed these limits. Therefore, the taxi will not be able to transport these devices. The Board encourages companies to publish the maximum size and weight of equipment they can carry in their vehicles.

Section E of the Report reviews potential service enhancements such as central dispatch for taxi service, taxi fare announcers for persons with a visual impairment and touch screens with “voice over” options.

Section F discusses accessibility of inter-city buses. Extra-provincial bus operators are subject to the federal government’s Intercity Bus Code of Practice. The largest inter-city bus provider in British Columbia is an extra-provincial operator. This Code does not apply to intra-provincial bus operators. The Board has sparse information about the accessibility of intra-provincial carriers, many of whom have relatively small routes. We will consult with these operators to review their accessibility services. We will publish our findings.





**“The United Way of the Lower Mainland supports 10 seniors-led community planning tables in the region, all of which are addressing seniors’ issues in their local areas. To date, roughly 400 seniors belonging to these tables have focussed on seniors’ transportation issues more than any other issue.”**

*– Beverley Pitman,  
PhD  
United Way of the  
Lower Mainland*

## INTRODUCTION

British Columbia’s population is aging. It is one of the oldest in Canada. The percentage of people with a disability is rising. The highest disability rates are related to mobility. British Columbia’s population is also growing.

These trends are projected to continue for more than two decades. As a result, we expect the need for accessible transportation will grow<sup>1</sup>.

Accessible transportation is important to people in British Columbia. It is particularly important for people with disabilities and seniors.

The Passenger Transportation Board (“Board”) is an independent tribunal. It published a Discussion Paper called Accessible Transportation in British Columbia. The Board posted the paper on its website on March 16, 2011. It was also distributed to many stakeholder groups in British Columbia.

The Board wrote the paper with the following aims:

1. To improve the Board’s understanding of the transportation needs of people with mobility challenges
2. To improve the Board’s understanding of vehicles, services and strategies for meeting those needs
3. To assess marketplace opportunities, as well as the challenges, for enhancing or expanding wheelchair accessible services

The Board produced the Discussion Paper independently of any licence application. We wanted to get a general, forward-looking view of trends and issues that relate to the transportation of people with disabilities, especially those who use a wheelchair or scooter.

The Discussion Paper included basic information, statistics and research.<sup>2</sup> This material was provided to stimulate discussion about wheelchair accessible taxis and inter-city buses that are licensed by

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for demographic statistics and trend information.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendices 1 and 2 for key statistics that were included in the Discussion Paper.

the Board. We received 46 responses. A cross-section of stakeholders provided input:

- People with disabilities, health care professionals as well as a parent who provides care for a child with a disability.
- Staff and elected officials for local governments in large urban areas and smaller communities.
- Representatives of municipal accessibility and 'moving up' committees
- Advocacy groups for people with disabilities
- Seniors
- Taxi owners' associations
- A taxi drivers' association
- Licensees (taxis and inter-city buses)
- Researchers

The Board also received guidance from members of its Adhoc Advisory Group on Accessible Transportation. This group met once before the Discussion Paper was published. It met once afterwards. See "Acknowledgements" in Appendix 3.

This report documents what the Board learned since publishing the Discussion Paper, and what it sees as key issues. It lists actions the Board is taking now. It sets out steps that will take more Board work. It also encourages companies and organizations to consider ways they can help improve the accessibility of taxis and inter-city buses in British Columbia. The report includes some specific suggestions. Appendix 4 lists Board actions and suggestions that are found throughout this report.

This report addresses accessibility challenges in urban areas, regional population centres and smaller communities in the province. It provides a "2011 snapshot" of key issues that exist. It also identifies new issues on the horizon. We hope it serves as a useful reference for people who have an interest in these issues.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is about accessible transportation in British Columbia. It discusses wheelchair accessible taxis and wheelchair accessible inter-city buses. The accessibility of inter-city buses is the focus of Section F. Part of Section A relates to inter-city buses. Other parts of this report relate to accessible taxi matters.

This report relates to vehicles that require a passenger transportation licence approved by the Passenger Transportation Board. The emphasis on “vehicle type” matches the categorization of licence types in the Passenger Transportation Act. This emphasis also reflects the types of decisions that are made by the Passenger Transportation Board.

This report uses terms that are defined in Appendix 5.

## A. LICENSING AND ACCESSIBILITY

This section summarizes current accessibility standards for taxis and inter-city buses. In general terms, accessibility standards relate to the availability of accessible transportation services and quality of those services. This section also describes how the Board intends to raise these standards through its licensing policies and decisions.

### Universal Taxi Rates

In British Columbia, there is no rate distinction between wheelchair accessible taxis and conventional taxis. Universal rates have existed for many years. This approach is consistent with principles set out in section 8(1) of the BC Human Rights Code. See Appendix 6 for a copy of section 8.

### Taxi Regulations

In British Columbia, wheelchair accessible taxis are vehicles that have been modified after purchase from a vehicle manufacturer. Taxi companies often purchase a Dodge Caravan or Toyota Sienna to modify for use as an accessible taxi. These vehicles must meet provincial vehicle standards. See [Division 44 of the Motor Vehicle Act Regulations](#). These regulations include requirements for ramps and tie downs that secure both the mobility aid and a passenger seated in a mobility aid. We note the interest of members of the Board's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Accessible Transportation in a regulation that requires drivers to secure passengers with an occupant restraint system that is anchored to the vehicle. (See [Division 44.8<sup>3</sup>](#)) Vehicle regulations are administered by the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement and Safety Branch. This Branch is part of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Accessible taxis are subject to vehicle safety inspections every six months.

### Passenger Transportation Licensing

To operate a wheelchair accessible taxi or inter-city bus in British Columbia, the operator needs a passenger transportation licence with special authorization. The Board approves applications to provide these



*Figure 1: A Toyota Sienna converted to a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (Victoria)*

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<sup>3</sup> CSA Standards Z605-03. Safety regulators last reviewed and reaffirmed this standard in 2008.

**“The accessible taxi vans in BC are dual purpose which helps them to stay financially viable..”**

– Mohan Kang,  
President

types of transportation services. It considers the following questions when deciding whether to approve a licence application<sup>4</sup>:

- a) Is there a public need for the applicant’s proposed service?
- b) Is the applicant fit, proper and capable of providing the service?
- c) Would approving the application promote sound economic conditions in the transportation business in BC?

The Board requires applicants to provide evidence that there is a public need. The Board, an independent tribunal, bases its decisions on materials it receives during the application process. When the Board approves a licence, it sets terms and conditions for the operation of the passenger transportation service. Board decisions are made in response to applications it receives.

### **Wheelchair Accessible Taxis**

In British Columbia, wheelchair accessible taxis are “dual use” vehicles. They can be used to carry passengers seated in a wheelchair or mobility device. They can also be used to carry passengers who do not use these devices. Dual-usage improves the affordability of adding wheelchair accessible taxis to a fleet. This may enable taxi companies to offer wheelchair accessible services.

Taxi companies may operate conventional taxis or wheelchair accessible taxis. The Board’s policy aims to have accessible taxis available in urban areas in British Columbia<sup>5</sup>. The Board also expects that accessible taxis are used on a priority basis to serve people with a mobility disability. Thus, the Board often sets specific requirements in the terms and conditions of licence. Here are some common examples:

When the Board finds that a need exists for wheelchair accessible taxicabs, part of the licensee’s fleet is designated as wheelchair accessible taxis. When the taxi company is operating the maximum number of vehicles that their licence allows, the designated wheelchair accessible taxis must be operated. Taxi companies typically operate

<sup>4</sup> See section 28(1) of the *Passenger Transportation Act*.

<sup>5</sup> See the Board’s accessible taxi web page for policy links: [http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/ptb/accessible\\_transportation.htm](http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/ptb/accessible_transportation.htm)

a full fleet. Taxi companies can replace any conventional taxi with a wheelchair accessible taxi. In practice, this is not common.

**“It was disappointing to read in the Discussion Paper that, despite having one of the oldest populations in Canada, of the seven taxis licensed to operate in the Parksville area, none were wheelchair accessible. We appreciate the (Passenger) Transportation Board considering requiring a minimum number of taxis in each community to be wheelchair accessible, rather than each local government needing to establish this requirement by bylaw.”<sup>7</sup>**

*– His Worship Teunis Westbroek, Mayor  
Town of Qualicum Beach*

Update: Since the Discussion Paper was distributed in March 2011, the number of taxis licensed to operate in the Parksville area increased from seven to eight. Of these eight, two must be wheelchair accessible taxis.

The Board may require that wheelchair accessible vehicles be in a fleet even when an applicant did not apply for accessible transportation. It may consider the local characteristics of a community before making these decisions. This may include demographics, the number of accessible vehicles in operation and the size of the community. It may set an hours-of-operation requirement. For example, it may require that one or more accessible vehicles be operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- On an application-basis, the Board may approve a company’s request to install flip-down seats (“flip seats”) in the area where wheelchairs and scooters are transported<sup>6</sup>. This makes wheelchair accessible taxis more versatile and gives operators more opportunities for commercial use.
- Applicants proposing to use wheelchair accessible taxis or use flip seats must give the Board a Priority Dispatch Plan. This plan includes policies and procedures which ensure that people with a disability get priority usage of wheelchair accessible taxis.

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6 See the Board’s Industry Advisory on [Flip Seat Authorizations](#) for more information and a link to the policy itself.

7 The Discussion Paper included the table “Accessible Taxi Supply in BC.” See appendix 2 in this document for an updated version of this table.

A number of responses to the Discussion Paper related to the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis. Some people commented on the lack or absence of wheelchair accessible taxis. The Board received a suggestion that the Board require at least one taxi in every community in British Columbia. These types of comments were common in large, medium-sized and smaller communities. It was also a common theme among people who represent local government or persons with disabilities.

The Board makes licensing decisions in response to the applications it receives. Established Board policy emphasizes the need to look at the characteristics of the local community when making these decisions. Markets, needs and issues vary from community to community. Taxis are operated as businesses seeking to make a profit or income.

### **Accessibility Standards and Performance**

Some jurisdictions set customer service standards for licensed taxis and regulate the collection of operational data. Los Angeles does this now. Recent reports show that Calgary is preparing to move in this direction. Brisbane, Australia, is working to build the capacity of taxi companies to monitor and publicly report their performance. Public reporting promotes adherence to service standards set by regulators.

The approaches described above are of interest to the Board. They may be applied to conventional and accessible taxis. The following excerpt shows the potential approach to data reporting and service standards. This excerpt is taken from a report that the City of Calgary commissioned from the consulting firm Hara & Associates Inc.

By looking at data collection, standard setting and reporting, it is possible to quantify the percentage of accessible taxis that are needed in a fleet to achieve a desired level of service. Percentages will vary from one city or town to another, depending on local factors.

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8 This is an excerpt from a draft published for public consultation at [http://www.calgary.ca/PDA/DBA/Documents/livery\\_transport\\_services/TLAC-2011/Taxi-Supply-Demand-Ratio-Att2-TLAC2011-63.pdf](http://www.calgary.ca/PDA/DBA/Documents/livery_transport_services/TLAC-2011/Taxi-Supply-Demand-Ratio-Att2-TLAC2011-63.pdf)

**“A set of monthly reports by taxi companies is recommended for a reporting and service quality monitoring framework. They include measures of trip volume, dispatch response time, vehicles available by time of day, and telephone response times. Separate measures are recommended for accessible taxi service. (Temporary) exemptions from reporting are proposed for small taxi companies... Once a reporting standard is in place the question of service standards will arise... Service standards for dispatch of accessible taxis are necessarily different. The lower number of accessible taxis means the average distance between the closest one and a wheelchair user will be larger than the average between a general service user and any available taxi... For example, if 85% of regular service dispatch trips were expected to arrive within 15 minutes, then a consistent service target for the accessible taxi fleet responding to accessible taxi requests would be 77% arriving within 15 minutes.”**

*– Hara Associates Inc.*

*Taxi Supply Demand Ratio for the City of Calgary*

*Phase II: Measurable Service Standards<sup>8</sup>*

Such measures may make it easier for companies, the public and the Board to access fact-based information on key issues such as passenger wait times. It can lead to improvements in customer service and business performance. Data that is collected can assist the Board in making application decisions respecting the need for more taxis.

The Board intends do more work on the use of taxi service standards and the capacity of companies to collect and report service data. It intends to research ways of measuring taxi demand and service standards. This initiative aims to improve both conventional and accessible taxi services. It is a significant undertaking that will require research and consultation. The Board is starting the work this year.

## **Board Action 1**

The Board will, in consultation with the taxi industry:

- a) research the future use of taxi service standards
- b) review its accessible taxi policy in light of this initiative



**“Our community has the two Go Buses that have multiple wheelchair spaces... the hours of service are quite limited. No one can be picked up later than 3:30 because the Go Bus stops service at 4:00... Seniors who want to go to any kind of activity in the evenings have to hope that someone has a vehicle equipped to transport them. Movies, plays and dinners out are all unavailable to most persons with mobility issues. Any type of activity on the weekend is also out of the picture. Church, parties, even funerals are inaccessible.”**

*– Marion Stuart,  
Accessibility  
Committee (Member)  
City of Williams Lake*

## **Licence Applications**

This subsection identifies new licensing or application requirements that the Board is implementing.

### **Plans for Serving People with Disabilities**

A disability may be physical and affect a person’s mobility. It may be sensory or cognitive. A taxi company does not need a wheelchair accessible taxi to be in the business of serving people with disabilities.

Whether or not a taxi company operates a wheelchair accessible vehicle, the company should have a basic plan for serving people with disabilities. The plan may cover dispatch, driver training and policies for helping a person with a particular type of disability. See Board Action 2(a),(b) and (c).

### **Geographic Distribution in a Community**

The Board learned from several sources that wheelchair accessible taxis may be unavailable even when a company has many of these vehicles in its fleet. These vehicles may be concentrated at an airport or another part of a licensee’s operating area. This can result in long delays or trip requests that are not met.

The Board expects that companies will distribute wheelchair accessible taxis geographically so they can best be used to serve people with disabilities and minimize service delays. The Board will ask applicants for information about how they distribute wheelchair accessible taxis. Companies should describe geographic zones and identify major transportation hubs (such as an airport or ferry terminal) that are in the zone. They should also state the number or percentage of wheelchair accessible taxis that are allocated to each zone. See Board Action 2(d).

### **Hours of Operation**

The Board sometimes requires an applicant to operate one or more of their wheelchair accessible taxis at set times of the day, or for a full day. The Board considers the local characteristics of the community when making such decisions. This practice was put in place to have accessible taxis available in urban areas.

Public responses to the Discussion Paper show that availability times are important to people with disabilities. This issue is relevant to

people in large urban centres. It is important to people in smaller cities where fewer options exist for people who need wheelchair accessible transportation. Also in the smaller areas, there can be more limitations respecting the hours and routes of HandyDART and transit options. This issue was raised by people in Williams Lake, Revelstoke, Sechelt, Fort St. John, Terrace and Quesnel.

The National Safety Code (NSC) limits the daily and weekly driving time of a taxi driver. Information about NSC hours of service requirements are posted on the Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement (CVSE) website.<sup>9</sup> Taxi drivers must comply with NSC driving time limits. In some locations, it may be impractical to have a wheelchair accessible taxi operating 24 hours a day, or seven days a week. The number of available drivers can be a factor when the Board considers setting hours when wheelchair accessible taxis must be available.

The Board sees that it can give more attention to the hours that an accessible taxi is needed in a community. To make a decision that reflects the needs and characteristics of an applicant's operating area, the Board needs more information. Thus, the Board will ask applicants for this information. See Board Action 2(e).

## Board Action 2

The Board will ask applicants to describe the following:

- a) The wheelchair accessible vehicles that an applicant provides (or proposes)
- b) The accessibility training that drivers receive
- c) The procedures in place to serve the transportation needs of people with disabilities
- d) How wheelchair accessible taxis are distributed within the applicant's operating area and dispatch zones
- e) The hours when transit and HandyDART services are available in the community, and the hours when accessible taxis are (or will be) operated

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/CVSE/hours\\_of\\_service.htm](http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/CVSE/hours_of_service.htm)

## Travel with an assistance dog or portable mobility aid

You have the right to travel with an assistance dog that sits on the floor and is held by a leash or harness. Taxis can also accommodate portable mobility aids, designed to collapse for easy transport, without the need for a specialized accessible taxi.

– *Taxi Bill of Rights (Metro Vancouver) Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure*<sup>10</sup>

## Expansion of the Taxi Bill of Rights

In 2008, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure introduced a Taxi Bill of Rights to improve taxi service quality in Metro Vancouver. This is a statement of principles that outlines expectations of both taxi drivers and passengers. Four drivers' rights are listed. Eight passengers' rights are listed. The passenger rights confirm that a person may use a Taxi Saver voucher to pay for a trip. The Taxi Bill of Rights states:

Industry representatives and stakeholders report that the Taxi Bill of Rights has been beneficial in Metro Vancouver. It helps prevent and resolve conflicts. It addresses basic service and conduct issues.

One person responded to the Discussion Paper by suggesting that a Taxi Bill of Rights apply to communities outside the Lower Mainland. Early in 2011, a media article in Fort St. John made this suggestion. In Fall 2011, the Greater Victoria Taxi Association asked the Board to implement a Taxi Bill of Rights in the Capital Regional District<sup>11</sup>.

The Board supports an expansion of the Taxi Bill of Rights. Members of the Board's Advisory Group also indicated their support.

The Board also notes that parts of the Taxi Bill of Rights may not be practical in all communities in British Columbia. For example, taxis in some communities may not be set up to accept payment by credit card. As well, procedures should be in place for handling service complaints. A Taxi Bill of Rights would need to be reviewed and perhaps customized to ensure it is appropriate for the communities where it takes effect.

### Board Action 3

The Board will consult with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure about expanding the Taxi Bill of Rights to communities outside Metro Vancouver.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.taxirights.gov.bc.ca/> for the full Taxi Bill of Rights and background information

<sup>11</sup> The Board received this request in November 2011. It was not made in response to the accessible Taxi Discussion paper.

## Flip Seats Review

The Board may approve a company's request to use flip seats in a wheelchair accessible taxi. This increases the number of passengers that may be carried in the van. Generally, this option has benefits for passengers and taxi businesses. However, some people with disabilities expressed concerns about the security and comfort of people travelling next to a flip seat.

### Board Action 4

The Board will review its process for authorizing flip seats.



Figure 2: Rear view of a flip seat.



Figure 3: Flip seat in upright position.

**“The flip-down seats, which provide the company with a more versatile vehicle, take up some of the space required for the wheelchair, can be intimidating to a person in the chair, even if the flip-down seats are apparently “secure”. In addition, they block the view out the right side of the vehicle—making for a very unpleasant trip for the individual sitting in the wheelchair.”**

*– Frances Clark,  
Secretary  
Richmond Centre for  
Disability*

**“Training is one of the most important components in having an accessible service that will be used. I am contacted by many people who are frustrated by the lack of knowledge regarding the tie-downs for their scooters and wheelchairs and who do not use the taxi service because they do not feel safe. The drivers must have training and they must have training on a regular basis... training is important for both safety and for having a timely service... if a driver takes a long time to hook up and unhook a mobility device it will be frustrating, time wise, for both the driver and the passenger.”**

*– Heather McCain,  
Executive Director  
Citizens for Accessible  
Neighbourhoods  
(Vancouver)*

## **B. GETTING THE RIGHT TRAINING**

Training is an important part of a taxi company’s operation. It may cover driver safety, customer service and communications, road skills, company policies and legal requirements. Driver training is a concern to many people with disabilities who use a wheelchair accessible taxi.

Some training may be provided by a training institution. Some may be provided by company managers, experienced peers and qualified in-house trainers. Training may be informal or follow a standardized curriculum. It may be supported with manuals, videos and other resources. Some modules and materials may be available online. Regardless of which training programs and resources are available, taxi companies are ultimately responsible for ensuring that drivers and dispatchers get the type and quality of training they need to do their jobs properly.

This section of the report lists the main training programs that are now offered in British Columbia. It identifies key training issues that have been raised. It sets out steps that can be taken to improve taxi training in British Columbia—especially training for drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis.

Where an accessible taxi service is operated, it is essential that drivers have proper training. Accessible taxi training is needed to ensure that safety regulations are met and that passengers receive a safe trip. It also boosts the ability of drivers to provide an efficient service that is satisfactory for passengers with disabilities.

Taxi driver training was raised as a concern by many people who responded to the Board’s Discussion Paper. It was raised consistently by people with disabilities and their advocates.

### **Availability of Taxi Training**

Ten years ago, the main concern about accessible services related to the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis. A 2001 report on Lower Mainland taxi supply records that concern. In the past decade, the number of wheelchair accessible taxis has tripled in the Lower Mainland.

As a percentage of the total fleet, accessible taxis grew from 6.8% to 16%<sup>12</sup>.

The 2001 report also noted that local governments in the Lower Mainland identified a need to improve training of drivers who operate wheelchair accessible vans. The Board did not survey the training practices of taxi companies in the Lower Mainland or the province. Over the past decade, it is not clear whether practices respecting accessibility training have changed or stayed the same.

In the Lower Mainland, the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) runs the TaxiHost program. TaxiHost training was developed in 1994 to set a consistent and high-standard of taxicab service in the Greater Vancouver area. Completion of TaxiHost Pro is now mandatory in all municipalities in Metro Vancouver and most of the Fraser Valley<sup>14</sup>.

Drivers receive 30 hours of standardized instruction. They also receive a certificate after successful completion. The current training program, TaxiHost Pro, includes 3 courses:

- Taxi Industry and Driver Safety (13 hours)
- WorldHost and Serving Customers with Disabilities (10 hours)
- Collision Avoidance Driving (7 hours)

TaxiHost Pro covers theory, service and communications issues relating to the transportation of people with disabilities. The program addresses a range of disabilities. These include mobility, sensory and cognitive disabilities. At present, the TaxiHost training does not give drivers hands-on experience with boarding and securing passengers with a mobility aid in a wheelchair accessible taxi.

**“There are more wheelchair accessible taxis in Vancouver than anywhere in North America. That is largely due to a push from the City of Vancouver, especially around 2007.”**

*– Amrik Mahil,  
President  
Association of Pacific  
Taxi Owners<sup>13</sup>*

12 An Examination of the Taxi Supply in the Lower Mainland: prepared for the Motor Carrier Commission of British Columbia by Bonnie Evans and John Webb, October 2001; see pp 31-32

13 The Association of Pacific Taxi Owners has been replaced by the larger Vancouver Taxi Association.

14 The program is required for anyone wanting to drive a taxi in Metro Vancouver, Abbotsford and Chilliwack.

Until February 2009, TaxiHost trainers used a simulator to show drivers how to load and secure passengers with mobility devices. Due to time constraints, some trainees received hands-on experience while others watched. This segment was cut after taxi industry representatives asked the JIBC to reduce the overall time of the training program. Industry representatives wanted to have new drivers start sooner after they are hired. They also wanted to reduce the cost of completing the training. The simulated training with accessible taxis was cut because it was time-intensive and did not give hands-on experience to all trainees.

The Passenger Transportation Branch is responsible for compliance under the Passenger Transportation Act<sup>15</sup>. The Branch receives complaints respecting taxis in British Columbia. Of the complaints it received from passengers with disabilities, it reports that most have related to “the loading of passengers and the tie-downs of mobility aids.” The Branch notes a number of cases in the Lower Mainland where a driver did not know how to secure both the mobility device and the person seated in it.

To help address this matter, a train-the-trainer workshop was held by the Richmond Centre for Disability on January 29, 2010. This was initiated by the Passenger Transportation Branch with the support of the taxi industry. The workshop covered theory in a classroom setting. It also provided hands-on instruction on the boarding, securement and unloading of people with wheelchairs and scooters in vans. There were about 30 participants. This included representatives from the four taxi companies based in the City of Vancouver. It also included representatives of Lower Mainland taxi company members of the BC Taxi Association. Now workshop participants can better train drivers within their company. As of late 2011, the Branch reports that it seems to get fewer complaints about loading and securement.

During the Board’s advisory group discussions, taxi associations stated that drivers are receiving the training they need with on-the-job training. We know that taxi companies are responsible for training drivers to meet customer service requirements, company policies and legal requirements. Training of various types is provided in-house by taxi

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15 The Passenger Transportation Branch and Passenger Transportation Board have distinct mandates under the Passenger Transportation Act.

companies. We have not sought or received information that supports making comment on taxi company training programs. However, the Board will start to ask taxi applicants with accessible taxis to describe the accessible taxi training that taxi drivers receive. See Board Action 2(b).

The Board notes that most taxi companies outside the Lower Mainland are not using institutional training programs. Kamloops may be the only exception. A general improvement in taxi driver training across the province would benefit drivers and all passengers. It can give drivers a way to learn more about serving passengers with disabilities—whether or not they operate a wheelchair accessible taxi.

### Training and Safety

Safety is the training issue that was expressed most strongly by people who commented on the Discussion Paper. Indeed, the improper securement of a person in a wheelchair or scooter can lead to injury or even death.

In Manitoba, lack of taxi driver training was attributed to the 1997 death of woman in a wheelchair. Her wheelchair was not properly secured to the floor of the accessible taxi. When the taxi stopped abruptly, the passenger was projected out of her wheelchair and onto the floor of the vehicle. Medical evidence suggested that a resulting fracture led to complications which ultimately caused her death about three weeks later.

At an inquest in February 2000, the Society for Manitobans for Disabilities made a number of recommendations. They included training that included “persons with disabilities participating in demonstrations where drivers are trained on how to offer and secure the occupant restraint devices.”<sup>16</sup>

**“People need to have confidence that they will be safe throughout the trip.”**

*– Lorraine Logan  
Council of Senior  
Citizens Organizations  
of BC  
(COSCO BC)*

16 INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF ANNE WOLOSHEN: What Can Be Done to Improve the Safety of Wheelchair Users that Rely on Transportation Services Provided by a Third Party? Prepared for the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities on September 22, 2000 by John A. Myers, Partner, Taylor McCaffrey, Barristers & Solicitors, Winnipeg



**“Training should not be counted in the number of hours they are trained, it is finished when they pass a test proving competency.”**

*– Individual Respondent*

More recently in the United Kingdom, a 14-year old girl died after her wheelchair was loaded sideways and improperly secured in a taxi. A Coroner concluded that the girl’s death may have been avoided if her wheelchair had been secured. The Coroner recommended that all taxi drivers undergo disability training, not just new taxi drivers<sup>17</sup>.

These cases underscore the potentially-serious consequences of driving a wheelchair accessible taxi without proper training. Passengers need to be safe and also feel safe. A taxi company that wants to build a clientele of accessible taxi users will need drivers who are properly trained.

Passengers with disabilities should know that they can expect that their driver is trained to load, secure and unload them and their wheelchair or mobility device. The interests of passengers, drivers and companies are protected when this training is available and provided to drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis.

### **Public and Industry Comment**

A number of groups and individuals raised training-related matters. The most comprehensive set of training concerns were received from the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD). The group expressed “deep concern” about the lack of certain types of training. It also provided some suggestions.

The BCCPD would like to see hands-on, tie-down training included with TaxiHost training or other training programs. The train-the-trainer workshop held in January 2010 is not seen as an adequate model because it does not ensure the delivery of one-on-one training. The BCCPD suggests that taxi companies should, at the very least, be required to keep a signed record of which drivers received accessibility training. The liability and insurance risk facing taxi companies was cited as an added reason for taxi companies to ensure that their drivers receive adequate driver training.

<sup>17</sup> [Letter of July 31, 2009](#) from Aiden Keith Cotter, H.M. Coroner, Birmingham and Solihull Districts, to Mr. Peter Barrow, Head of Licensing, Birmingham City Council. See Also [Birmingham Coroner calls for new taxi restraints for wheelchairs](#) in the Birmingham Mail, July 9, 2009.

A number of individuals and groups stressed the importance of providing drivers with hands-on training. Comments suggested that drivers receive certification as drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis. The Board also heard that training should be more than a one-time event. It should be provided periodically throughout a driver's career.

### Areas for Improvement

In British Columbia, wheelchair accessible taxi fleets have been growing. Accessible taxi drivers seem to get training in a variety of ways. However, there is no standard in place for training that is adequate and available for all drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis.

The first question is this: What standard of accessible taxi driver training is adequate? Comments on this subject suggested that the following components and features be part of an overall training program:

- theory with respect to a range of disabilities
- hands-on training with the loading, securement and unloading of passengers who are seated in a wheelchair or scooter
- standardized curriculum and delivery methods
- testing and certification
- periodic retraining

Although driver training is not within the Board's purview, the Board sees that accessible taxi drivers should receive training that includes at least most of these components and features. Regardless of which organization or personnel delivers the training, it is important that drivers get the training they need to competently drive a wheelchair accessible taxi.

Hands-on training stands out as a key feature of adequate driver training. Drivers need to get adequate training before they start operating wheelchair accessible taxis. These skills also need to continue to develop over time. Options for training and supervised guidance may vary among companies and locations. Addressing these important training and development issues will likely take a clear plan. It will likely result in additional costs for companies or drivers.

**“Taxi use is safe for people with disabilities when all taxi drivers are required to complete training in disability issues, when drivers of accessible taxis are required to have separate licensing and hands-on training in securement and boarding, and when complaint processes are independently managed with effective penalties and enforcement. Under those circumstances, safety issues are no different for taxis and non-taxis.”**

*– Jill Weiss, Co-Chair  
City of Vancouver  
Persons with  
Disabilities Advisory  
Committee*

**“The best training is ‘hands-on’ training which comes on the job with the passage of time.”**

– Mohan Kang,  
President  
BC Taxi Association

**“Blindness is often a misunderstood disability.”**

– Rob Sleath, Past  
Chair CNIB (BC/Yukon)

An effort should be made to establish a minimum standard for hands-on training for drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis. Such training should be available for drivers in the Lower Mainland and other population centres across British Columbia. It should be available close to the communities where wheelchair accessible taxis are provided.

#### **A Suggestion for the Passenger Transportation Board:**

**“Work to further advocate for a ‘hands-on’ training component of TaxiHost, including the addition of time allotted for all trainees to participate in associated practice activities.”**

– Social Issues Committee Report  
Adopted by Burnaby City Council,  
May 30, 2011

The training of drivers for these vehicles is specialized. It is reasonable to distinguish training for conventional taxi drivers from training for wheelchair accessible taxi drivers.

For conventional taxis, drivers should be trained to provide service to people with a range of disabilities. Drivers need to know the specific needs of passengers with different types of disabilities. For example, opening the door for a passenger is normally seen as good customer service. For a person with a visual impairment, it takes away their control and can leave them vulnerable to sharp edges on the vehicle door. Professional drivers with accessibility training should know this. They know how to serve passengers with a particular disability. This underscores the importance of this type of training.

This type of training is provided through TaxiHost Pro. Outside the Lower Mainland and Kamloops, taxi drivers seem to rely almost entirely on in-house training that may vary from company to company. A more standardized curriculum and delivery for taxi driver training in other parts of the province can benefit taxi drivers, taxi businesses and passengers with disabilities. Throughout the province, training for others who help manage and deliver taxi services should also be considered.

**“There is some training for taxi drivers but there is no training for managers, dispatchers or directors of taxi companies. [The Lanyon Report<sup>18</sup>] recommended some training for directors and managers.”**

– *Opinder Singh*  
*West Coast Taxi Drivers Association<sup>19</sup>*

Responses to the Discussion Paper point out that Taxi Dispatchers and General Managers play a key role in the delivery of the transportation service that a passenger receives. The Board did not receive much information about the training or performance of dispatchers or managers. Still, comments were received that warrant a look at the training that is available for dispatchers and managers.

At present, different types of training are provided in ways and degrees that vary from place to place in the province, and which sometimes vary from company to company. Despite the existence of well-developed training programs like TaxiHost Pro, accessible taxi drivers may not be getting all the types of training they should be getting. Where training gaps exist, we expect that they are generally smaller in the Lower Mainland, and greater in other parts of the province.

It is beyond the scope of this report to specify what training gaps exist, where they exist and the best way to address them. The Board does see a need for groups and companies with an interest and expertise in these areas to take a closer look at these matters. Generally, the Board sees a need to look at ways to ensure this training is available to drivers in any community where wheelchair accessible taxis are operated.

## Capacity for Enhanced Training

Responses to the Discussion Paper show concerns about training. They also show that capacity and interest exists in British Columbia to improve accessible taxi training. This capacity and interest

**“I have heard from many people... that when they call for taxi service they are asked for details about their disability that they are not comfortable discussing. I have also heard from people that they have phoned dispatch and had to argue to get a wheelchair accessible taxi... I personally have had a dispatcher argue with me about whether or not I really need an accessible taxi.”**

– *Heather McCain,*  
*Executive Director*  
*Citizens for Accessible*  
*Neighbourhoods*  
*(Vancouver)*

18 A Study of the Taxi Industry in British Columbia (1999)

19 This association is registered as the Taxi Drivers’ Association of Southern British Columbia.

is evident from the statements and actions of the taxi industry, training institutions and groups representing seniors and people with disabilities. The Board sees that cooperation and collaboration among these groups can lead to helpful improvements in accessible taxi training. Toward this end, we are noting some of the organizations and groups that took the initiative to show their capacity to help improve taxi training.

### **JIBC and PTEC**

The Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) operates the Pacific Traffic Education Centre (PTEC) which delivers TaxiHost training. The TaxiHost program is provided in the Lower Mainland. Part of the program is provided in Kamloops. Most taxis in British Columbia are located in the Lower Mainland. Thus, PTEC provides standardized training for most taxi drivers in the province. PTEC can also provide customized training and consultation in a variety of formats at a company's premises or in their community.

### **Richmond Centre for Disability**

The Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD) is a not-for profit group that serves communities on accessibility issues. It is disability led and community based.

The RCD led the 2010 train-the-trainer workshop for taxi companies throughout Metro Vancouver. The Centre has indicated an interest in potential certification options and doing more to help improve accessible taxi driver training, especially with respect to hands-on training.

### **Access Nanaimo**

The Access Nanaimo Committee is a group of individuals working to educate, inform and sensitize local government, the business community, and the public on issues of accessibility and inclusion. Access Nanaimo told the Board it could assist as a resource and help with the delivery of accessible taxi training outside the Lower Mainland.

## Taxi Industry

In 2010, representatives of taxi companies in Metro Vancouver voluntarily took part in the RCD train-the-trainer workshop. This shows interest in accessing resources to improve the training of accessible taxi drivers. At a recent meeting with members of the Board's stakeholder advisory committee<sup>20</sup>, we learned that Metro Vancouver taxi companies are seeking training advice to enhance services for seniors and people with disabilities. Assistance is being provided by representatives of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO BC) and the CNIB.

## BC Transit, TransLink and HandyDART

BC Transit, TransLink and HandyDART administrators have long been training drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles at various locations across British Columbia<sup>21</sup>. Section C of this report includes a discussion of the potential public savings for taxi companies to provide transportation services for local HandyDART providers. There may be opportunities for transit, HandyDART and taxi companies to find common ground on training and other service delivery matters.

The notes provided above illustrates the capacity in BC to assess and fill gaps in accessible training, where they exist. We suspect that these notes only describe a portion of this capacity. For example, a number of local government representatives made submissions on the Board's Discussion Paper. There may be a role for local governments and citizens to support and facilitate improvements that raise the standard of training received by local taxi drivers. Most local governments in the Lower Mainland require drivers to complete Taxi Host Pro.

Future changes in training have implications for taxi companies, drivers, driver training programs and people with disabilities. The best training solutions will meet the needs of all these groups and the people they serve. Ultimately, the success of future training programs will depend on the willingness of training institutions, interested groups and taxi companies to work together.

**"The association wants to work in cooperation with the authorities and organizations that are working to improve accessible services."**

*– Mohan Kang,  
President  
BC Taxi Association*

20 Passenger Directed Vehicle Advisory Committee (PDVAC)

21 The Board learned this through its adhoc advisory group on accessible transportation..

## Suggested Action A

The Board encourages training institutions, interested groups and taxi companies to develop training plans and programs that can be delivered in many parts of the province.

**“In those areas where good training and enforcement are in place, people with disabilities often prefer travelling in an accessible taxi than a dedicated para transit vehicle (Burkhard et al 2008; Dalton 2005; Gilbert 2002).”**

*– Jill Weiss, Co-Chair*

*City of Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee*



## C. FINANCIAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The decision to operate a wheelchair accessible taxi is most often made by a taxi company. Such decisions may be influenced by regulatory requirements and financial costs may influence these decisions.

For example, the Board may set a term and condition of a taxi company's licence that requires the company to operate an accessible taxi. It may specify hours of operation. A municipal bylaw may require a company to operate a set number or percentage of wheelchair accessible taxis. Local governments have such bylaws in Prince Rupert, Kamloops and Vancouver.

Decisions to support, start or require wheelchair accessible taxis should be informed by an understanding of the financial issues that apply.

Wheelchair accessible taxis have a unique financial profile. For example, the costs, break-even point and business opportunities are not the same as a conventional taxi. They are not the same as HandyDART services that receive public funding.

This section of the report introduces some cost-related issues for starting and operating a wheelchair accessible taxi. The economic advantage of using dual-use taxis is noted, along with the tension between service quality and the pursuit of income.

### Higher Operating Costs than Conventional Taxis

Wheelchair accessible taxis cost more to run than conventional taxis. The British Columbia Taxi Association (BCTA) wrote that the extra financial cost of buying and running an accessible taxi is "the major challenge for the taxi industry." The BCTA listed the following costs:

- Initial costs of buying an accessible taxi van are "2 – 3 times higher" than a conventional taxi, depending on location
- Extra fuel costs are "very high"
- Maintenance costs are "much higher" than for conventional taxis
- The time involved in providing accessible trips is "higher"

**"It is neither feasible nor practical to have accessibility in all regions of the province... There are a number of smaller taxi companies that do not have the funds available to provide accessible taxi services for a period of time without going under. To meet the future increased demand for accessible taxi service there has to be some sort of incentive (in these smaller communities) to make it a viable venture on a long term basis."**

*– Mohan Kang,  
President  
BC Taxi Association*



**“The availability of drivers for the accessible vans is another challenge for the taxi companies. The livelihood of drivers depends upon the income they get from their hard work. It would be a catch 22 question to ask the companies to subsidize the drivers’ income or expect the drivers (or owner-operators) to forget about their livelihood.”**

*– Mohan Kang,  
President  
BC Taxi Association*

- If a taxi is damaged and written off, the gap between insurance coverage and replacement cost is much greater for a wheelchair accessible taxi than a conventional taxi
- Ramp conversion costs and time for the conversion is high

The Board agrees that the capital and operating costs of a wheelchair accessible taxi are substantially higher than the costs of a conventional taxi.

### **Driver Responsibilities and Wages**

A taxi driver representative commented that the burden of some accessible taxi costs is placed on drivers. An advocacy group for people with disabilities attributed these types of issues with high driver turnover.

To help address these concerns, hourly wages were suggested for drivers. Taxi owner representatives pointed out that all taxi drivers are subject to a process defined by the Employment Standards Branch that guarantees minimum wage.

It was also suggested that a fund be set up to cover driver training costs. However, it is not obvious who would set up and administer the fund.

The Board does not make decisions regarding driver terms of employment or contract. Nonetheless, drivers play an important role in the delivery of accessible transportation services. Some perspectives and options on driver issues are noted here. They may be considered when planning new accessible transportation services.

### **Some Financial and Economic Strategies**

The Discussion Paper pointed to some of the higher costs faced by accessible taxi owners and operators. In response, a number of people sent the Board suggestions and strategies for reducing or subsidizing capital or operating costs. There seems to be real interest in helping taxi companies resolve the financial challenges of operating a wheelchair accessible service. Many of the suggestions are listed below. Some may be practical in certain circumstances only.

There is no one strategy in our list that can bring the costs down to those of a conventional taxi. However, combining two or three strategies may add up to a helpful cost reduction. Treat the list as a menu of options.

### Tax Incentives

Some public comments stated that preferential tax incentives may be available, or should be available, for the capital costs of wheelchair accessible taxis. They may be available at the federal or provincial level. Companies may explore these options with their accountants and other professionals they work with.

### Driver Subsidies

We learned of two cases in North America where drivers get a per-trip subsidy of about \$2 from local government. The subsidy is designed to cover the extra costs and service time for which drivers are responsible. If local governments opt for such an approach, it could provide an incentive to provide more and better accessible transportation services<sup>22</sup>.

### Private Community Fundraising

We learned of how community members in Williams Lake raised private funds to help cover the additional capital costs of bringing a wheelchair accessible taxi to their community. We also heard that operating costs and requirements remained a burden. Although service was provided for some time, it is no longer in operation. This story shows that private individuals can play a key role in helping to bring a wheelchair accessible taxi to their community. Anyone in a community can take the initiative. It also underlines a point made in this report: there are a number of factors that determine the viability of a new wheelchair accessible taxi service. This seems especially true in a smaller, more rural population centres.

### Business Counselling

Businesses may seek the assistance of business counselling

**“Side-loading vans are used throughout North America, in part because they provide faster service to the customer, taking less time to load and hookup as well as providing safe access to the consumer.”**

*– Frances Clark,  
Secretary  
Richmond Centre for  
Disability*

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22 In Washington DC, passengers pay normal taxi rates, but drivers receive an additional \$2 per trip from the grant funding. The drivers have received special training and a special licence from the taxicab commission. See [Wheelchair taxis begin operating in Washington \(AP\)](#) posted by ABC News, May 13, 2011.

**“...have the taxi companies in BC or some other agency undertake bulk purchasing of these vehicles for all taxicab companies in British Columbia. This is something that BC Transit [does now] for transit buses and HandyDART buses.”**

*– Mitch Moroziuk,  
Director of Operations  
City of Penticton*

professionals in their community. These services can help with business and financial planning and decision making<sup>23</sup>.

### **Side Loading Vans**

The Board heard that side-loading vans require less time when loading and unloading passengers seated in a wheelchair or scooter. We also heard that operating costs are lower. We are not aware of any side-loading options for use in British Columbia. The claimed advantages of side-loading vans seem reasonable, although the Board has not assessed the validity or extent of the stated advantages. They are listed here as a potential, future option that may reduce costs. New vehicles must obtain certification from Transport Canada and meet provincial requirements in Division 44 of the Motor Vehicle Act Regulations.

A new MV-1 was recently launched in the United States. This vehicle is designed as a wheelchair accessible vehicle for a number of potential transportation uses, including taxi use. New reports indicate that Transport Canada certification is being sought so the vehicle can be operated in Canada<sup>24</sup>. It is not known whether or when this vehicle—or comparable vehicles from other manufacturers—will be an option for taxi companies in British Columbia.

### **Bulk Vehicle Purchasing**

Members of the Board’s adhoc committee on accessible transportation suggested that the taxi industry may wish to explore bulk vehicle purchasing. The suggestion also arose in comments made in response to the Discussion Paper. If such a strategy can be implemented, it would likely reduce vehicle costs.

### **Density Planning**

The Board heard that wheelchair accessible transportation options—including accessible taxis—are more economically viable with increased urban densification. This is a long term view that relates to local community planning. Given that populations, average age and disability rates are projected to increase in most parts of the province over the next two decades, we see that this is a point worth noting.

<sup>23</sup> We came across a free loan counselling service in Washington DC for taxi operators buying a wheelchair accessible taxi: [http://www.dctaxi.dc.gov/dctaxi/lib/dctaxi/info/Taxi\\_Limo\\_Program.pdf](http://www.dctaxi.dc.gov/dctaxi/lib/dctaxi/info/Taxi_Limo_Program.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> *Enabling the Disabled with Accessible Vehicles*; Globe and Mail, July 6, 2011

## Savings for Transit and HandyDart Operators

In British Columbia, paratransit and HandyDART services are publicly funded. For passengers, the fares are the cheaper than hiring a taxi. HandyDART has TaxiSaver programs that enable registered HandyDART users to buy vouchers that can be used toward the cost of a taxi fare.

TaxiSaver programs reduce reliance on HandyDART services and may result in savings for public transit. They also enable passengers to arrange their own transportation, without booking far in advance. The voucher covers about half the metered taxi rate. For taxi companies, participation in a TaxiSaver program can increase its customer base and encourage it to provide accessible services.

When a taxi company attains the training and operating standards set by HandyDART, community members benefit from having more satisfactory options for accessible transportation. Also, taxi companies can expand their customer base. Establishing capacity to serve passengers with disabilities may enable them to provide overflow service for HandyDART as well as services arranged directly by people with disabilities.

Taxi companies in some communities may be in a position to work with a local transit or HandyDart provider to secure trip volumes that justify the costs of adding an accessible taxi to their fleet. Figure 4 shows the potential cost savings for publicly-funded services when HandyDART hires an accessible taxi to provide a trip instead of using its own vehicle.

Figure 4: Ride cost comparisons for Para transit operators in 4 Canadian cities (2009)<sup>25</sup>

City	Non-Taxi Ride Cost <sup>26</sup>	Taxi Ride Cost	Savings
Calgary	25.92	18.79	28%
Montreal	50.26	12.52	75%
Toronto	30.27	18.31	40%
Vancouver	31.69	14.17	55%

25 Research submissions by Jill Weiss: *Solutions for Safe Taxi Use and Measures to Improve Para transit Cost Effectiveness*, 2011. Data in Figure 4 is found in the Specialized Services Fact Book: 2009 Operating Data (Canadian Urban Transit Association)

26 These trips may be provided with HandyDART vehicles or a comparable service.

The same research paper attributes the cost savings to four factors:

- Accessible taxis are smaller than para transit vans and mini-buses
- Deadheading costs are reduced because taxi charges usually start at the point of pick up
- Public scheduling costs are reduced when users book taxi rides directly through taxi dispatch
- Drivers wages are lower

HandyDart managers can reduce their costs by diverting trips to conventional transit or wheelchair accessible taxis. Taxi Saver programs provide incentives for users to opt for a taxi instead of HandyDART. However, only some passengers have the means to purchase Taxi Saver vouchers.

Taxi companies can build their wheelchair accessible business by providing overflow service for HandyDART. These companies will need to meet service standards established by HandyDART. We see this as beneficial for the taxi industry, drivers and passengers.

As demand for accessible transportation increases, public transportation systems will face greater pressure to deliver services at a lower cost. This appears to provide an opportunity for taxis in smaller communities where the public is looking to start or expand publicly-funded accessible transportation services. It is also an opportunity in urban centres to build business volumes and expand their fleet and expertise for operating accessible transportation services.

Local discussions and collaboration may lead to new ways of delivering accessible transportation in a community. These new ways may result in more service for longer hours, a higher service quality, savings in public funding costs and more revenue for business.

## Suggested Action B

The Board encourages taxi companies and community leaders, when reviewing local wheelchair accessible taxi service, to look at options for working together and addressing accessible transportation needs in the community. Further, they are encouraged to consider the following issues and opportunities:

- a) The higher business cost of operating wheelchair accessible taxis (higher capital and operating costs, and higher break-even point)
- b) Financial interests of taxi drivers
- c) Options that may exist to subsidize or reduce some operating costs
- d) Opportunities that may exist to increase accessible taxi ridership and revenues through a partnership with a HandyDART or para transit provider

“There is a lot of demand for the HandyDART service despite the early heavy booking and expected wait time for pick up. I believe the reason for such demand is economic as the rider has to pay a nominal fare... Seniors and people with disabilities who have fixed incomes support the publicly-funded or subsidized transportation and HandyDART, not the accessible taxis.”

– Mohan Kang,  
President  
BC Taxi Association

## D. SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

So far, this report has discussed Board application requirements, the terms and conditions of licence the Board can set, driver training issues, and the financial challenges and opportunities of operating accessible taxis. This section focuses on ways that taxi drivers and companies serve and interact with their customers.

Taxi transportation is a customer service business. Taxi companies and drivers control the way service is provided. With this in mind, this report offers suggestions for taxi companies that want to improve service for people with disabilities. We think these suggestions are good for customers, business and the local community.

### Door-to-Door Service

Taxi services are often thought of as a “curb-to-curb” service. The Board learned that many people with disabilities and their advocates expect that a taxi driver will help them get to or from the door. We heard that door-to-door service is expected even though the meter is not running, and even though a passenger may not be in a position to tip well. The taxi associations explained that this is standard policy and is adopted by many taxi companies. This policy is seen as part of delivering good customer service. However, the taxi associations advised that the policy is not applied uniformly by companies and drivers throughout the province.

The Board agrees that the policy adopted by most companies and drivers is good for customer relations and good for people with disabilities. As a way of promoting more uniformity among taxis across British Columbia, the Board encourages taxi companies to adopt a door-to-door assistance policy, and to promote it as standard practice among taxi drivers and dispatchers. Companies may attract new customers by sharing the policy online, discussing the policy with a local accessibility committee, or by adding it to company promotional materials. The Board also notes the importance that companies with this policy ensure that drivers are trained to assist passengers with sensory, cognitive and mobility disabilities.

## Suggested Action C

The Board encourages taxi companies to adopt and promote door-to-door standard for customer service.

### Taxi Stopping and Parking

Municipal parking bylaws and enforcement make it hard for taxis in Vancouver and some other cities around the province to pick up or drop off passengers in downtown areas. This is a challenge for all types of taxicabs. It is a particular problem for taxi drivers when loading or unloading a passenger and their mobility device, or when they are helping a person with a disability get themselves from or to a building entrance.

We could not find any examples of bylaws that give deference to taxi drivers helping people with disabilities. This seems to be a problem in a number of jurisdictions in North America. Interest was expressed by members of our stakeholder group to work together and seek a solution. Advocates for people with disabilities indicated a willingness to support a taxi industry proposal for the City of Vancouver to help provide a taxi parking solution when taxi drivers are helping a person with a disability. It was noted that the Social Planning and Research Council (SPARC BC) manages disability parking passes in the Lower Mainland. A representative of this group said that SPARC BC can consider distributing a special pass for taxis to put in their windshields when assisting a person with disabilities.

The Board sees these cooperative initiatives as worthwhile. Establishing a workable formula in one jurisdiction may make it easier to apply in other jurisdictions.

## Suggested Action D

The Board encourages the taxi industry and stakeholders to work together to address parking-related challenges of serving people with disabilities in urban, downtown areas.

**“It is a challenge picking up passengers for accessible trips from doctors or other offices which are located on a busy road. When you are blocking the lane for a longer period of time it can lead to unpleasant comments from car drivers behind you or a ticket from the commissioner who is just doing their duty.”**

*– Mohan Kang,  
President  
BC Taxi Association*



## Size of Mobility Aids

The lifts and interior of wheelchair accessible taxis have limits. The size and weight of power wheelchairs and scooters is not regulated. This presents challenges for some taxi operators. A similar challenge exists for public transportation providers. It is standard for public transit operators to post this information on their website. The following links are examples:

- TransLink<sup>27</sup>
- Comox Valley Transit System<sup>28</sup>
- Transit HandyDart<sup>29</sup>

## Suggested Action E

The Board encourages companies to publish the maximum size and weight of wheelchairs and scooters they can carry in their vehicles. It encourages companies to post this information online and share it with medical supply retailers that sell mobility aids.



27 See <http://www.translink.ca/en/Rider-Info/Accessible-Transit/Wheelchairs-and-Mobility-Aids.aspx>

28 See <http://www.accesstotravel.gc.ca/19.aspx?CarrierCd=512&CityCd=352&lang=en>

29 See <http://bctransit.com/regions/vic/accessible/handydart-safety.cfm>

## E. POTENTIAL SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS

The Board has identified some issues and emerging trends that are worth noting. They may eventually lead to improvements in customer service in the future. These potential service enhancements are noted for information.

### Central Dispatch

Dispatch is a company operations matter. The Board does not regulate dispatch. Nonetheless, public comments noted the advantages of central dispatch for wheelchair accessible taxis as well as conventional taxi services. With central dispatch, the pool of wheelchair accessible taxis can be more evenly distributed across the city, with more taxis in each zone. This can shorten deadhead distances and improve response times for wheelchair accessible services.

Our advisory group, which includes two taxi associations, agreed that central dispatch offers service and economic benefits for both accessible taxi users and providers. We also heard of the practical challenge that arises when competing companies try to set up a central dispatch. Taxi companies compete for passengers. They compete to promote their brand and expand their client base. It seems that the theoretical benefits of a central dispatch system are rarely realized because companies have not found a way to cooperate on dispatch and compete at the same time. The taxi associations do not see central dispatch as a realistic option.

### Taxi Fare Announcers

People with visual impairments may have trouble reading the taxi fare that is displayed on a taxi meter. Such passengers are put at a disadvantage. One such person has taken proactive steps to pitch a solution to two large taxi meter manufacturers that supply most of the taxi meters that are used in British Columbia<sup>30</sup>. The proposed solution is to add a voice announcer option to taxi meters. This can be done when a taxi meter has a satisfactory printed circuit board<sup>31</sup> and software that converts text to speech. Conversion kits do not exist. However, existing

**“An accessible community is not a ‘special’ measure for people with disabilities. An accessible community is good for every member of that community, be it a mother pushing a baby buggy, a young person who’s temporarily injured in some sport activity, or a person who uses a wheelchair, or a senior citizen who uses a walker.”**

*– Francis Cheung,  
P.Eng.  
Chief Administrative  
Officer, City of Langley*

30 Centrodyne (Montreal) and Pulsar (New Jersey).

31 Most taxi meters in British Columbia may require an inexpensive upgrade.

technology could be used to create an add-on for a taxi meter. The add-on would provide the option for announcing key events while the meter is turned on. These could include the point when the meter is turned on and off. It could include the point when the fare reaches a set interval, such as every \$5.00. Fare announcers could be programmed to welcome passengers and identify the taxi they are in. If conversion kits were developed, there would be a cost.

### **Accessibility of New Touch Screens and Monitors**

The fare announcer concept could be incorporated into visual monitors and touch screens that are starting to get used in a few taxicabs. These are located behind the front passenger seats. They can be used by passengers seated in the back seat of a conventional taxi. These screens can display information about airplane schedules, local amenities and commercial advertisers. Advertising may generate revenue for taxicab owners or enable the use of these monitors at low cost. They may also display taxi fares and let passengers process credit and debit card payments.

These technologies have many of the components that are needed to include a fare announcer option for passengers. For example, a recently-released tablet<sup>32</sup> has a voice-over option that can easily be turned on by a person with a visual impairment. The coupling of the fare announcer concept with emerging taxi touch screen technologies may provide a quick way to improve the accessibility of taxicabs. This approach may be less costly for taxi companies than buying an add-on for an existing taxi meter.

The Board is including these concepts in this report as a way of encouraging others to consider their development and application in British Columbia and other places.

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32 iPad 2

## F. ACCESSIBILITY OF INTER-CITY BUSES

Inter-city bus carriers provide scheduled bus services that connect cities and towns in British Columbia. They operate buses on fixed routes and charge individual fares.

The services of inter-city bus carriers are subject to a federal Intercity Bus Code of Practice (“Code of Practice”) when one or more of their routes cross a provincial border.<sup>33</sup> These carriers are referred to as extra-provincial carriers. The Code of Practice applies to all routes that are provided by an extra-provincial carrier. It does not apply to intra-provincial carriers that only have routes that are operated within the borders of British Columbia.

The Code of Practice has the aim of making Canada’s scheduled intercity bus network accessible to all persons with disabilities. It was agreed to by extra-provincial carriers.

### The Commitment of Bus Operators

**Bus operators are committed to enhancing their scheduled intercity network in Canada to provide access, in the spirit of respect and inclusion, to all persons with disabilities. Services will be provided through a combination of accessible equipment and facilities as well as personnel who have been trained to assist passengers with disabilities. There are a number of different methods to ensure the availability of accessible scheduled intercity bus services. The application of these methods will vary from region to region and from bus operator to bus operator.**

*– Intercity Bus Code of Practice  
Transport Canada (April 2011)<sup>34</sup>*

33 The Canadian Transportation Agency administers the Intercity Bus Code of Practice. It also has other codes of practice for accessible travel by ferry, air and train.

34 Download the Intercity Bus Code of Practice at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/media/documents/policy/intercity-bus-code-of-practice.pdf>.

**As a minimum, operators will ensure that an appropriate number of buses in their fleet are mechanically equipped or designed for boarding or disembarking passengers using mobility aids, and include a wheelchair securement system, in order to provide such a bus on 48-hours advance notice.**

*– Intercity Bus Code of Practice (Section 7.2)  
Transport Canada  
(April 2011)*

The Code of Practice was created in 1998. A revision was announced in August 2011.<sup>35</sup>

The federal Code of Practice sets out standards for a range of accessible transportation issues. They were agreed upon by the bus industry and consumers with disabilities. The standards address matters such as making reservations, the securement of wheelchairs, staff training and bus terminals. As an example, the standard for equipment availability is set out below.

The Code of Practice is subject to a complaint-resolution process between passengers and bus carriers. In British Columbia, it applies to the carrier that has the largest network of inter-city bus routes<sup>36</sup>. It also applies to a small number of other inter-city bus operators that have a route that cross a provincial border.

Inter-city bus carriers that operate in British Columbia must have a passenger transportation licence with special authorization. This includes both extra-provincial carriers and those that only operate in British Columbia. Licences to operate an inter-city bus in the province are approved by the Passenger Transportation Board.

The Board's Discussion Paper generated a small number of comments on inter-city bus issues. These expressed interest in seeing more inter-city buses that are equipped with lifts to carry passengers and their mobility devices in the passenger compartment of the bus. Some expressed concern about the quality of service available to people with disabilities. One comment shared concerns about the challenge of transferring from an extra-provincial carrier to a local-carrier. The Board also learned that one intra-provincial carrier has a wheelchair accessible bus that can be requested in advance by passengers.

The Board sees that the federal Code of Practice provides a broad set of accessibility standards for its extra-provincial licensees. These standards apply to most of the medium and long-haul inter-city bus routes on the

<sup>35</sup> Media Release of August 12, 2011: [Improvements to Bus Service Standards for Persons with Disabilities](#) (Office of the Honourable Denis Lebel, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Ottawa)

<sup>36</sup> Greyhound Canada Transportation ULC.

British Columbia bus network. The Board does not see a need to review the accessibility standards of extra-provincial bus carriers.

The Board has relatively little information about the accessibility of intra-provincial carriers. The Board will seek more information about these carriers. It wants to learn more about the accessibility of these services and what, if any, improvements may be practical. The Board will consult with inter-city bus operators later this year.

### **Board Action 5**

The Board will consult with inter-city bus licensees to review the accessibility of intra-provincial services in British Columbia. The Board will publish its findings.



## CONCLUSION

This report highlights a general and growing need for more and better accessible transportation services in British Columbia. It provides a general view of a number of key issues. It also sets out some steps that can improve the accessibility of taxi and inter-city bus services in British Columbia.

The Board is interested in practical steps that address the needs of passengers who require accessible transportation. It is interested in seeing businesses and organizations work together in a number of areas that require attention – including accessibility training and the use of operational performance data. We hope this report spawns a number of solutions to accessible transportation challenges in many communities across British Columbia.

With this report, the Board is bringing more attention to accessibility issues and the licensing process. In the future, the Board will continue listening to applicants and other stakeholders so its policies and licensing decisions properly address these issues:

- public need for local accessible transportation
- the fitness and capacity of licensed companies to serve these needs
- the economic soundness of local conditions in the transportation business

This report encourages companies and others to take steps that improve both the financial stability of accessible transportation services and the standard of service that passengers receive. It provides information and sets out new direction in Board policy on matters that contribute to a successful accessible transportation service. We hope this work proves helpful for people who are working to enhance the accessibility of transportation in their company or community.

## APPENDIX 1

### Projected Changes in Population, Demographics, Disabilities and Transportation

The Accessible Transportation Discussion Paper of March 16, 2011, included information about statistical trends in British Columbia. This is included here for reference.

#### Population

- 1) British Columbia's population is growing. In the next decade, the population of British Columbia will increase by about 14%. It will grow from 4,510,000 in 2010 to about 5,148,000 in 2020. From 2009 until 2036, total population is expected to increase by 36%<sup>37</sup>.
- 2) Population growth is driving urbanization in Southwestern BC. Population growth will likely continue to concentrate in urban centres. Growth will be strongest on eastern Vancouver Island, the Southern Interior, and areas adjacent to Metro Vancouver.

#### Age Demographics

- 3) Senior age groups in BC are getting larger. The overall retirement-age population (65+) will increase steadily in real terms and as a percentage of total population. This part of the population will increase from 14.7% in 2009 to 24.0% in 2036. In 2036, almost a quarter of BC residents will be aged 65 or older. At that time, there will be four elderly dependents for every 10 potential workers. In 2009, there were just over two elderly dependents for every 10 people of working age (18 – 64)<sup>38</sup>. By 2036, the population of people aged 80+ will increase from 4.1% in 2009 to 7.4%<sup>39</sup>.

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37 These 'medium growth scenario' projections are made by BC Stats.

38 [People 35; August 210](#), by BC Stats

39 [People 35; August 210](#), by BC Stats

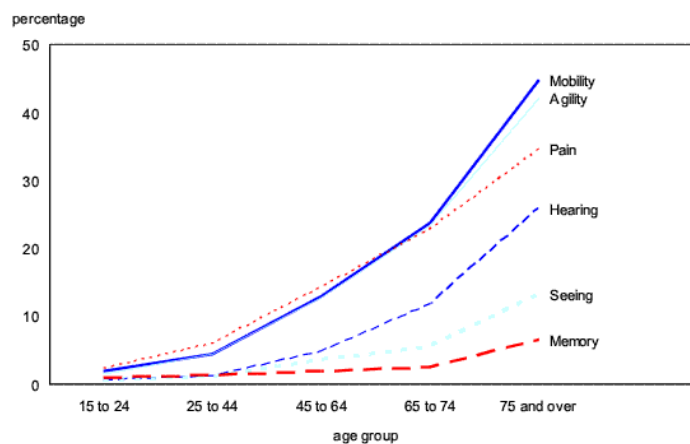


- 4) In terms of the age of its people, BC is one of the oldest provinces. This is largely due to the longer life expectancy that has been observed in British Columbia for decades. For example, the senior population in Kelowna is 19% of the population. This makes Kelowna the oldest city in Canada. In Parksville, 10.2% of the population are aged 80 or older. For this age category, this is the highest proportion of all mid-sized urban centres in Canada.

## Disability Rates

- 5) There is a strong correlation between age and disability rate. Statistics Canada reports that “the disability rate in Canada increases steadily with age. This is also the case with most types of disabilities, especially disabilities related to mobility, agility, hearing, seeing and pain.” Figure 5 shows how disabilities become more common with age.

Figure 5: Disability rates by age: Canada 2006 | Statistics Canada 2006<sup>40</sup>



## Public Transit

- 6) BC disability rates are higher than Canadian rates—and increasing. Based on 2006 statistics, the overall disability rate in British Columbia was 16%. This represents 638,640 British Columbians. This is an increase since 2001 when the disability rate was 14%. In that year, 530,130 British Columbians reported having a disability. British Columbia disability rates are consistently higher than the Canadian rates of 12.4% in 2001 and 14.3% in 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006.

7) Transit is expanding services for people with disabilities in British Columbia. The province's two public transit agencies—BC Transit and TransLink—have significantly expanded their conventional and accessible transportation services over past decades.

To illustrate, statistics for BC Transit are provided in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: The Growth of Transit Over 30 Years (BC Transit only)**

	1979	1989	1999	2008
<b>Number of Systems</b>	13	47	57	81
<b>Fleet of Buses</b>		322	642	850
<b>Annual Expenditures (million)</b>	\$1.03	\$42.4	\$102.0	\$185.4
<b>Ridership (million)</b>		21.1	29.5	45.0

Source: BC Transit<sup>41</sup>

In Metro Vancouver, TransLink subcontracts the operation of 338 HandyDART vehicles that are available 18 hours a day. In addition to HandyDART, BC Transit and TransLink deliver custom transit services through contracted Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver (discounted coupon) programs. Minibuses, taxis and vans are used to provide para transit services in rural and suburban areas.<sup>42</sup>

The BC Transit strategic plan<sup>43</sup> and the TransLink strategic plan<sup>44</sup> account for key trends such as the growing, aging and urbanization of the British Columbia population, the regionalization of public services and the

41 See the webpage [Shaping Our Future: BC Transit's Strategic Plan | 2030](#) and page 4 of the BC Transit Annual Report: 2007/8 (accessible at [http://www.transitbc.com/corporate/general\\_info/annual\\_reports.cfm](http://www.transitbc.com/corporate/general_info/annual_reports.cfm))

42 Performance measure comparisons of HandyDART, taxi supplement and TaxiSaver programs are found in a number of local and regional transit service plans. For Example, see Exhibits 5-3 and 5-4 in the [Nanaimo Regional Transit Business Plan](#) (April 2008).

43 See page 17 of [Shaping Our Future: BC Transit's Strategic Plan | 2030](#). Access the report at <http://www.transitbc.com/2030/>.

44 See page 37 of [Transport 2040: A Transportation Strategy for Metro Vancouver. Now and the Future.](#)

potential for rapid shifts in the demographic profile of resource towns. We note that the regionalization of public services will continue to affect transportation in rural British Columbia.

## APPENDIX 2

### Accessible Taxi Supply in BC

Figure 7 shows the current supply of wheelchair accessible taxis in more than a dozen cities and towns in British Columbia.

**Figure 7: Wheelchair Accessible Taxis in Selected BC Cities and Towns**

(Population Data: Statistics Canada 2006.

Board Vehicle Data: January 5, 2012)

Location	Total Taxi Fleet Size	Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (% of Total)	Population (% aged 65+)
Parksville	8	2 (25%)	10,993 (33.6%)
City of Vancouver	589	113 (19.2%)	578,041 (13.1%)
Greater Vancouver (excluding City of Vancouver)	894	126 (14.2%)	1,538,540 (12.7%)
Penticton	29	4 (13.8%)	31,909 (25.8%)
Chilliwack	31	4 (12.9%)	69,217 (15.8%)
Abbotsford	71	8 (11.3%)	123,864 (14%)
Whistler	54	6 (11.1%)	9,248 (3.8%)
Greater Victoria (CRD)	276	20 (7.2%)	345,164 (18.1%)
Nanaimo	65	4 (6.2%)	78,692 (18%)
Kelowna	87	5 (5.7%)	106,707 (19.4%)
Kamloops	74	4 (5.4%)	80,376 (14.2%)
Prince George	91	2 (2.2%)	70,981 (9.6%)
Cranbrook	30	0 (0%)	18,267 (16.4%)
Fort St. John	24	0 (0%)	17,402 (6.2%)
Prince Rupert	50	0 (0%)	12,815 (10.5%)
Terrace	19	0 (0%)	11,320 (10.9%)
Nelson	9	0 (0%)	9,258 (15.1%)
Haida Gwaii	7	0 (0%)	5,000 (12.7%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,408</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>3,117,794</b>

A passenger transportation licence sets out the maximum number of taxis that a licensee can operate in their fleet.<sup>45</sup> Taxi companies that want to expand their fleet beyond the maximum in their licence must apply to the Board. Figure 7 shows the number of wheelchair accessible taxis (column 3) that must be operated if the licensee is to have a full fleet of taxicabs.

Within the maximum allowable fleet, companies can add as many wheelchair accessible taxis as they want. Also, local governments in Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Kamloops set requirements for a minimum number of wheelchair accessible taxis. In Prince Rupert and Kamloops, taxi companies operate more wheelchair accessible taxis than required in their passenger transportation licence.

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<sup>45</sup> Companies may voluntarily use more wheelchair accessible taxis.

## APPENDIX 3

### Acknowledgements

The Board would like to thank the individuals, companies and organizations that took the time to share information and viewpoints about accessible transportation in British Columbia. The Board received responses from 33 organizations (including businesses) or their representatives. We also received comments from 13 individuals.

We also want to thank the members of our Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Accessible Transportation. This group met at the Simon Fraser University campus in downtown Vancouver on October 26, 2010 and June 2, 2011. We appreciate their guidance and experience.

### Discussion Paper Responses

Comments and information was received from the representatives and individuals noted below.

#### Organizations

- Access Nanaimo Committee
- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
- BC Taxi Association
- BC Transit, Victoria Regional Transit Operations
- CNIB, BC/Yukon
- Child Development Centre, Fort St. John
- Citizens for Accessible Neighbourhoods
- City of Burnaby, City Council
- City of Cranbrook, Corporate Services
- City of Langley, Chief Administrative Officer
- City of Penticton, Operations
- City of Port Coquitlam, Engineering and Operations
- City of Quesnel
- City of Terrace, Councillor
- City of Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
- City of Williams Lake, Active Living

Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of BC,  
 Representative (COSCO BC)  
 Greyhound Canada Transportation ULC  
 Mount Cartier Court, Revelstoke  
 North Shore Advisory Committee  
 North Shore Disability Resource Centre, Information and Advocacy  
 Pacific Coach Lines Ltd.  
 Parksville Measuring Up Committee  
 Richmond Centre for Disability  
 Richmond Society for Community Living  
 Save Our Northern Seniors  
 Sechelt Accessibility Advisory Committee  
 Sooke Harbour Transport Inc. (Sooke Harbour Taxi)  
 Town of Creston, Development Services  
 Town of Qualicum Beach, Mayor  
 Town of Sidney, Councillor  
 United Way of the Lower Mainland, Seniors'  
 Community Planning Tables  
 West Coast Taxi Drivers Association<sup>46</sup>

**Individuals (location only is provided)**

Cranbrook (1)  
 Maple Ridge (1)  
 Metro Vancouver (3)  
 Richmond (1)  
 Squamish (1)  
 Unknown Location (2)  
 Victoria (1)  
 Whistler (1)  
 Williams Lake (2)

<sup>46</sup> This group is registered as the Taxi Drivers' Association of Southern British Columbia

### Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Accessible Transportation

Association of Pacific Taxi Owners<sup>47</sup>, Amrik Mahill  
BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, Jane Dyson  
BC Council of Seniors of BC (COSCO BC), Lorraine Logan  
BC Taxi Association, Mohan Kang  
BC Transit (Greater Victoria Operations), Dave Guthrie  
CNIB (BC/Yukon), Rob Sleath  
Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO BC), Lorraine Logan  
Greyhound Canada Transportation ULC, Grant Odsen  
Justice Institute of BC (TaxiHost Program), Jasbir Sandhu and Al Lund  
TransLink (Member, Access Transit Committee Users' Advisory Committee) Pam Horton  
Passenger Transportation Branch (Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure) Doris Sundquist  
Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC), Emese Szücs  
TransLink (Access Transit Secretariat), Peter Hill and Julie Rogal

### Photographs

Photographs in figures 1, 2 and 3 were taken with the permission of Bluebird Cabs Ltd. at a viewing in December 2011, arranged with the assistance of Kuldeep Singh of the Greater Victoria Taxi Association. Other photographs in this report have been purchased and are copyrighted.

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47 The Association of Pacific Taxi Owners has been replaced by the larger Vancouver Taxi Association



## APPENDIX 4

### Board Actions and Suggestions

This appendix lists the actions that the Passenger Transportation Board is committed to taking. These are actions that fit the Board's mandate and resources. It also lists Board suggestions for actions that may be taken by taxi companies, organizations and governments. These suggestions and actions are also found in the body of the report.

#### Board Action 1

The Board will, in consultation with the taxi industry:

- a) research the future use of taxi service standards
- b) review its accessible taxi policy in light of this initiative

#### Board Action 2

The Board will ask applicants to describe the following:

- a) The wheelchair accessible vehicles that an applicant provides (or proposes)
- b) The accessibility training that drivers receive
- c) The procedures in place to serve the transportation needs of people with disabilities
- d) How wheelchair accessible taxis are distributed within the applicant's operating area and dispatch zones
- e) The hours when transit and HandyDART services are available in the community, and the hours when accessible taxis are (or will be) operated

#### Board Action 3

The Board will consult with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure about expanding the Taxi Bill of Rights to communities outside Metro Vancouver.

### **Board Action 4**

The Board will review its process for authorizing flip seats.

### **Board Action 5**

The Board will consult with inter-city bus licensees to review the accessibility of intra-provincial services in British Columbia. The Board will publish its findings.

### **Suggested Action A**

The Board encourages training institutions, interested groups and taxi companies to develop training plans and programs that can be delivered in many parts of the province.

### **Suggested Action B**

The Board encourages taxi companies and community leaders, when reviewing local wheelchair accessible taxi service, to look at options for working together and addressing accessible transportation needs in the community. Further, they are encouraged to consider the following issues and opportunities.

- a) The higher business cost of operating wheelchair accessible taxis (higher capital and operating costs, and higher break-even point)
- b) Financial interests of taxi drivers
- c) Options that may exist to subsidize or reduce some operating costs
- d) Opportunities that may exist to increase accessible taxi ridership and revenues through a partnership with a HandyDART or para transit provider

### **Suggested Action C**

The Board encourages taxi companies to adopt and promote door-to-door standard for customer service.

### **Suggested Action D**

The Board encourages the taxi industry and stakeholders to work together to address parking-related challenges of serving people with disabilities in urban, downtown areas.

### **Suggested Action E**

The Board encourages companies to publish the maximum size and weight of wheelchairs and scooters they can carry in their vehicles. It encourages companies to post this information online and share it with medical supply retailers that sell mobility aids.

## APPENDIX 5

### Terms

Definitions are provided for some terms that are used in this report.

Term	Definition
Accessible Inter-city Bus	An <b>inter-city bus</b> that is equipped for the transportation of people who use a wheelchair or scooter.
Accessible Taxi	A <b>taxi</b> that is equipped for the transportation of people who use a wheelchair or scooter. (See Division 44 of the Motor Vehicle Act Regulations for a legal definition of accessible taxi.)
Conventional Taxi	A taxi that is not an <b>accessible taxi</b> .
Dual Taxi or Dual Use Taxi	An <b>accessible taxi</b> that may carry passengers seated in a wheelchair or scooter as well as passengers who are not seated in a wheelchair or scooter.
HandyDART	HandyDART is a transportation service for persons with a disability that is severe enough that the person cannot use conventional transit without assistance. The service is provided to and from accessible building entrances. Users must register with TransLink (Metro Vancouver) or BC Transit (outside Metro Vancouver).

Inter-city Bus	<p>A commercial passenger vehicle when it is operated</p> <p>(a) on a set time schedule between any prescribed municipality or regional district in British Columbia and any other location, whether in British Columbia or not,</p> <p>(b) for individual fares,</p> <p>(c) over a regular route, and</p> <p>(d) between fixed terminating points, picking up or dropping off passengers at intermediate points as necessary, and includes or excludes any commercial passenger vehicle or class of commercial passenger vehicles prescribed by regulations.</p>
Flip Seats	<p>Movable, let-down seats installed in accordance with Division 10.07(5) of the Motor Vehicle Act Regulations.</p>
Licence	<p>A licence issued under section 25(1) or 29(1) of the Passenger Transportation Act. (A licence may also be referred to as a “passenger transportation licence.”)</p>
Mobility Aid	<p>In this paper, <b>mobility aids</b> refers to wheelchairs and scooters. The term may also include walkers and other mobility aids that can be lifted and placed in the trunk or rear of a taxi.</p>

Para Transit	A type of transit service that is more flexible than fixed-route transit. Para transit services may be provided to able-bodied passengers as well as passengers with mobility difficulties. Para transit services may be operated by public transit, community groups or not-for-profit organizations.
Taxi Saver	A service for people with permanent disabilities who have a photo identification card issued by a local <b>HandyDART</b> office. The program gives passengers a subsidy toward the cost of taxi rides.
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi	An <b>accessible taxi</b> as defined in Division 44 of the Motor Vehicle Act Regulations.
Wheelchair Accessible Transportation	In this report, wheelchair accessible transportation refers to the transportation of passengers in a taxi or <b>inter-city bus</b> that can be used by a passenger and their wheelchair or scooter. More generally, it may include transportation by para transit vehicles, <b>HandyDART</b> vehicles and wheelchair accessible buses that are used for conventional transit.

## APPENDIX 6

### Subsection 8(1) of the BC Human Rights Code

- 8 (1) A person must not, without a bona fide and reasonable justification,
- (a) deny to a person or class of persons any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public, or
  - (b) discriminate against a person or class of persons regarding any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public
- because of the race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation or age of that person or class of persons.

