TO: Mayor and Members General Issues Committee

WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE

COMMITTEE DATE: January 10, 2011

SUBJECT/REPORT NO:
Accessible Transportation Service Delivery (PW11003) - (City Wide)
(Outstanding Business List Item)

SUBMITTED BY:
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PREPARED BY:
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SIGNATURE:

RECOMMENDATION
(a) That Report PW11003 regarding Accessible Transportation Service Delivery be received;
(b) That the item “Transportation service delivery models to ensure that persons with disabilities are guaranteed 100% trip service” be identified as completed and removed from the General Issues Committee’s Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
As per Council direction in response to a recommendation of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) within its Report 10-001, staff has completed a preliminary review of accessible transportation service delivery options that include use of demand responsive services i.e. trips requiring minimal advance booking times.

Staff conducted a literature review through on-line resources, and developed options for achieving an on demand model, included in a discussion brief presented to the Transportation Subcommittee of ACPD on July 5, 2010. Based on initial feedback of that Subcommittee, further detailed development of a preferred option is necessary before any decisions on a model for implementation could be made, but the Subcommittee offered some initial preferences for consideration. Given the existing models within the United States that have been implemented, successful development of an acceptable model in Hamilton would be likely.

Vision: To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.
Values: Honesty, Accountability, Innovation, Leadership, Respect, Excellence, Teamwork
There are a number of initiatives within the City that will have an effect on consideration of any on demand service model, including:

- work being carried out by the Taxi Reform Subcommittee of Council;
- Council consideration of a 2011 operating budget enhancement to implement the revised Eligibility & Registration policy and procedures for ATS services;
- present work on DARTS service enhancements; and
- pending enactment of the AODA Transportation Standard.

Given the uncertainty of outcomes associated with the above initiatives, staff has made no recommendation within this Report on proceeding with development of further service options at this time. The review of options is included in the City’s Annual Accessibility Plan, which will ensure that further analysis and review will continue with input from ACPD and the community.

Alternatives for Consideration - Not Applicable

FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: N/A
Staffing: N/A
Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the direction of Council, and in response to a recommendation of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) within its Report 10-001, received by Committee of the Whole on February 8, 2010, the Transit section of Public Works has investigated transportation service models other than those currently employed by the City under its Accessible Transportation Services program.

ACPD had recommended:

(a) That whereas in the future, demand will increase for accessible transportation services; the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities advises Council that it has concerns regarding the availability of resources for Accessible Transportation services (ATS), including DARTS, required so that persons with disabilities have access to accessible transportation required to meet their daily needs for work, school and health care;

(b) That staff be directed to bring a report back to Committee of the Whole by early fall 2010 investigating other transportation service delivery models to ensure that persons with disabilities are guaranteed 100% trip service.

Specifically, staff looked at opportunities that could be provided to meet criteria put forward by ACPD that include:

- guarantee of 100% trip [service] accommodation;
ability to book [DARTS] within 24 hours and get a ride;
• consideration of adequacy of service levels; and
• need for expansion of service options that are more “efficient”, considering shared ride or on-demand services.

Staff developed a preliminary option for meeting the noted criteria, and presented the same to the Transportation Subcommittee of ACPD at its meeting of July 5. The options discussed within this report are based on those materials presented to that subcommittee, and reflect the observations of its members.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

Transportation Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

**ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The staff recommendation that this report be received, but with no recommendation for further action, reflects the uncertain outcomes from several key related initiatives presently in progress within the City, or which are expected to require active consideration over the next twelve months.

**Taxi Reform Subcommittee**

The Taxi Reform Subcommittee of Council has been examining, among a number of issues, those that relate to accessibility of the taxi industry and the present practices of taxi operators with respect to rates and fees for service to persons with disabilities that fall outside the standards set by Council within the Taxi By-law. Lack of accessibility of the taxi industry has been identified by ACPD as a major barrier to provision of services in Hamilton, and opportunities to advance the concept of an “on demand” service offering that responds to the expressed desire of ACPD to achieve “ability to book [DARTS] within 24 hours and get a ride” are substantially constrained by that lack of accessible taxis. While resolution to the issue may come through legislated requirements of the taxi industry i.e. enactment of the Transportation Standard of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), it is more likely that changes at a local level through the City Taxi By-Law will be required to achieve the necessary enhancements to taxi accessibility. Development of trips by persons with disabilities on an on demand basis, managed as part of the City service offering through ATS, may provide some impetus for enhancement of accessibility by taxi operators, if done in conjunction with legislated reform.

**ATS Eligibility and Registration Changes**

As part of the 2011 City budget process, Transit will be putting forward a service enhancement that will allow implementation of changes to eligibility for Accessible
Transportation Services (ATS), specifically for services delivered by DARTS, as previously directed by Council under Report PW03128c. These changes will require a significant growth in service levels over the next four years, and will significantly change the demographic of passengers to include a far greater number of “ambulatory” passengers with disabilities who might be able to make greater use of existing resources within the community, including sedan taxicab services that are available on demand or on short notice. ATS expects that, if the necessary 2011 operating budget service enhancement is approved by Council, expanded service to meet the new demand would be required in the latter part of 2011. There may be some opportunities to utilize demand responsive service for a number of these new registrants to the program.

DARTS Service Enhancements

As part of Council direction arising from Report PW03128c, ATS has worked with DARTS to add over $450,000 annually in expanded service to meet trip demand that could not previously be accommodated. This service expansion has substantially reduced the number of trip denials over the first two months of its implementation. Additionally, DARTS, as part of its commitment to the City to develop improvements to system efficiency and effectiveness, is implementing changes to scheduling processes which it believes will result in further service availability to meet the present demand for trips. Any consideration of implementing on demand services as contemplated by ACPD in its recommendation to Council should be made in conjunction with consideration of existing service capacities and the effect on the development of the service infrastructure provided by DARTS.

AODA Transportation Standard Enactment

It is anticipated that the proposed AODA Transportation Standard may, among other requirements, direct provision of trips within a defined time period from the time of request, such that an “on demand” service is a requirement rather than an optional means of service delivery. Depending on the enacted language of the legislation, there may be a substantial impact on Transit service requirements and associated costs which can only be fully evaluated once the requirements are known. Instituting any changes to service on any basis other than that of a demonstration or pilot project is not recommended until such time as the Transportation Standard is made public, as there may be greater priorities to be addressed in the near term which require the application of financial and staff resources.

A substantial investigation of the use of taxis in paratransit programs was carried out in the United States by Easter Seals Project ACTION, with results published in December 2008. Of 28 responding transit properties representing a cross section of paratransit property size, with 17 that carry a comparable number of trips to Hamilton or greater each year, almost all utilized taxi services in carrying out regular paratransit services i.e. the equivalent of DARTS; but only a few operate a parallel “on demand” service such as the one contemplated by the ACPD recommendation to Council. Within the models operated by those operating the parallel on demand service, there are different service parameters that bear consideration, including:
• curb-to-curb service rather than the door-to-door service provided by traditional paratransit services;
• a differing fare structure from that used for paratransit trips, which may include a base fare plus further fare payment by the passenger after a pre-determined cost for a taxi trip;
• a limit on demand trips on a monthly or other basis; and
• direct-to-the-taxi bookings by the passengers, bypassing traditional reservations and dispatch requirements.

Pros of such a system include superior response to passenger needs; elimination of trip denials; and cost benefit to the Transit provider.

Cons of such a system include service and driver quality issues; difficulties in payment and administration, along with fraud control issues, for the Transit provider; and difficulty in monitoring and enforcing operational performance standards.

The Transportation Subcommittee of ACPD provided feedback to the Transit presentation discussing issues and approaches to on demand service. The presentation included discussion of objectives of an on demand service offering recognition of key stakeholders, and options for implementing such a service, which might include expansion and/or modification of the ATS Taxi scrip program; bookings through a coordinated call centre (brokerage); or direct calling to taxi services by the passenger.

The Transportation Subcommittee require a more detailed model to determine how a preferred model might best be implemented, but did offer a preference for a brokerage that could determine what trip mode best suits the passenger’s particular needs for responsiveness and quality of the service.

Development of a cost analysis for this initiative cannot be completed at this time, as there is insufficient operational detail to determine costs. However, both anecdotal and limited empirical evidence presented in the Easter Seals Project ACTION discussion paper on the use of taxis in paratransit programs indicates that there can be savings generated by the use of taxis in a demand responsive model servicing some portion of the capable registrant base.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

N/A

**CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN**


**Social Development**

• People participate in all aspects of community life without barriers or stigma
• Promotes greater accessibility within the community for persons with disabilities.
Healthy Community

- An engaged Citizenry
- Responds to concerns raised by the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities for the City of Hamilton.

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

None