

# Winnipeg Transit Plus: Winnipeg Transit Master Plan Customer Discussion

Carol Shields Auditorium - January 13 @ 6:00pm



## **Speakers:**

Kevin Sturgeon, Program Manager

John, StanTec Representative

Various Audience Members

[Start]

**Speaker:** Everybody's here for the meeting of the Winnipeg Knitting Club right? [Laughter] We're going to get started in a few minutes, we're just going to give a few moments for some late-comers to come in. We'll get started in a few minutes, but there are lots of treats, cookies, and coffee, so please, take a few.

**Kevin:** Okay everybody, if you can make your way to the front we'll get started. If you come closer we might be able to hear each other better. I'll give you a few minutes to finish off some snacks there. Okay, so let's get started, thank you for coming everybody, this is Phase 2 of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan Public Engagement. I am Kevin Sturgeon. I work for Winnipeg Transit. This project started about a year ago and it covers all of the transit system, conventional and Winnipeg Transit Plus. In May we had Phase 1, we asked people what was good and what worked, we had a lot of feedback, thousands of submitted comments, and using that feedback we have - along with a lot of data, we have developed a plan on the conventional side that we presented in November, for a new transit

network. So, the current conventional network has been completely redesigned, and there is info on our website for those of you that are interested if you didn't have a chance to learn of it in the fall. In that network, and keep this in mind for this presentation, we are reclassifying this as the primary transit network, so those that come frequently, and you'll hear about that later on. So, this is Phase 2 engagement for Transit Plus, and soon I'll pass it over to John to tell you more about that. This is the second of three public engagement phases, so after tonight's discussion, and those tomorrow, we'll come back in March to present the recommendations. So tonight, we'll present some ideas, we hope to have thorough discussion and to hear your thoughts and suggestions you have, and then in March we'll present the recommendations. Tonight, we'll start with the presentations. John has a lot of material to cover, you'll see via the slideshow. Questions will happen after, so if you could hold your questions until after so that we have time for thorough discussion afterwards. The presentation should be about 45 mins and then we have about an hour for discussion after, or longer if people want to keep talking. So, I will ask John to present some of our thoughts on changes to Winnipeg Transit Plus.

**John:** Thanks Kevin. My name is John Goguss, I work for Stantec Associates. We do work all over North America. I myself have overseen the transit system in Dallas, and over the last 20 years I've had the pleasure of being involved in the largest voluntary accessible transit service, which is the City of Los Angeles' program which has over 120,000 volunteers in it. This is providing services to people that depend on it to maintain their way of life. A couple of ground rules: please, as Kevin mentioned, try to hold your questions until the end so that we can get through everything, some of you may have trips booked, so we want to make sure we finish in time for those or else I'll be the one to drive you all home. Take your time in your questioning since we have a number of people recording and signing, and we can have all others participate too. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't be bashful about asking an obvious question. We're going to go through quite a bit of material, I'll try to go as quickly as I can, but also to highlight things that are important about the study. So, we can

get questions from you in terms of the changes impacting how you use and improve transit service.

**John:** Did I skip one? - excuse me. Sorry. Okay, so here's our agenda for the evening, I'll give you an overview and purpose, an overview of the program, select topics and policy items and then we'll get to where we came to today, with recommendations. As Kevin said, we are still in the process of engaging the public, so tonight is basically recommendations and how we got those recommendations is based on analyzing the service that you are being provided with today, looking at that service relation to other programs in Canada and the US - peer programs.

**John:** I apologize, but I operate off a... a mac, and I'm operating off a PC, so for those of you that are apple fans know I'm in foreign territory here. [laughs] What Kevin mentioned is important because mobility has changed considerably over the last decade. There are options that are out there today that were not 5 or 10 years ago, and a lot of those changes are generated by advancements technology. They are influencing people's choices in how they travel from one place to another. What Winnipeg Transit wants to do is make sure it provides all the options for the residents of the city, and what that means is looking at travel, which is being done in the master plan study, looking at how the services being provided today are being used, and today we'll talk about Transit Plus and other specifics, but also ridership on the fixed-route buses, and how *that* service can fix how you travel, that is you in the participation of the service. The network is undergoing a detailed review, the importance of that network is that it's accessible. There are low-floor buses, you might remember years ago getting on a bus and having to go up a number of steps, now you can roll a mobility device onto the bus. The city working with Winnipeg Transit is expanding accessibility in a number of stops. You know this as door-to-door service for those that can't get to the stops, but this gives us a unique opportunity to better service your needs and for your peers that use the service. It's a unique opportunity that comes once in a decade, where you fix the fixed-route service, but also how to enhance the Transit Plus service. We'll get more into it during the service, and a lot of this is

beneficial to you as riders of the service today, because those changes, particularly the use of technology, will be beneficial for you in terms of using the service.

**John:** You are obviously familiar with Winnipeg Transit Plus, if you are here today. We've provided 400,000 door-to-door trips when looking at the service area, and accessible services are an essential service. Trip requests are made ahead of time by calling and booking a trip. There are limitations, like by 11:00am on the day before, I think you can call up to a week in advance to book your trips as well. To be in the program you have to satisfy certain requirements as well, and we'll talk about the as we go.

**John:** So, let's talk about the purpose of our review of the Transit Plus program. We wanted to take a look at how the program was doing, first and foremost how it is doing for you the riders. Are we meeting your needs? Understanding that everything in this world is not perfect but we can strive for it. And understanding that we are assessing next to peer programs in Canada particularly the largest in the country, TTC, we also looked at the main findings of the ombudsman report and I think those involved are aware of this report it has been published in print and media. We also need to align the program with the recently passed AMA and this is important because in order for the agency to continue to get grant money you have to be compliant let alone the fact that it is legislation and requirements of the agency as to how services are provided. We also want to modernize the program so it is equitable for those that need it. You have first-hand knowledge that it may be difficult for you to get a trip when you need it and that is common across North America. So, what we are trying to do is figure out ways where we can make the program sustainable for the future. As Kevin mentioned this includes increases in frequency, improvements in facilities, vehicles in order to deliver better service options.

**John:** So, to set the context of what we are talking about we went over the review and we will get into the detail of what we found of the performance of this program. So, your population in Winnipeg is aging as we all are since the day we were born. This is a trend that is not unique to Winnipeg,

any market we operate in in the world is getting older. As we get older we do not have the ability to be as mobile-our ridership and demand for Transit Plus has grown significantly so we have to look at how we are going to handle the demand in the future. What is the best way to do that and meet your needs as well as some of the things I mentioned; technology, identifying lifestyle behavior and complying with the AMA and which is to remove or prevent barriers to accessibility so we need to update the program for equity and update based on lifestyles. This goes across the board, if you look at the demographic of those that ride the bus in the room previously we had 60-70 people in the room and the participants with transit is so wide from teenagers to people in their later years. And we need to take that into consideration and provide equitable solutions that are sustainable.

**John:** Let me talk a little about the act that I have been mentioning. So, AMA was passed in 2013. It is breaking down barriers and providing increased accessibility. There was a standard which was a discussion transportation paper where Winnipeg Transit had a great deal of input but it has not been proclaimed. It requires accessible vehicles, features like priority seating, mobility device securement grab bars all the things that if you wanted to use bus services in the city would make it easier. Fares are going to have to be the same as conventional services so those that have all their abilities-the pre-boarding and onboarding announcements this would help people with vision barriers and we have already deployed these throughout North America and they are very helpful. As well as inside and outside the bus it is helpful in opening options for you on the bus-lighting and sounds; making it as comfortable for you to use accessible service is the major point of this act. Also providing additional services for those that require it. And as accessibility information so if you go to the kiosk for the bus the maps would be large and it is trying to be as accommodating as possible.

**John:** The other thing that is also directly impacting major portions of the Transit Plus program, is eligibility. You know that when you entered the program, you went under evaluation. There were three categories:

unconditional, which means that you will never be able to use conventional services for your trips, conditional, meaning you can sometimes use conventional services, and temporary, which would be you could use services for a certain length of time, so that would be like if you broke your leg. These are categories that are standard again across Canada, in terms of the eligibility status of people. They may say that, in our experiences from places like Toronto, there are a considerable amount of people that are in the unconditional status that will always be in the program. There are a number of people that are under the second category, and because of the devices they use, opt for Transit Plus since it opens up some unique opportunities in terms of travel. Booking, it provides for same-day service requests, and up to the same day for services. The big thing is that it provides for same-day services, sometimes it's tough for a service that has demand like this, to get a same day trip. One thing that came up in the act is that you are leading your life and there might be something that comes up and you have to make a trip, sometimes it's difficult because you haven't booked it in advance, and you have to try and fit it in. It's challenging but it's part of that balancing in that, thinking about how you accommodate all those trips. In Toronto, the program there does 16,000 trips a day, it's an incredibly high number, in addition to that they accommodate 2,000 additional daily trips. So, if you sat like we did in their control center and tried to accommodate 2,000 additional trips in a day, it's very, very challenging. So you have to put something in place that allows us to accommodate that, so that's how many drivers and vehicles you have, and trying to figure out - like when you get on the bus and the driver says that he has a manifest of all the pick-ups of things that he has to do, and it's a consideration, as we look at planning for the agency, the handle has changed and it's demanding in terms of resources.

**John:** The other, the trip prioritization will be eliminated, and I know that's a contentious issue, but trip prioritization will be gone. The important thing is that Winnipeg Transit particularly the staff in Winnipeg Transit Plus had a lot of say in the formulation of this service, and the riders were well represented, so it's an important piece of legislation that we have to accommodate.

**John:** Let's talk a little bit about modernizing - sorry I'm from New England, so I have a little bit of an accent. Let's talk about modernizing the program - I mentioned earlier that there has been a lot of impact, because of the use of technology on the use of transit in general. There are a lot of basic things, and fundamental things that go into making a program modern. You probably began with the program when it was known as Handi-Transit, but now it's rebranded as Transit Plus. We understand that people's lives have changed and being in the equitable service and the use of the program, have to be regardless of disability. You know, we have to recognize that and respond to that with a combination of fundamentals and things like technology to respond to those particular needs. The aspects that we think are important in terms of the legislation and the act is the no-show policy. We think that the existing policy is outdated and the cash penalty, which I hope no one has had to pay, is not the best thing for a transit agency to do. We've done away with cash penalties in other parts of Canada. For no-shows, we always think about it, it's challenging to deal with that when managing a program because we know that things come up, but you know, better communication and use of that technology is helping to reduce the number of no-shows. We use messages, and text, to let them know when their ride is coming, but also the use of that to let them know when they cannot make their ride, then it can go to someone else that day.

**John:** Another issue is the Family of Services - this is basically looking at combining fixed route and Transit Plus services to increase dignity. Transit Plus is an essential service but is somewhat constraining in that your travel is accommodated by someone else and that someone has the decision of making your trips. The whole concept of FOS came out of dealing with people that had physical and cognitive disabilities and addressing the need for more freedom in their lives. We talked to a lot of riders, advocates and healthcare providers in development of this concept and we think it's an important option, and I think it's important in addressing the reboot here, which is also to increase the frequency on the well-riden services. That will provide more frequent services for accessible buses and that the wait times will probably be shorter, I mean, I can't guarantee that it will be, but it

makes the fixed-route services more attractive so that eventually it will be. Some of the other accommodations like securements, play into that as well

**John:** And then looking at lowering the cost of services by looking at all options and that Transit Plus can be a broker or operator of all services. There are places in North America where we deploy all transit services in the area to meet the needs of individuals so we may use the fleet, vans from an agency or a church van. We do this by a traffic control center and you are looking at all services and seeing when they arrive and when they land and we deploy the same-

**John:** Let's talk a little about eligibility-so the current eligibility criteria was approved and adopted by the city in 2006, 14 years ago which is a long time in terms of policy and ordinances. It was later modified and requires your eligibility in the program requires use of a wheelchair or scooter I would say as an outsider that is unique because in the other programs just because you have a scooter or wheelchair doesn't mean you can't use fixed transit. The other criteria include unable to walk 175 meters (575 feet) outside. I would qualify for this today as I would not be able to walk 575 feet outside. You have 20/200 vision or less or you have Alzheimer's or related dementia. If you look at talking about the legislation, current eligibility is you are required to undergo a functional assessment and those that are participants in the program probably went under that. We heard this afternoon that some things went well and some didn't. Based on this assessment, individuals are categorized as unconditional, seasonal-able to use Transit Plus during winter months only, or temporary-able to use Transit Plus for a limited period based on a temporary medical condition. If you look at this breakdown, a significant number of people are categorized in unconditional. This is not something we are criticizing as those people went under assessment but it is a lot of people. In most programs it is more evenly split.

**John:** We looked at the assessment and the current eligibility practices of the program and we came to the conclusion that your processes and policies do not align with other programs. What we are looking for in the



end is how we make the program sustainable and maximize resources in the program. We need to look at how people are deemed to be eligible in the program. Also, the eligibility was determined before the accessibility features we have today. Today vehicles have ramps and other accessibility features. Back in 2006 when this program was being established the industry, that is the public transit, took a more blanket approach to people we think the most current criteria does not focus on individuals. The use of the wheelchair as example and for Winnipeg so you know we are not saying we are going to take a cookie cutter approach but if we look at it in a peer reviewed approach there is issues with how eligibility is being granted now. And part of this processes is to vet how this is working for you and Winnipeg.

**John:** So, our overall assessment of the current practices is that they do not keep the program equitable and sustainable. Equitable being the equal number of resources for those that use it. I keep going back to this balance, we have this demand and resources and we keep trying to maximize both for those that need the service. Our initial recommendation is to focus on using conventional services with Transit Plus that means you may take an accessible bus and you may take the trip back with Transit Plus. You may take your whole trip with Transit Plus and if the weather is accessible for you may take transit. We recommend taking other transit services and this is something we need to look at.

**John:** When we do research, people who have disability, be it physical or cognitive, are leading tremendously different lives today than they did in 2006 or 1996, or - especially in 1986 or 1976, and thank God we've progressed to give people options. What we're doing is to continue that progress and to do it in a way that's sustainable so that people can use Transit Plus in the future.

**John:** We'll talk a little bit about trip prioritization since that's a sticking point here in the past. Let me say, the current priority is work, medical, education, therapy. The second is essential shopping, support groups, and self-development. And the third is recreational activity, grooming, dining

out, and if you are in the program, you are aware of calling and saying what your trip is about and giving the ranking. Giving the reason in other parts of North America is outdated, because it sets up a precedent. If I am making a trip, why does it matter more than someone else needs to do to self-development class? It's tough for someone making the trip request to make that decision. And we don't think it's fair or equitable and goes against the City of Winnipeg's 2011 framework, which is to provide as much transportation as possible. We mention the AMA, but even here it doesn't allow it. So, we think a functional eligibility requirement regulates demand and makes sure that trip-by-trip, we're providing as much service as possible to those that need it, and our goal is that it needs to be eliminated.

**John:** Let's talk about no-shows since that's an issue too. No-shows to me is a selfish thing, if you book a trip and someone else that really wants to go somewhere that day doesn't have a trip because you didn't show up - the problem is that it has a domino effect. If David isn't up for his trip, that means we have to try and recalibrate the resource and bring it somewhere else, and it's hard to do that on the fly and pick up someone else. As technology advances, it becomes easier, but as no-shows are by and large, a human choice, we think that, what we're working on in terms of recommendations, are people to regulate no-shows as much as possible. If a customer cancels within 30 mins of a pickup, that's a late cancellation. Or if you have too many shopping parcels, there are a lot of things that we have to respond to in issues with no-shows, and in other programs - sorry I'll grab this for you.

**John:** So, I've mentioned that a lot of the things in here we've responded to with technology in other places and that will be in some of the recommendations in our final report to Winnipeg Transit. As I mentioned before, there is a domino effect, each no-show has a letter explaining the incident and fines are charged, and you're aware that there is a first no-show, down to the fifth no-show, there are penalties. During 2015, which is the last audit that was done, there was \$28,200 collected in no-show fees. That's a lot in relation to the 400,000 or so trips that were done. It's something that again, it's not out of total range for some of the other

programs, but it's high and needs to be considered and controlled. And also, the whole issue of no-show was a source of complaint in the Ombudsman's Report. There are point schemes, and we mention some of our clients here, with the graduated point system in the North of Toronto with great transit plus programs, so there are cancellations and late cancellations, TTC or Toronto, has a similar points program. The thing about this is that neither of these have financial penalties, but if you are a user to the program, if you are collecting points, someone has to administer this, has to go into the database, attribute the bad stuff, and then take away the stuff we want to do, the high-quality service that people need. I'm not saying that anyone ruins the no-show here, I'm not pointing fingers, but if you are, you know you're guilty.

**John:** Again, some of the larger agencies like New York have a point system, and Grand River Transit and Waterloo also have a system on occurrence, but no financial penalties. So... you know, point-based systems are most common, these systems, even if they are administratively different, they require more time and result in service suspension for repeated no-shows and cancellations. These are quite uncommon now, so our recommendation is to get away from financial penalties.

**John:** You know financial penalties looking at the \$28,000 isn't really changing behavior. We think increasing the allowances of no shows you know giving you freebies is maybe too restrictive. We think of expanding the cancellation window to 2 hours to improve the accommodation rate that goes back to the issue of what do you do in that time frame to give the ride to someone else. These things are being looked at and worked together. We also need to define the no show appeal process. So, booking trips and trip delivery is a major portion of our work. This goes back to the issues of freedom and giving you more mobility options when a customer currently requests a trip an exact pick up time is given. This is good if you operate in a city with no traffic or a city that doesn't snow-I shouldn't say that since Miami Dade is one of my clients and we also have the same problems. You can't say a specific time because of traffic and weather conditions.

Providing unrealistic expectations impacts customer satisfaction, it clogs up our call services and it impacts our ability to share trips. If you look at the charter of this program and other programs they are shared programs not limousine programs. The intention was that there would be 2-3 people riding with you in a sedan that has been difficult to do because of demand. So, a subscription trip or standing order trips can be done i.e. for healthcare if everyone was going to the same clinic would be easy to do. But it isn't if people are going to the shopping center and somewhere else. It is supposed to be a shared service and sometimes on our side we are at fault because we need to do a better job at coordinating trips and getting people on the van with you.

**John:** So, most peers use a booking window not giving people a specific time, giving people a 30-minute window as to when they should be ready you know be ready between 11:00-11:30am. This is something we are just looking at right now, we need your feedback, is that window too long or too short? It does give you some time to get ready but it does impact the no show policy. I'll go back to technology there are programs where if the driver is 5-10 min away if you have a smartphone the driver will tell you he is 5 min away. So, we can use technology to reduce the booking window program to fit your lifestyle better. Again, these are things for consideration nothing is concrete yet. Let me talk about the FOS again. We are very optimistic for this potential based on our experience in Toronto and LA. It means we are using the investment in accessible infrastructure and vehicles to complete para-transit and transit trips together. So, depending on the time of you may be given a trip plan that gives you a conventional trip and you may ride a subway or we may pick you up in a van and drop you off at the subway. The FOS looks at what is appropriate for you-it will save you time and in most cases will also save money. You know again same day service can almost be guaranteed because we are using more options than just Transit Plus so it increases flexibility and freedom so you can decide 'I'm going to walk out and ride the bus downtown because I'm going to a jets game'. We have had a number of people using van service and taxi service which is similar to Transit Plus today to riding conventional services.

**John:** This is a case study from Toronto, if you look at how it begins, starting at the home, a transit vehicle might come and bring the customer to an accessible bus stop, then they take the bus or train to another stop, then remember you know these options are there because the bus and streetcar services are already running at intervals where we can put you on a vehicle and take you to an accessible bus stop so that you have more options. We believe that this expands your mobility options tremendously and provides more options.

**John:** Again, in Toronto, we match the service to the customer, when someone calls for a trip, we look at their particular challenges whether it be cognitive or physical and then try to match the service to what's right for them. If they can't navigate accessible services, then they'll continue to do what they do today. Drivers provide services door-to-door, and without the FOS it would be difficult to reach those numbers and provide as much service as they do. The goal in Toronto is by 2025 that 50% of all trips will be delivered by FOS. But Toronto has things that you don't have here, they have trains and streetcars, but again the goal isn't just to provide service but also the advocates and the advisory committees that have been most vocal champions of the service concept, so it comes from the users to show that it has value. And again, if you have Family of Services, they're not left out or alone. Here's a fixed bus route with a low-floor, they don't just say "have at it!" They go and help people with the confidence they need to negotiate through the service. They do Travel Training 101 in some places and we have peer-to-peer, so groups that will go out and do some training. They'll show them how to use the services. We also do in a lot of places what is called co-mingling, where we put people in the same vehicle, so we'll put people who have accessible needs in the same car as someone that has none. It's just bringing people out of that network.

**John:** There are challenges as we see right now with the FOS concept in Winnipeg, it doesn't defeat the concept, but you need more wheelchair securements on the conventional bus fleet, that issue needs to be addressed. If someone is going to try and use the service, you need to be able to accommodate the needs. Not all of your bus stops are accessible

and you obviously have ice and snow and internal buy-in and trip scheduling and being able to transfer between the services. Okay!

**Kevin:** So, John has been talking for quite a long time, so we thought we'd have some discussion for a bit! So, at this standpoint we are far enough along that no one will miss their trip, but let's hear some comments on things that were mentioned?

>>> The picking up two hours before and they get you there late past the time you are supposed to be there and your pickup is later and it's happened to me twice in the last two months. They can always find me a van to get me home. Why are these dispatchers, well I don't think they know the city well enough?

**John:** So, you think it's a dispatch problem rather than a driver problem? Okay.

>>> I've driven transit and it's more dispatchers don't know how to break up into areas, you're going to have cars crossing, but the way it is now is terrible. I was at the Grace Hospital and there was a guy eating his lunch, I was waiting for a van to take me home, and when I asked him he said "No, I'm eating my lunch! My next trip is in Charleswood!" and I asked him well what is he doing there? Eating his lunch? There doesn't seem to be continuity in booking their cars in certain areas.

>>> Okay several issues first yesterday we went to the art gallery it was free, the area in front of the gallery was not cleaned it was inaccessible it was not accessible the bus driver trying to haul us...second of all I called 311 - no, I called Handi-transit I explained the situation the woman said this is not my problem, she said you have to call 311. The thing is when you go to a public event they want people to come out there was more than one Handi-Transit in front but they could not get in because of snow and traffic blocking the door. You got to change the volume in your voice you are monotone -

you are not being effective in communicating, I'm not trying to be offensive that's just my opinion. When drivers come and pick us up they come from one end of the city to the other and it is not practical the system is dysfunctional it does not work the drivers do not have time to go to washroom they don't get paid for their breaks they don't have amenities and we pay the price. It's absolutely horrible you are talking about wonderful things well how about things that will work for this city not San Francisco or Toronto. I'm sorry I've been using Handi-transit for a number of years but I have seen a deterioration of services over the years.

>>> He's right, I was leaving Seven Oaks Hospital, and I couldn't get onto the bus, he said that he would wait for me at the next bus stop or that I would have to phone the city. Well I did, they had fixed the driveway to get to the bus stop, but if you don't complain about it, it doesn't get fixed. It goes for everything.

>>> I had a comment that some people are able to use public transit and that's fine if they can and they have the finances and cognitive learning abilities but there are some that have learning disability or cognitive disabilities they may even get assaulted. I have one friend who has developmental disabilities so after 3:00pm she doesn't know how to take the bus. So, this one time she got separated from her caregiver and she called me crying and I had to call her caregiver. Her family looked into it and now she has 24-hour staff. I have another friend who was told to use Handi-transit but doesn't not qualify except during winter. Last year he fell a number of times and people told him to tell his physician and case worker to have it changed and we did that but it was denied. He does not have a 1-on-1, 24hr worker and because he is in his 50s he doesn't want to go anywhere because if he has a seizure or falls no one will help him. That's what happened last year and he was raising a family for the past 5 years and we are both on disability and

how are you supposed to take 100\$ form that for transit to take him places if he can't get on Handi-transit....

**John:** Right, well we-had a number of different issues there. I understand-

>>> Well that's not fair because he's being told to us Handi-Transit but then is not being helped. I understand that but he is not the only one with developmental issues and he is not the only one not using a wheelchair 24 hours to get around the city.

**John:** Well some of those issues, we can't respond to since we are just consultants. Cognitive issues are difficult to accommodate, but that's why the Travel Training is important-

>>> One time we went on Handi-transit and he got lost and then he missed his appointment and now he never wants to use Handi-transit again.

**John:** Okay, yes, you over there?

>>> The one thing I will say, personally I have no issue with the way Handi-Transit is now, but the one thing I will say is that I used to be able to take the regular bus a lot more than I do now, but in August of 2019 I stopped taking the regular bus because I was in a bus accident where the bus stopped suddenly and my foot plate got sheared off on my wheelchair and I broke my foot. So, I don't use the regular bus anymore because I can't - I'm alone 16 hours a day and I cannot physically tie myself down, so I've resorted to using Handi-Transit all the way down since they tie me down. So, if you are going to have people who can - and not everyone can, but if you are going to ask people to use regular transit more often, that's great, but the regular transit has to change. Because that accident happened because I wasn't tied down. Being tied down or having electronic options to tie people down is critical if you do go to a system like that. And it just happened that when I broke my foot, I wasn't careful. So



regular transit drivers need to have the time to tie you down, because there are situations where people don't have staff to tie them down, but if there is no one there - there's a lot of accidents.

**John:** Right you are right about the securement issue and we have identified it as an issue

>>> There still needs to be a person available to help people tie down.

**John:** Absolutely.

>>> And they have to have proper training not half assed so people are libel.

>>> If it's not icy, I take Winnipeg Transit, but if I'm going to the doctor's I take Handi-Transit, but a lot of people don't know about that fee (\$3 for 3 years).

**John:** So, you think communication should be improved? What's the best way to do that? Send you a letter?

>>> I think so, because not everyone has a computer, and some of them don't know how to operate it. Like I play games on mine, but don't ask me to email you.

**John:** How about any other comments?

>>> I have a couple of different comments one has to do with the size of the vehicles. I travel with a guide dog and I notice the small sizes of the vehicles. I have had drivers say I can't sit in the front because of the computer. When I sit in the back there isn't enough space for me or for my dog and I have the driver give me heck because in order to get in the car she [my dog] had to stand on the seat and then he [the driver] harassed me saying my dog was not supposed to step on

the seat and was complaining. And if it was a problem for me then I should call Handi-Transit and tell them that I don't want small vehicles picking me up anymore. Another comment about Toronto is that when you first call them they give you a 30 min window. But then the night before they give you a specific time. And no shows the no show is not always the client's fault. I have many times been called a no show when I wasn't. I have now taken photos with my iPhone to prove I was there. I will take it 5 minutes before to prove I was early. I'm totally blind so I'm taking random shots but I'll even take them when I'm standing at the door because I'll have the driver pull up and then stand there for 10 minutes and leave. It's supposed to be a door to door service but it's not.

>>> And from the car, they've sent me a van, they don't send the cars for me anymore

>>> I understand that you said that there are no prioritizing rides, but I am concerned with medical appointments, because in some cases, for a specialist appointment you wait 8 or 10 months for an appointment and then you find out in the afternoon that you can't go anymore.

**John:** Remember what I said about that is that this new legislation doesn't allow that so it has to be you know.

>>> Is there some other contingency plan for that? If you phone the cancellation line will you be given priority in line? I wonder how things like that will be handled?

**John:** No, it'll be addressed because you are bringing it up tonight and that's why we have these engagement sessions, we bring up the things we have to respond to in the plan. Did someone over here have their hand up?

>>> I would like to know, I had a similar thing-priority like if they eliminate that okay how are they going to like make sure those

people that really need it are not getting like they aren't getting on the schedule but before they would have been because they would have been first priority.

**John:** Well you know, the intention of the advances is to make more resources available and so, essential transportation, the issue here is a balancing act to make as many resources available to the greatest number of people in accommodating issues like you're saying, the reason that we're having this session is to figure out the issues like this and how to come up with a system that responds to this. Like people with cognitive issues, the same thing - one more, and then we have to keep on moving.

>>> And that's for the new one there. Yes FOS, is there a booking you know the booking time they are thinking of putting 11:00am I'm using that as an example-now are they putting 11:30am from the time that you want to be there? No, I give them the time my program starts or my doctor appointment is.

**John:** What the dispatcher does is he tries to provide you as close as he can to that time with the rides that he has that day, and that will continue to be the practice - to get as close to your needs as possible.

>>> So, you still give-

**John:** But there will still be a window there, you have to consider the weather and travel time and...

>>> Yeah well that's why I'm wondering because if you don't put that there if you don't put the time you have to be there for do you have to put in before that lets say it takes 30 min to get there do you have to put in 30 min before?

**John:** Yeah, you always have to give yourself some cushion in terms of your schedule.

>>> okay...

**John:** Alright? So, we're going to move on here since I know that some people have trips. So early action items, again, we're going to eliminate trip prioritization since it's not compliant with the AMA, and changing the no-show policy and allowing for a number of no-showing within a rolling time frame and adopting a 2 hour no show time period. With what we've heard previously, providing information and education about the no show policy and developing a clear list of what 'no-show' is to clarify the appeal process, and I've heard that drivers are sometimes not showing up.

>>> Or they go to a different location...

**John:** We're also implementing a booking window, a 20-minute window and a 5-minute pick up window.

>>> We were talking about getting these phone calls as to when drivers are on the way, are they going to do that?

**John:** That's something that we've done, where calls occur when the driver is showing up, or if people have smartphones, they get a message.

>>>Because most of us are in apartments I think and they won't come out the door.

**John:** The other considerations within 1 year is fare parity, offer the same fares and fare products as conventional services. And developing an accessible transit tactical implementation plan to develop how to incorporate the act. The midterm actions are to revise the eligibility requirements and be consistent with the new legislation and what we have heard from other agencies for best practices and expand the service boundaries within the whole city of Winnipeg not just 500 meters from a bus stop. Long term we are suggesting we recertify customers with the new parameters-this wouldn't happen at one time. We are very strong on the

FOS and we think there is a lot here and investigate of providing only return trips from dialysis appointments

>>> How would they get there?

**John:** A lot of times the concern is about getting there on time so they use other options, it is a strategy that we use in other places because the challenges are getting there on time is a necessity. And you know, we transition to a model that this is a mobility coordinator, and this booking volunteer programs, hospital programs and other services to be part of a network of programs. Sorry for the long speech and all the info. Yes ma'am?

>>>I just want to mention that staff scheduling rides for people don't take into consideration the size of the power wheels of the wheelchair. One time I was asked to get off the vehicle and someone else was coming to get me, I don't remember what time of the year it was, but if it's nice out I don't mind, but if it's cold out. You can't cram a lot of people in a vehicle the size of the person or the size of the wheelchair is important when taking those trips.

**John:** Okay that is a good point, in a lot of places we have a profile of the people that ride the transit.

>>>But the size and the weight of the person in a power chair-

>>>But with the oversized wheelchair they used to.

**John:** Sounds good, yes ma'am?

>>>One comment, if you keep pushing the FOS and taking a ride and then taking transit; as a companion I am a regular user of transit and it is fine to say you will expand regular transit and hopefully more wheelchair users will be able to use it, but I don't know how many

times I've had to stand because of the number of people and strollers...

**John:** The stroller problem is a problem everywhere and it conflicts with mobility devices now.

>>> Some strollers are way too big for public transit now. One woman got mad at me because she has a right to use the bus, which she does, but it shouldn't be so big that no one can go down the aisle of the bus!

>>> Yes, the comment that it is fine to say yeah and to coordinate with the city infrastructure because the sidewalks to get to the bus stop is one of the reasons that we don't use Handi-transit because we can't push over to get to the Handi-Transit.

>>> My other comment really quickly is that the busses tend to freeze. I had to wait hours when I went to see a movie before because all the busses would freeze and it took forever for me to get home.

**John:** Yes, sir?

>>> Is Transit Plus going to take a look at their internal fleet of vehicles in the future? I ask because we have cars which are great for ambulatory people but not for wheelchairs. We have minivans which are too small for carrying two large power chairs and the weight of these chairs cause the van axles to break. Sometimes I will be on a van by myself but my question is will they look at a fleet of vehicles so they can be more efficient-I live in south St. Vital and I work at the UofM and a lot of times I go there by myself and I'm pretty sure that there are a lot of other people also making that trip as well but they aren't on.

>>> That's another issue with the - that I had was with the big busses, a lot of time I'd go on there and I'm the only one there even though they're made for three to four people.

**John:** The whole, let me respond to this gentleman first, the fleet management plan is really challenging to this and other programs the problem is there isn't really a right size of equipment to provide paratransit we may have too much seating capacity but not enough for power scooters. There aren't a lot of vehicles to choose from. We not only have the capacity inside but the quality of the ride; the springs are worn out or we don't have enough people on the ride to make it comfortable as you need even weight for a suspension service.

>>> You can probably make a more efficient service if you have vehicles that have a capacity of a variety of that.

**John:** The problem is that there isn't a vehicle out there that meets the needs for all of this. I wish there was one.

>>> We had a situation earlier this week, we were picked up by one of the newer busses - or sorry, the older busses, during the snowstorm when it was coming down like cats and dogs. There were a couple of people aboard the bus that we were picked up by on the east end. We were going to where... Health Sciences, we had to detour during the snowstorm to pick up a person that had a physical problem and could barely stand up let alone get on the vehicle, had to get up, and as a consequence the driver was late, drop him off, back up, and then drop him off again. It didn't work for the other passengers, and the only person that it worked for was for him - this person on Main Street. The travelling isn't always eventive.

>>> It's a whole scheduling issue. They had a whole slot to pick up and drop this person off but it didn't make sense-the people that were on the bus before they picked us up in Elmwood were on the bus for almost 1.5 hours and we all looked at each other and said why did we

go down to the legislature to pick this person up and then drop them off on main street. It was bizarre it is something that needs to be looked at, because the scheduling can be very bizarre.

**John:** That's why we're here tonight, to hear comments like that. Any other comments? Another housekeeping item is that there is an exit survey on the tables here, if you would oblige us, then that way the next time we do this it's more effective for you. If you have a few minutes on your way out, again the engagement and outreach process doesn't end here, we'll continue to listen and take your feedback and final recommendations again will be reviewed and will be made available for you to commit to again. One last question?

>>> when the buses and the vans are ordered, whoever does the ordering, I've been told that that person has not been in a Handi-Transit vehicle, not the cars, vans, or busses. This has got to change.

**John:** Like you mean you've been told that the person has not been in a van?

>>>They don't step foot in the vehicle. This has got to change! Transit has to make sure that they are getting what they pay for. The busses are too small to service the people!

**John:** Thank you all for coming tonight and again the comments don't stop here continue to provide information. There is an online survey please take that. Please continue to engage us in the dialogue so we can improve your service. Hopefully no one missed their ride. I think we are on time? So, thank you all!

[Applause]

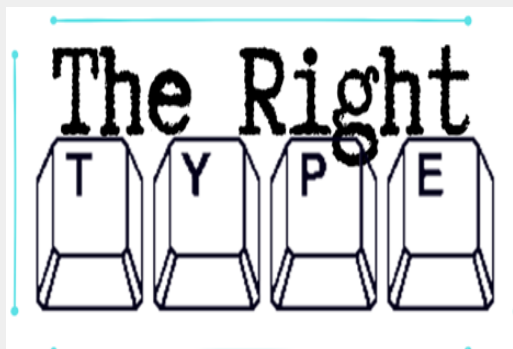
**John:** And if anybody needs assistance in filling out the form, we have people here that can aid! If you need help just identify yourself so that someone can come and help you! Thank you.



[End]

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