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The Regional Municipality of Durham

MINUTES

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 28, 2024

A meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, May 28, 2024 at Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby at 1:02 PM. Electronic participation was permitted for this meeting.

1. Traditional Territory Acknowledgment

R. Purnwasie, Chair, read the following land acknowledgement:

The Region of Durham exists on lands that the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg inhabited for thousands of years prior to European colonization. These lands are the traditional and treaty territories of the Nations covered under the Williams Treaties, including the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, and the Chippewa Nations of Georgina Island, Beausoleil and Rama.

We honour, recognize, and respect Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and stewards of the lands and waters on which we have the privilege to live. In our efforts towards reconciliation, we continue to build and strengthen relationships with First Nations, as well as the growing Inuit communities and large Métis communities and here in Durham. We commit to learning from Indigenous values and knowledge, building opportunities for collaboration, and recognizing that we are all connected.

2. Roll Call

Present: D. Campbell, Whitby
P. Chandwani, Whitby
M. Lloyd*, Oshawa
Councillor McDougall*
J. McEwen, Clarington, Vice-Chair
R. Purnwasie, Ajax, Chair
L. Williams*, Pickering
***denotes members of the committee participating electronically**

Absent: W. Henshall, Whitby
S. Sones, Whitby

Staff

Present: N. Dash*, Accessibility Coordinator, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
A. Hector-Alexander*, Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
P. Hines, Manager, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
R. Inacio, Systems Support Specialist, Corporate Services – IT
J. Kilgour*, Deputy General Manager, Maintenance, Durham Region Transit

M. Rippin, Eligibility Coordinator, Transit Specialized Services, Durham Region Transit

K. Smith, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services

***denotes staff participating electronically**

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Welcome and Introductions

A) Welcome

P. Hines welcomed Project Search Interns to the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting.

B) Introduction of Project Search Interns

P. Hines invited Project Search interns to introduce themselves. The Project Search interns introduced themselves and stated where they are currently doing their internship.

The Project Search interns responded to questions with regards to the length of their internship; plans for after their internship ends; their favourite area to work; and which school board they are part of.

P. Hines thanked the Project Search interns for attending the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Moved by J. McEwen, Seconded by D. Campbell,

That the minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on Tuesday, March 26, 2024, be adopted.

CARRIED

6. Presentations

A) Bill Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit, and Megan Rippin, Eligibility Coordinator, Transit Specialized Services, re: Response to Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Report

James Kilgour, Deputy General Manager, Maintenance, Durham Region Transit was in attendance for Bill Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit.

Megan Rippin, Eligibility Coordinator, Transit Specialized Services, provided a PowerPoint presentation with regards to Follow-up, CNIB Durham Transit Town Hall, CNIB Findings Report.

The presentation provided an in-depth response to the following CNIB recommendations:

1. All transit stops must be identifiable through tactile walking surfaces indicators (TWSI's). The information on all transit stop signs, such as stop number and routes, must be presented in high-contrast lettering and uncontracted braille.
2. The route name and number must be announced each time passengers board either by an automated system or by the vehicle operator.
3. The entrance of new shelters must be facing towards the street.
4. Every upcoming transit stop must be clearly announced, either by an automated system or by the vehicle operator in a volume that exceeds ambient sound.
5. Bus stops must be properly maintained, including snow removal during the winter.
6. Bus stops that are no longer in use should be removed or properly marked as "not in use".
7. Bus seats should be changed to brightly coloured fabric.
8. Accessibility/priority seating signs on buses should be written in high-contrast between background and wording (e.g. yellow wording on black background).
9. Buses should run more frequently to avoid overcrowding.
10. Transit operators must receive updated training on how to effectively assist passengers who are blind or partially sighted.
11. An education campaign for the general public should be implemented that addresses stigma and bias towards people with disabilities.
12. Durham Transit should partner with disability organizations for adequate training on accessibility.

J. Kilgour responded to questions with regards to how the specialized vehicles are disposed of; the name of the third-party providers for specialized services vehicles; whether reassessments are being done on current bus stops to identify if a mobility device can be properly used there; why fabric seats on buses are being removed; what Transit is doing to ensure the cleanliness of bus shelters if it was occupied by someone who is homeless; how residents can obtain travel training from Durham Region Transit to learn how to use public transit and gain confidence to travel independently; and how to set up travel training for residents.

J. Kilgour advised he would follow up as to why there is a delay in determining the direction the bus stops will face and whether solar lights will be installed to illuminate transit signage.

7. Discussion Items

A) Youth with Disabilities Advisory Committee

M. Lloyd and P. Hines advised that they have had discussions with regards to creating a Youth with Disabilities Advisory Committee to garner feedback, to provide an opportunity for leadership and engagement in their community, and to engage in different capacities in the community.

P. Hines asked Committee members for their feedback in creating a Youth with Disabilities Advisory Committee.

Discussion ensued with regards to whether it would be a subcommittee of the Accessibility Advisory Committee or an independent committee; having a youth committee could provide helpful information for youth residents in the community; the need to have conversations with the school boards to help implement the committee; supporting youth as they move out of school; and how the youth committee would be supported.

B) Youth Member on the Accessibility Advisory Committee

P. Hines advised that two Committee members have recently resigned from the Accessibility Advisory Committee and recruitment will begin for two new members.

Discussion ensued with regards to appointing a youth member and the age range for a youth person with a disability.

It was the consensus of the Committee that one of the new members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee be a person with a disability under the age of 29 to provide a youth's perspective.

C) Bowmanville GO Train Extension and Concerns with Accessibility

J. McEwen expressed concerns with regards to the Bowmanville GO Train extension, stating that Metrolinx will be funding and constructing train platforms and that they require the private sector to fund and construct station buildings and associated infrastructure at all new stops along the new Bowmanville GO train extension.

J. McEwen provided a brief overview of the background information he has compiled, and stated that he will provide his full report to Committee members following the meeting.

Discussion ensued with regards to only two of the new station stops being built with full accessibility in mind.

A. Hector-Alexander advised that there are Durham Region staff working in this area and will request to have staff provide background information regarding this matter at the June 25, 2024 meeting.

D) Motion re: Construction of Stations for the Lakeshore East GO Train Extension to Bowmanville

Moved by J. McEwen, Seconded by Councillor McDougall,
That we recommend to the Finance and Administration Committee for approval and subsequent recommendation to Regional Council:

Whereas the Durham Accessibility Advisory Committee takes the position that Metrolinx must construct station buildings and associated infrastructure at all stations for the Lakeshore East Go train extension to Bowmanville before the extension opens for the following reasons:

- i) To protect Durham Region's ridership from nature's harsh elements;
- ii) To house properly designed accessible washrooms; and
- iii) To ensure the safety of individuals utilizing transit connections;

Now therefore be it resolved that the Durham Accessibility Advisory Committee request Metrolinx to fully fund the Lakeshore East GO train Extension to Bowmanville, including all Station buildings and associated infrastructure such as entrances and parking lots.

DEFERRED LATER IN THE MEETING
(See Following Motion)

Moved by Councillor McDougall, Seconded by M. Lloyd,
That the main motion of J. McEwen and Councillor McDougall regarding Construction of Stations for the Lakeshore East GO Train Extension to Bowmanville be deferred until the June 25, 2024 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting.

CARRIED

It was the consensus of the Committee to recess at this time. The Committee recessed at 2:18 PM and reconvened at 2:25 PM.

Following the recess, the Committee Clerk conducted a roll call, and all members of the Committee were present with the exception of W. Henshall and S. Sones.

8. Correspondence

There were no items of correspondence to consider.

9. Information Items

A) Update on the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC)

The May 21, 2024 Transit Advisory Committee meeting update from J. McEwen was emailed to Committee members.

J. McEwen advised that the implementation of the Sunflower Program is underway at Durham Region Transit, which is a program aimed to assist those travelling with invisible disabilities who may need extra patience, care and assistance during their travel experience. He further advised that a summary of the special focus group meeting held on May 1, 2024 was provided and included a summary of the vision, strength, challenges and priority areas for the Durham Region Transit Advisory Committee (TAC).

B) Accessibility Coordinator Update

N. Dash thanked Committee members for attending the Durham Accessibility Conference held on May 22, 2024.

N. Dash provided the following update:

- There will be an AAC Social event on June 17, 2024 in the evening to allow Committee members to get to know each other and connect over a shared passion for accessibility.
- The 2023 Accessibility Report has been approved by Council, has gone to print and will be posted on the Durham Region website. A link will be provided to Committee members once the report has been posted.
- The Joint Accessibility Forum planning has begun and they are looking to host the event in September this year.

N. Dash asked Committee members for suggestions on where to host the Joint Accessibility Forum this year which included. Committee members suggested Dish Play, the Abilities Centre and the Ontario Tech Campus.

10. Reports for Information

There were no reports to consider.

11. Other Business

A) Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) Focus Group

J. McEwen advised that the TAC focus group meeting held on May 1, 2024 was a well run meeting and suggested that it may be something the Accessibility Advisory Committee should consider to develop a Workplan for the Committee.

Discussion ensued with regards to how the meeting was presented to Committee members; how answers were documented throughout the meeting; and incorporating a similar focus group for the next term of Council.

B) National AccessAbility Week

D. Campbell advised that the week of May 26, 2024 was National AccessAbility Week with conferences and webinars happening throughout the week.

P. Hines provided the following update:

- A few Committee members attended the Accessibility Conference held on May 22, 2024 and review of this year's event and planning for next year's event will take place shortly.
- The Accessibility Ambassador Program has launched.
- The Disability Flag was raised at Regional Headquarters on May 28, 2024.
- There is an accessibility display in the lobby at Regional Headquarters.
- There is a Let's Talk Neurodiversity Session being held on May 29, 2024 and Committee member Meghann Lloyd is the presenter.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 25, 2024 at 1:00 PM.

13. Adjournment

Moved by J. McEwen, Seconded by P. Chandwani,
That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 2:48 PM

Respectfully submitted,

R. Purnwasie, Chair, Accessibility Advisory Committee

K. Smith, Committee Clerk