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DATE: May 17, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **TRANSHelp ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2009 ANNUAL REPORT**

FROM: Dan Labrecque, Commissioner of Public Works

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### RECOMMENDATION

That the TransHelp Advisory Committee 2009 Annual Report, attached as Appendix I to the report of the Commissioner of Public Works, dated May 17, 2010, titled "TransHelp Advisory Committee 2009 Annual Report", be received;

And further, that the TransHelp Advisory Committee be renamed to Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) in order to reflect the variety of services offered by the Region of Peel;

And further, that the Terms of Reference of the TransHelp Advisory Committee be amended to reflect the new name *Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee*;

And further, that the Terms of Reference for the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee be approved, as amended.

### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The TransHelp Advisory Committee (TAC) prepares an annual report on the TransHelp service. It also identifies potential enhancements, observations, recommendations and TAC related outcomes to be reviewed for the following year.
- The mission of TAC is to provide TransHelp staff and the Region of Peel with a consumer point of view and a valuable source of input regarding the TransHelp service.
- The annual report highlights TAC 2009 activities and changes resulting from TAC input. It also identifies concerns and issues to be addressed in 2010.
- TAC and TransHelp staff had a number of successful accomplishments during the last year.

### DISCUSSION

#### 1. Background

The TransHelp Advisory Committee (TAC) was established by Regional Council in 1989. This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> year of this voluntary committee.

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The members of TAC for 2009 were:

- Glenn Barnes, Coalition for Persons with Disabilities (Chair)
- Danielle Svec, Brampton Passenger Representative (Co-Chair)
- Jason Gauld, Peel Association for Handicapped Adults
- Dulcinea Gauld, Ontario March of Dimes
- Clement Lowe, Seniors Representative
- Suzanne Hernandez, Caledon Passenger Representative
- Jon Greenaway, ErinoakKids
- John Mandrow, Mississauga Passenger Representative

The Chair of the TransHelp Advisory Committee prepares an annual report on behalf of the Committee that is submitted to Regional Council for their information. This report recognizes some of the service improvements achieved in 2009. It also identifies areas of interest to the Committee that should be reviewed for the following year. The 2009 report and the 2010 agenda are attached as Appendix I.

The Chair of TAC is scheduled to make a brief presentation to the General Committee on June 17, 2010 and will introduce the members of the Committee who are able to be present.

Based on the 2008 TAC Report, the following items were 2009 agenda items that were to be reviewed during the agenda year:

- Reinvestigate new bus designs (sprinter buses).
- Maintain most economical bus versus taxi ratio to deliver daily service.
- Reciprocal pass agreements between municipal transit authorities and TransHelp.
- Investigate a fare sharing partnership with Brampton and Mississauga Transits.
- Implement web based trip booking.
- Implement call back module.
- Enhance Children/Infant Policy.
- Enhance client registration process.

## 2. 2009 Accomplishments

TAC and TransHelp staff has had a number of successful accomplishments during 2009 and the beginning of 2010 as indicated below:

- Enhanced the Fare Forgiveness Policy for late cancellations and no shows.
- Implemented a Cross Boundary Trip Policy.
- After a successful pilot in 2008, a permanent Same Day Service Policy was implemented.
- Introduced a streamlined client registration process, eliminating wait times to get on the service.
- Enhanced the Monthly Pass Program to allow for automatic renewal each month.
- Improved and clarified Policy on Carrying Infants and Children on TransHelp buses.
- New Complaints/Feedback software purchased and currently being implemented to improve complaints handling process.
- Participated in several community events such as the Children's Water Festival, Rick Hansen Wheels in Motion, and International Day for Disabled People.

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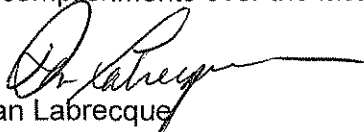
- Merged TransHelp with Accessible Transportation Coordination Office (ATCO) and brought all accessible transportation services under one roof.
- Investigated options for online booking technology and purchased a solution to be implemented in summer 2010.

**3. Changes to Committee Name and Terms of Reference**

The TAC approved the renaming of the committee and amendments to the Committee's Terms of Reference on April 23, 2010. The mandate of the committee continues to be to provide a consumer point of view to improve the level and type of service provided for persons with disabilities residing in Peel.

**CONCLUSION**

The 2009 Annual Report from TransHelp Advisory Committee celebrates the accomplishments achieved in 2009 and focuses on areas to review for the upcoming year. It demonstrates the results of continually engaging our clients to improve the TransHelp service. TAC will continue to assist staff to strengthen relationships with clients and providing excellent customer service. TransHelp staff and the TransHelp Advisory Committee have demonstrated dedication and commitment to our TransHelp clients and are to be congratulated for their tremendous accomplishments over the last year.



Dan Labrecque  
Commissioner of Public Works

**Approved for Submission:**

D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

*For further information regarding this report, please contact Mark Castro at extension 6850 or via email at [mark.castro@peelregion.ca](mailto:mark.castro@peelregion.ca)*

*Authored By: Mark Castro*

c. Legislative Services

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**APPENDIX I**

TRANSHELP ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2009

Prepared by Glenn Barnes  
TransHelp Advisory Committee Chair

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TransHelp Advisory Committee  
2009 Annual Report  
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**TRANSHELP ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2009 ANNUAL REPORT****Executive Summary**

In continuing the mandate of the TransHelp Advisory Committee (TAC) this report has been put together to summarize the Advisory Committee's role in improving the operation of TransHelp's service from the users needs. This year's report will be the last annual report presented under the "TransHelp" Advisory Committee name as a departmental shuffle has merged TransHelp services with the Accessible Transportation Coordination Office (ATCO).

The new section is called *Accessible Transportation* and it should have no noticeable effect on day-to-day service at TransHelp or any of the ATCO programs. This was a merge that the TAC report recommended in previous years and certainly endorses. Transportation services, both conventional and para-transit are expected to expand significantly in the next few years and thus improve accessible service across the Region.

Progressive Committees like TAC, the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and forward thinking community organizations who have provided services to the disability community for years, continue to rely on TransHelp and believe that achieving a higher standard of services on an equal basis to each resident who lives in the Peel Region. Regardless of ability, all services offered at the Region must serve all residents, and by incorporating accessibility into current, everyday operations and not offering them as "specialized" services of a department or division. As an Advisory Committee we are successfully continuing to work with TransHelp to achieve this harmonization.

The 2009 agenda also saw enhancements to a variety of policies. Although every policy enhancement improves service, some are seamless and go unnoticed by the average TransHelp rider. The most significant policy enhancement having the greatest day-to-day impact was the positive improvements made to the Cross Boundary Policy whereby any registered client can book a trip that extends up to 5 km beyond Peel's borders. This represents a forward thinking attitude that incorporates components from the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) legislation and supports seamless travel principles that are a large part of the Metrolinx master plan.

Other accomplishments stemming from TAC's work noteworthy as changes to be regarded as positive and progressive to TransHelp service include:

- Service delivery continues to improve as the number of TransHelp trips delivered in 2009 was 300,005.
- Ridership continues to grow as another 2,156 people registered in 2009, making the total number of active users for TransHelp service 5,348.
- TransHelp continued being active in the community and participating in various events such as the Rick Hansen Wheels in Motion relay; the Peel Association for Handicapped Adults (PAHA) Bowl-a-thon fundraiser; Mississauga's Carassauga Festival; Erinoak teen social events and activities; holding a food and toy drive in support of Peel Children's Aid and Salvation Army; and sponsoring a family at Christmas through Peel's Human Services Outreach group.
- Attending on-going meetings with conventional transit providers (GO, Mississauga, Brampton) as well as investigative meetings for fare payment technology at Presto.
- Overseeing and testing a number of new technology improvements, including an online trip booking module and a complaints/feedback module.

All in all, it has been another smooth year of operations, continuing a trend of successful years at TransHelp. Looking ahead to next year it is expected that another successful year at the

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Advisory Committee will follow with an additional mandate of overseeing TransHelp and other supporting programs from the former ATCO section; testing usability of an automated call back feature soon to be active on the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system; and testing customer safety and satisfaction on new buses. The Committee will also continue to implement AODA standards as they affect booking parameters and observing potential scheduling improvements that are afforded from the installation of Automated Vehicle Locators (AVL) on buses and implementation of Computer Aided Dispatching (CAD) technology.

**1. 2009 Service Delivery Statistics**

TransHelp continued to experience strong growth in 2009. This can be attributed to continued increases in weekend and holiday ridership as well as overall ridership. TransHelp has also committed to meet the needs of clients for special community events, same day services and cross boundary transportation. The chart below shows a comparison of trips provided in 2009 and 2008 respectively:

	2009	2008	% of Increase
Total Trips	300,005	266,456	12.6%
Stat Holiday Trips	2,505	2,093	19.7%
Weekend Trips	36,545	31,723	15.2%
Late Request Accommodations (Same Day Trips)	4,441	3,988	11%

**2. Policy and Service Enhancements**

**2.1 Fare Forgiveness Policy**

An enhancement to the late cancellation policy was instituted to reduce staff administration time and tedious paperwork handling requests for fare refunds related to un-intentional late cancellations. The policy allows clients more flexibility in handling unplanned incidents and simplifies the procedure for receiving fare refunds for their missed trips.

**Status:** Completed

**2.2 Cross Boundary Policy**

In an effort to provide a seamless option for travelling to neighbouring municipalities, TransHelp adopted a Cross Boundary Trip Policy which allows registered clients living in Peel to travel up to 5km outside Peel Region borders. As a result, over 8,900 cross boundary trips were provided to TransHelp clients in 2009. In addition to the cross boundary policy, enhances were also made to official transfer points with other Para-transit services including the addition of the Woodbine Race Track and Woodbine Centre in Toronto and a Guelph Street location in Georgetown.

**Status:** Completed

**2.3 Same Day Service Policy**

After the completion of the June 2008 pilot TransHelp instituted permanent same day service. The service is offered on a first come first serve basis to registered clients. Although same day service is not guaranteed, the current accommodation rate is approximately 63 per cent which is a significant improvement from previous years. As a result of this policy, 4,441 same day trips were provided in 2009.

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**Status:** Continue efforts to increase accommodation rate.

**2.4 Client Registration Process**

A streamlined client registration process was introduced allowing for a quick turnaround because the long and tedious process of having an assessment was eliminated in most cases. Only when a client's application does not provide sufficient evidence to warrant service will an assessment be required. This improved registration process allows applicants to be processed in a more timely fashion and has resulted in a decrease in administrative costs related to processing new clients. In addition, eligible clients no longer have the added stress of arranging a trip to the TransHelp office in order to prove their eligibility through an assessment. In most cases, a medical referral completed by a doctor is all that is needed. Time lines needed to process an applicant have decreased from approximately four weeks to one week.

**Status:** Completed

**2.5 Monthly Pass Policy**

To enhance the monthly pass policy that was implemented in 2008 riders had requested a preauthorized payment option be implemented. Client's who provide authorization will have payment for monthly passes automatically renewed. This complements TransHelp's current prepaid fare system.

**Status:** Completed

**2.6 Carrying of Infants and Children Policy**

Clarification was made on the Carrying of Infants and Children Policy. Specifically, the policy now distinguishes between taxis that provide TransHelp service and TransHelp bus service. The net result is a clear, easy to understand policy for clients travelling with infants and children.

**Status:** Completed

**2.7 Complaints/Feedback Policy**

Based on the 2008 TransHelp Advisory Committee Annual Report it was suggested that an action item related to improving the TransHelp complaints handling process be initiated. As a result a software module has been purchased for TransHelp which will better track and manage customer complaints and feedback and ensure that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner.

**Status:** Currently staff is in training with full implementation expected in June 2010.

**3. TransHelp in the Community**

In 2009 TransHelp continued to actively participate in the community above and beyond its day to day operation and obligations. For example, TransHelp was involved in the following community partnership projects:

- Provided trips for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Action Coalition Conference



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- Connections 2009 Resource Fair for Persons with Disabilities – TransHelp/Accessible Transportation participated with an information booth
- Rick Hansen Wheels in Motion – participated with teams in Mississauga and Brampton and contributed \$2,000 to the cause
- Provided free transportation for people in Peel and neighbouring communities of Halton and York to participate in Peel's International Day for People with Disabilities celebration
- TransHelp staff hosted a fundraising BBQ to assist with the Peel Adult Handicapped Association (PAHA) annual fundraising initiative
- Provided extended bus service for numerous programs throughout the year including Erinoak Teen Social activities and PAHA social events
- Provided a means for many young Erinoak kids to attend summer programs that aid in mental and physical development
- Continued a long standing tradition of providing transportation for participants of Community Living Summer Camps
- For the third year in a row, TransHelp staff held a successful Christmas Food and Toy Drive benefiting Peel's Children Aid and the Salvation Army
- For the first time in 2009, TransHelp staff raised over \$700 and sponsored a less fortunate family during Christmas through Human Service's Outreach group
- Participated in the Peel Children's Water Festival by providing shuttle bus service
- Provided shuttle services for Mississauga's Carassauga Cultural Festival and transported over 6,000 festival goers over a three day weekend.

**Status:** Completed

#### **4. Online Booking System**

A web based trip booking module was purchased to better accommodate rider booking requests. Implementation and testing of system with user groups is expected in June 2010. Prior to the system going live TAC will participate in testing the web based online booking system. As well a presentation will be made to a variety of user groups and committees to solicit feedback and ensure the system is user friendly.

**Status:** Software vendor selected, testing to begin in summer 2010.

#### **5. TAC's Contribution to Peel's Accessible Transportation Network**

In keeping with the mandate to expand the network of accessible transportation, the Region of Peel decided that the Accessible Transportation Coordination Office (ATCO) and TransHelp merge, effectively enhancing services for a variety of clients with different disabilities residing in the Region of Peel. The result of the merge is a one-stop shop of accessible transportation services under one roof.

In October 2009 a Community Bus program was launched in Mississauga and Brampton providing semi-fixed service in areas known to have high concentrations of people with disabilities. The program is currently in a pilot phase and is operated by TransHelp trained drivers. An evaluation of this new program is underway to determine future direction.

In December 2009, the newly formed Accessible Transportation section introduced a Taxi Scrip program. The program provides subsidized taxi fare to TransHelp clients as well as people with other disabilities who do not qualify for TransHelp service. The program is currently running in pilot phase with an evaluation expected in summer 2010 to determine future direction.

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Also note worthy is the Passenger Assistant Program (PAP) operating in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross and Caledon Community Services. The program provides trips to individuals who require supervised transportation over and above TransHelp service.

Two other programs that will ensure inclusivity for people with disabilities in Peel are Travel Training and the Conventional Transit Access Initiative. The Travel Training program provides specialized training to individuals able to use conventional transit services but who may be reluctant, fearful or unsure of how to get around on the conventional system. The Conventional Transit Access Initiative strives to encourage and promote the use of conventional services in Peel which have made huge strides to become fully accessible. To assist in promoting the conventional services, a short video was created in collaboration with Mississauga and Brampton Transit demonstrating the many benefits and ease of use of the conventional system.

**Status:** Continue to evaluate and enhance programs under Accessible Transportation.

**AGENDA PRIORITIES REQUIRING COUNCIL APPROVAL**

Name Change of Committee to Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee

**TRANSHelp ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) AGENDA FOR 2010**

The following new items will be on the TAC Agenda for 2010:

- Trip booking enhancements – Assess the booking cut off times, scheduling window and late cancellation window to ensure client needs continue to be met.
- Accessible Transportation Website Enhancements – currently needs to be more informative and updated to reflect family of services.
- Same Day Service Enhancement – work towards a 100 percent accommodation rate.
- Challenges to relook at TransHelp's Eligibility Criteria to ensure the needs of all people living in Peel with disabilities are being met.
- An additional mandate of overseeing TransHelp and other supporting programs from the former Accessible Transportation Coordination Office (ATCO) section
- Testing usability of an automated call back feature soon to be active on the Interactive Voice Response (IVR)
- Testing customer safety and monitoring satisfaction on new buses
- Continue to implement *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) standards as they affect booking parameters
- Observing potential scheduling improvements that are afforded from the installation of Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) on buses and implementation of Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) technology
- Enhancements to Taxi Contracts