

Accessible Transportation Coordination Office Initiatives

Appendix V
2006 Accessibility Plan

The Study of Transportation for Persons with Disabilities was initiated by the Region through the planning department, in cooperation with the member municipalities and public transit services in the Region, to develop a comprehensive strategy for the ongoing provision of transportation services to persons with disabilities. The study was designed to provide an assessment of transportation needs in the Region of Peel, a review the existing transportation services, identification of policy options and the development of a strategic direction to respond to the transportation needs of persons with disabilities.

A key recommendation from the study called for the development of a strategy that would lead to a broader range of travel options for people with disabilities, using a "family of services" approach coordinated by Peel Region.

In the sixteen months since the inception of her position, the Transportation Accessibility Specialist for the Region has worked to develop a framework and implementation plan for the "family of services" model.

This has required investigating and experiencing best practice transportation methodologies in both the United States and Canada. Focus groups have been conducted with seniors, multicultural groups and people with both intellectual and physical disabilities to explore factors that influence access to and uptake of transportation resources. Based on this research, a conceptual model for a Peel Transportation Coordination Office was developed and was approved by Regional Council in May 2006.

Initially, the new office has three main functions. It will:

1. Act as a gateway to direct users to appropriate services and screen applicants
2. Provide support to transit, including TransHelp, to optimize access to and use of their services
3. Serve as a brokerage to administer community services aimed at providing additional travel supports for all passengers with disabilities; and providing health and social transportation that cannot be offered by local transit or TransHelp:

Accessible Transportation Coordination Office Initiatives

Appendix V
2006 Accessibility Plan

- Training:
 - Transit training to facilitate use of local transit by people with a range of disabilities
 - Passenger assistance training for attendants and for drivers in non-profit community programs
 - Sensitivity training for transit operators
- Direct health and social transportation for
 - Dialysis
 - Day programs
 - Community Living programs

Red Cross will be the lead transportation provision and coordination agency for urban brokerage operations. Caledon Community Services will assume this role for rural Peel. The new office represents a key service development that supports accessibility objective number two in the accessibility section of the Social Services Business Plan (SSBP) for the Region of Peel. Objective number two requires demonstrated improvement in terms of access to municipal programs, services and facilities. Information in the following paragraphs further supports Objective two.

To help support the Transportation Coordination Office a new staff person will soon be working with the Transportation Accessibility Specialist.

The Transportation Resource Coordinator will assist persons with disabilities, their families and caregivers to identify appropriate transportation services and resources and will work to develop strategies to help people with disabilities access and use these services to enhance their mobility in the community.

The model described in the next three paragraphs has been presented to Council but funding has not yet been confirmed. Pending approval staff have developed a model for a cost effective shared “passenger assistant” service that will provide supervised transportation where needed, for vulnerable riders who cannot travel safely alone.

The core of this service will be the development of shared dedicated runs that will serve multiple long term care homes, mental health day programs and

Accessible Transportation Coordination Office Initiatives

Appendix V
2006 Accessibility Plan

Community Living sites to ensure that each passenger who needs it is supervised in transit and met at each end by their designated caregivers.

The Passenger Assistant Program will include the development of a pool of attendants, to accompany passengers in need of supervision on some dedicated bus runs. The passenger assistant program will provide training for agencies to provide their own attendants and drivers in non-profit community programs (e.g. Alzheimer Society, Canadian Cancer Society, CNIB, India Rainbow), so that they can accompany their own passengers who require supervision on their rides using any form of transportation. These would include rides on conventional local transit and volunteer driver programs. Cost sharing for the attendants will be sought from families and community agencies as the service grows. This program will be operational in the fall of 2006. The Passenger Assistant Program will operate out of the Transportation Training Institute, which is a joint initiative of the Region of Peel and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The institute is currently housed at the Red Cross Peel Branch. The Coordinator will also work closely with the Region's Transportation Accessibility Specialist. The development of the Institute reflects strong commitment to Objective number four in the accessibility section of the SSBP for the Region of Peel. Objective number four aims to "build public awareness and knowledge of accessibility issues".

In support of Objective three in the accessibility Section of the SSBP: "To address policy issues and optimize advocacy efforts", at least two general information sessions will be hosted this fall to explain the concept of travel training and how it can enhance travel options for people with disabilities.

In the future, reports will be prepared for Regional Council aimed at encouraging the possibility of pilot testing both community bus and taxi scrip programs.

"Community bus" has been identified as a cost effective alternative to reduce demand on TransHelp. This model is in place in several communities in Ontario and consists of small low-floor buses (usually 25 to 30 feet) going to common malls, recreational and health care sites on semi-fixed routes. They have regular scheduled stops at multi-unit buildings with high concentrations of seniors and persons with disabilities, but can deviate to the doors of higher-need individuals in single family homes. Anyone can ride for a transit fare, but the runs are marketed to persons with disabilities who make up about a third of the riders at any given time.

Accessible Transportation Coordination Office Initiatives

Appendix V
2006 Accessibility Plan

Taxi Scrip is a user-side subsidy for qualified applicants, usually based on a broader criterion than for para-transit. The aim of the program is to enable spontaneous travel, with the taxpayer covering part of the taxi fare. The municipality issues "scrip" at less than the face value to registered clients who pay taxi drivers with their scrip vouchers. The vouchers are then cashed in by the taxi companies at the municipal office to reimburse their drivers for full fare.