

Highlights of Selected Accessibility Initiatives July 2007 – June 2008

Appendix III
2008 Accessibility Plan

Accessible Transportation Coordination Office

Over the past three years, the Accessible Transportation Coordination Office (ATCO) has been evolving to provide three main functions:

1. Act as a referral to direct the public to appropriate accessible services.
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. These community services include travel training, and direct health and social transportation to dialysis, day programs and community living programs.

Many passengers, who require supervision or support for the duration of their ride, will soon have the option of traveling without a caregiver using a trained Passenger Assistant. The Passenger Assistant Program or PA program is a door to door, or hand to hand service depending on the nature of each client's disability and self-identified needs.

In June 2008, our Passenger Assistant pilot program began. By the late 2008 five buses with a capacity to carry up to 11 passengers each will be operating as part of this initiative. This number will grow to seven vehicles by 2009.



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In the future, the role of Passenger Assistants will be expanded so that they will also be able to provide assistance to disabled riders on conventional local transit and during rides provided by volunteer driver programs. Cost sharing for the Passenger Assistants will be sought from families and community agencies as the service grows.

Production of a video promoting the positive aspects of conventional public transit usage by people with disabilities is well underway. The transit properties are paying for production of the video while the Region will develop and support a fare reduction strategy for people with disabilities who opt to use public transit to address some of their travel needs.

The Accessible Transportation Coordination Office will initiate a Community Bus demonstration project beginning in 2009. The community bus model is a transportation option designed to reduce social isolation for people with disabilities and reduce the fear of going out. These objectives are achieved by maintaining driver assignment and offering a slow meandering route that can be flagged down from a variety of locations. A service standard for the program is to avoid poor service to passengers. Drivers are expected to assist the passengers through an “active offer of assistance” model. The ridership on community bus is comprised of a mixture of people with and without disabilities.