

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Laurie Wills Director, Public Works lwills@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type: Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>	
Meeting Date:	June 21, 2021		
Report No.:	Public Works-051-21		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: Unfinished Business item: Wheels Transit Options for Boarding/Disembarking"

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council approve the new Wheels Specialized Transportation Service Policies and Procedures,

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to purchase a second winch system for the back up Wheels bus in the amount of \$6,000.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

Invest in programs, services and infrastructure to make Cobourg more accessible.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The draft policy was brought to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on January 20, 2021 and June 16, 2021.

3. PURPOSE

To address an unfinished business item and finalize the Wheels Specialized Transportation Service Policies and Procedures.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

Committee of the Whole Meeting 2020-01-27

Motion - unfinished business item 'Wheels Transit Options for Boarding/Disembarking'. Report and Accessible Transit Service Policy.

FURTHER THAT Council instruct staff to draft an accessible transit service policy, in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the proposed Accessibility Coordinator, for presentation to Council by June 1, 2020; and

FURTHER THAT the issues raised by the delegations from Troy Mills and the Golden Plough Lodge Family Council be considered when drafting the policy.

5. BACKGROUND

The Town of Cobourg specialized transit Wheels Service has a policy that has been in draft format for several years. The draft policy was not clear regarding the driver assistance component for boarding and disembarking. A delegation from Troy Mills also requested that the Town provide this service.

Correspondence from the Golden Plough Lodge also inquired about whether the Town's transit system could provide patient transfer services for persons on a stretcher.

Council requested for Staff to review and revise the policy through consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

6. ANALYSIS

The first draft of the Wheels policy was presented by Staff to the AAC on January 20, 2021. At the time, the Town's transit contractor (Century Transportation) did not have specific training or experience related to assisting with boarding and disembarking of riders. The draft policy specified that drivers would not be assisting with boarding and disembarking and if assistance was required, a Personal Attendant would be required to provide that assistance.

The AAC requested that Staff inquire with Century Transportation about training opportunities that would allow for drivers to provide this service. Staff did research and found options for training which were presented to Century and subsequently to their unionized driving staff. An agreement was made that the training would provide the knowledge and skills enough for drivers to provide assistance during boarding/debarking.

Scheduling of the training was challenging due to the restrictions associated with large gatherings during the pandemic. At the same time, Staff were in the midst of rolling out the new on-demand transit service which also required significant training events with Century staff and drivers. Also at the same time, Century was in need of driver training time for the newly installed winch system on the Wheels bus. By May 17, 2021, the majority of drivers had received both the training for the winch and the board/debark training.

A special trial event was then scheduled with Mr. Troy Mills, AAC member, to test the new winch system which was well received and reported back to the AAC on May 19th, 2021. The AAC put forth a motion to Council supporting the purchase of a second winch for the Wheels back up bus (included on the current agenda June 21, 2021). Not only does the winch system assist with boarding/debarking,

it also eliminates contact between driver and passenger to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

On June 1, 2021 Town Staff met with Century staff to discuss the training as well as the updated Wheels policy to ensure that the new requirements for drivers to provide rider assistance during boarding/debarking could be satisfied as a result of the training.

The final draft of the Wheels policy was brought back to the AAC on June 16, 2021 and reviewed in detail. The AAC endorsed the policy and put forth a motion to Council for approval.

For clarity, the policy includes a statement that the Town of Cobourg public transit system does not provide medical transportation services including patient transfers for stretchers. Staff are consulting with the County of Northumberland Community Outreach Services to collect resources and contact information that can be added to the Town's Transit website for inquiries regarding local medical transportation services.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

The total cost to the Town for the board/debark training was \$1,000 and funded by the Transit Contract operating budget.

The total cost of the second winch system for the Wheels back up bus will be \$6,000 and is anticipated to be funded by the Phase 3 Safe Restart Program.

8. CONCLUSION

THAT Council approve the new Wheels Specialized Transportation Service Policies and Procedures,

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to purchase a second winch system for the back up Wheels bus in the amount of \$6,000.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Unfinished Business - Wheels Policy - Public Works-051-21.docx
Attachments:	- Wheels Application Form - June 2021.pdf - Wheels Policy - June 2021.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 17, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Jun 17, 2021 - 3:54 PM