Winnipeg
Embrace the Spirit

Review of the Handi-Transit Service

Final Report
March 2004

Audit Department

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Executive Summary

Since 1977, Handi-Transit has provided public transportation for people who cannot use Winnipeg's Regular Transit service because of a physical disability. Soon after, the provision of rides for people who are legally blind was included in the Handi-Transit mandate. Door-to-door service is currently provided through independent contractor companies using wheelchair accessible buses, vans and specially designed cars. The cost of a trip for a Handi-Transit customer is the same as the cost of a trip for a passenger to use regular transit service in Winnipeg. In 2002, Handi-Transit provided over 500,000 rides for purposes ranging from medical visits to recreational outings.

In 1993, a special Task Force was established to review Handi-Transit issues. The Task Force was chaired by Mr. E. Arthur Braid of the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Law and included representation from key stakeholder groups. Phase I of the Task Force addressed current issues and problems and recommended solutions to be implemented over the short-term. Phase II addressed longer-term issues including principles and characteristics of "reasonably equivalent public transportation services for disabled persons". Our report follows-up on the Task Force's recommendations but also addresses current and future key risks identified with management through the preparation of a *Risk Profile*.

We are pleased to report that Handi-Transit has made significant strides in performance over the past ten years. Handi-Transit has been able to provide significantly more rides on an annual basis as a result of both funding increases and operating efficiencies. Handi-Transit's total expense per passenger remains below the national average, and passenger trips per hour are among the highest. We conducted a limited customer survey and found that customers are generally pleased with the service and are very appreciative that it exists.

The Task Force's Phase I report recommended improvements to trip scheduling functions and the confirmation system. As a result, the trip scheduling process was fully automated in May 2001 using software developed in-house (*iRide*). This software compares favourably with packages available on the market. At the same time, there are opportunities to improve system functionality, and we have recommended that management prioritize these issues so that an appropriate amount of information technology resources can be allocated to address them. We are also recommending further monitoring of telephone systems with the goal of minimizing wait times. In addition, we note that enhancements have been made to management information systems and the complaint/ commendation system. Recommendations for increased reporting capabilities are outlined in our report.

Service improvements have also taken place with respect to the Task Force's Phase II recommendations. In September 2000, Council adopted the policy that Priority 1 trips be guaranteed. These include medical, therapy, work and education trips. In addition, conversion of Regular Transit's fleet to accessible low-floor buses is now approximately one-third complete. We have found that paratransit services in other jurisdictions at similar levels of conversion have integrated their accessible transit information and are now offering training on low-floor buses to their paratransit customers. Given the experience of other jurisdictions, we have suggested that Handi-Transit move more aggressively towards integration.

The trip priority system remains an effective tool for matching demand with available resources while ensuring that the most

critical needs of customers are met. At the same time, there may be a need in the future to revisit the definition of “reasonably equivalent” service, given legislation trends. In the United States, restriction on the number of trips a person can make is prohibited. Ontario is also testing new legislation to remove barriers. In this regard, we note that universal access is a fundamental principle espoused in *Plan Winnipeg*. We have recommended that management monitor legislative trends and new practices in other jurisdictions and be cognizant of the need to consult with the community and inform Council of potential budgetary and other impacts that would result from a shift towards a non-restrictive system.

For the immediate future, we have recommended that management prepare both short and long-term projections of the demand for service to enable Council to make informed decisions about Handi-Transit’s current and future operations and resource requirements. Given budget constraints, we also believe that management must better capitalize on opportunities to learn from the successes and failures of other paratransit services in the management of demand for service.

With a track record of solid performance and continuous service improvements, we are confident that Handi-Transit is well positioned for the future.

Director of Transit Comments

INTER OFFICE MEMORANDUM



TRANSIT DEPARTMENT
Handi Transit
421 Osborne Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3L 2A2

To: Shannon Hunt
City Auditor

From: Rick Borland,
Director of Transit

Date: July 4th, 2003

RE: DRAFT REPORT ON THE HANDI-TRANSIT PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Thank you for your memo dated June 13th, 2003 forwarding the above report for our attention and comment. I am pleased that overall, the report appears to be very positive in nature, and I view the recommendations contained therein to be constructive.

c.c. N.L. Kurmann

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Background

Handi-Transit was identified in our last Audit Plan and tabled at Audit Committee. We decided to conduct a performance audit of Handi-Transit at this time because of several factors including

- the recent implementation of a new computerized ride scheduling system;
- the establishment of a new management information system;
- the introduction of low floor buses to the regular transit system; and
- the expectation for the demand of Handi-Transit service to continue to increase for the foreseeable future due, in part, to the City's demographics.

Audit objectives

The objectives of the review of Handi-Transit were

- *To review the mandate, organization and resources of the Handi-Transit Division*
- *To assess compliance with current policies, procedures and controls in place to ensure achievement of the mandate*
- *To make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operations and provide optimal service to Handi-Transit customers*

Audit scope and approach

The audit has been conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. In preparing our report, we have relied upon extensive interviews with Handi-Transit management, staff and others, and information, data, and other documentary evidence provided to us. The conclusions reached in this report are based upon information available at the time. In the event that significant information is brought to our attention after completion of the audit, we reserve the right to amend the conclusions reached.

We approached our review in three phases:

- Preliminary survey phase
- Field work phase
- Reporting phase

In conducting our activities, we employed a variety of methods:

- We conducted interviews and discussions with the Director of Transit, Manager of Handi-Transit, Supervisor of Handi-Transit and staff of Handi-Transit.
- We conducted interviews and discussions with Handi-Transit contractors, a sample of customers and members of the Policy Advisory Committee.
- We reviewed and analyzed relevant background information and documentation, operating information and processes, policies and procedures, and independent consulting reports.
- We observed the day-to-day operations and developed a flowchart of Handi-Transit operations.

- We determined the most significant risks that could inhibit or prevent the achievement of Handi-Transit's business objectives and used a control model to identify key controls that should be in place to mitigate these risks.

- We communicated the results of our review on an on-going basis and presented a formal report to the Director of Transit, Handi-Transit Management, the Chief Administrative Officer, Audit Committee and Council at the end of the audit.

Audit conclusions

The audit work we performed led us to the following conclusions:

- *Handi-Transit needs to make greater efforts to utilize demand management techniques to help offset increasing demand.*

- *Opportunities exist to improve management information systems that will assist in identifying emerging trends and to improve operational efficiency.*

- *Information from external sources could be better leveraged to identify opportunities to improve service delivery and maximize resource usage.*

Acknowledgements

The Audit Department wants to extend its appreciation to the many individuals who participated in the review and, in particular, the managers and staff of the Handi-Transit Division. Their comments and insights assisted us in completing our analysis and provided the foundation for many of the report recommendations.

City of Winnipeg Audit Team

Brian Whiteside, Deputy City Auditor
Bryan Mansky, Audit Manager
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_____
Shannon Hunt, CGA, CFE
City Auditor

Winnipeg, Manitoba
June 9, 2003

Introduction to the Handi-Transit service

In support of the Transit Department's mission *"To provide the best public transportation service possible"*, the Handi-Transit division plays a vital role. Handi-Transit provides a parallel transportation service for people who are legally blind or who cannot use regular transit service because of a physical disability. Customers pay the same fare as a regular transit user.

Business objectives

Within the 2002 business plan, the following were outlined as the service goals and strategies for Handi-Transit:

- Improve Service Reliability
- Improve Customer Relations
- Improve Productivity
- Financial Improvement

Enabling the achievement of these objectives was a consideration in the performance of this audit.

Trip information

In 2001, Handi-Transit was able to provide 449,433 rides to their customers. In 2002, the number of rides climbed to 503,327 and this number is continuing to rise in 2003. The provision of rides is based upon a three-tier trip-allocation priority system.

The following table breaks down the percentage of rides provided to each priority category:

Priority	Types of reasons	%
1 Guaranteed	Medical or medically authorized therapy appointments, Work, Post secondary education	65.8
2 High Priority	Volunteer with recognized organization, Attend support group meetings, Self development courses, Personal business purposes (bank, daycare, autopac), Essential shopping (groceries, prescriptions), Religious services, Transportation terminals (airport, bus, etc.), Advance ticket events Compassionate (funeral, visit ailing family)	16.6
3 Discretionary	Recreational activity (swimming, boating, bingo), Shopping, Visiting, Grooming (hair care, manicure), Dining out	17.6
	Total	**100**

Organizational structure and complement

Handi-Transit is part of the Specialized Services Division that reports to the Director of Transit. The division's manager is responsible for overseeing the operations of the Handi-Transit service. The authorized complement for the division for 2002 is 16 full-time permanent positions and 4 temporary positions as broken down in the chart below. (See Appendix 1 for Organization Chart.)

Handi-Transit Positions

Position	Number
Manager of Handi-Transit	1
Supervisor of Handi-Transit	1
Customer Service Supervisor & On-Street Inspector	2
Dispatcher / Scheduler	3
Administration Clerk	1
Customer Service Clerk	1
Reservation Clerk	8 permanent & 4 temporary
Contractors	10 Hourly utilizing 66 vehicles 1 Flat rate utilizing up to 40 vehicles

Manager of Handi-Transit
The manager directs the operation of Handi-Transit to ensure service levels provided reflect the approved operating budget; that approved service policies are being observed; and that major service problems are satisfactorily resolved. The manager is also the contract administrator and acts as the main contact person in this regard.

Supervisor of Handi-Transit
The supervisor manages the day-to-day operations, which includes supervising staff, scheduling and handling minor service issues.

Customer Service Supervisor & On-Street Inspector
These positions monitor the contractors' drivers for adherence to Handi-Transit policy and procedures. They are also responsible for monitoring contractor activity and following-up on customer complaints.

Dispatcher / Scheduler
The dispatcher/scheduler is responsible for running the scheduling system and performing a manual review once the system develops the next day's schedule. They will attempt to update the schedule by providing rides to customers previously declined as cancellations are received.

Administration Clerk
The administration clerk is responsible for the Handi-Transit registration system and performing a financial reconciliation between contractors' billings and fare collections.

Customer Service Clerk
The customer service clerk receives all complaints/commendations, follows-up with contractors and assigns follow-up duties to the on-street inspectors as required.

Reservation Clerk
The reservation clerks take all requests and cancellations for service and confirm rides for customers

Contractors
The independent contractors provide the vehicles and drivers used to transport the customers.

Two additional groups that interact with Handi-Transit on a regular basis are

1. Policy Advisory Committee
The committee is comprised of representatives from the major stakeholder groups who review and provide advice on service policy issues to the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works on matters related to public transportation service provided for physically disabled persons.

2. Information Systems Division
The Information Systems Division supports both the hardware and software utilized by Handi-Transit. This group may also be the developer of the system, as is the case with the *iRide* scheduling system.

The Handi-Transit trip management process

The customer makes a request for service and provides necessary information that will include the reason for the trip, which determines the priority assigned. Ideally, requests for service should be made 24 hours in advance but can be made up to 11am of the day prior to the requested ride. Customers who use Handi-Transit for a regular, set schedule trip may book a subscription trip. The subscription trip must be required at least three times per week.

Handi-Transit staff will make every effort to fulfill late requests within budgetary and scheduling restrictions. Daily, a scheduling program is run to optimize resource usage and map vehicle routes. Customers are required to share a vehicle. Complete vehicle schedules are emailed to each contractor for the next day's trips.

After the schedule has been prepared, there will very often be cancellations. Handi-Transit staff must manually search the unfilled requests and the schedule to maximize the number of trips accommodated.

Currently, customers must call back to receive confirmation of their trip. Customers receiving rides are asked to be at their pick-up point at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time to maintain efficiency of the vehicles. Drivers are required to collect any fare owing, which is set at the same rate as regular transit service. The total fares are deducted from the payment to the contractor. Any fares paid by Transit ticket are submitted by the contractors to the Transit Treasury for reimbursement.

Each contractor is required to monitor at least 10% of their trips to ensure that all work is being performed in accordance with Handi-Transit policies and procedures. Contractors are required to submit a monthly report of their monitoring activities. Handi-Transit staff also monitor trips on a random basis or will target specific customers/drivers that have complaints lodged against them. Handi-Transit has an Appeal process for customers to appeal decisions regarding eligibility or where they have been determined to be at fault for missing a ride. The final appeal is made to a committee comprised of Handi-Transit customers and operational staff.

Report on performance

Handi-Transit service is available seven days a week, providing door-to-door service within the same geographical area served by the regular public transit service. Handi-Transit provides a highly visible public service that is often under scrutiny due to the financial inability to meet all demand requests.

Current performance results

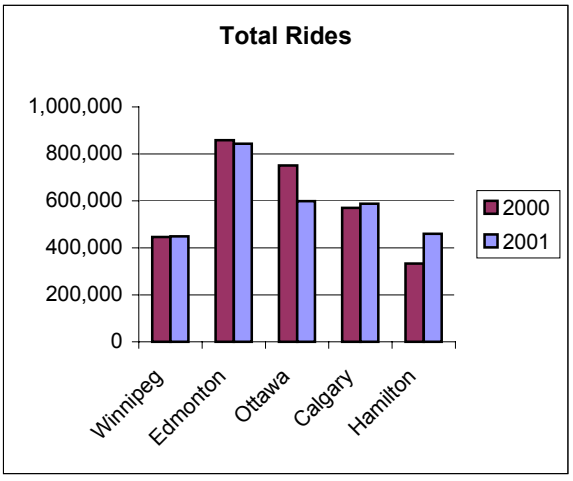
An integral part of our audit was the assessment of the performance of the Handi-Transit Division. To do this, we compared performance criteria gathered by the Canadian Urban Transportation Association (CUTA) in their annual *Specialized Transit Service Fact Book*. This

book contains common financial and operating statistics from CUTA member transit systems that provide services for persons with disabilities.
To the extent possible, we relied on performance information and data currently maintained by Handi-Transit and compared this information with similar paratransit operations from other jurisdictions.

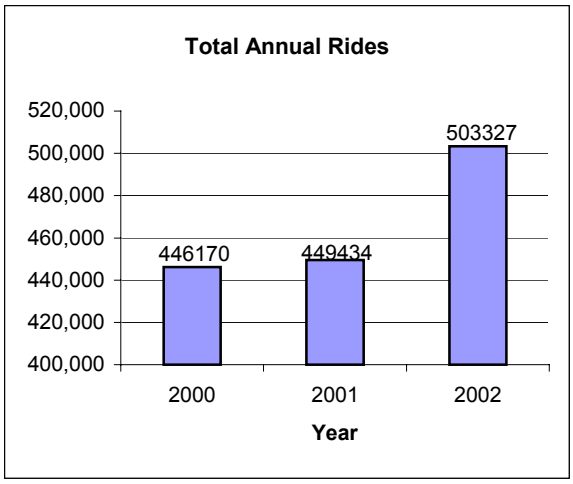
It is important to note that while paratransit service is provided in all major metropolitan areas, there are differences that sometimes make comparison across boundaries difficult. The main differences affecting comparison of paratransit services are the extent to which the service is contracted out and accounting methods used by the organization.

Rides provided

A comparison of the total volume of rides provided by specific jurisdictions is shown below. Of these cities, Edmonton, Ottawa, Calgary and Hamilton were determined to be the most similar to Winnipeg's Handi-Transit. The volume of rides varies significantly, and the two main determinants of the number of rides provided are funding and cost effectiveness. A comparison of these will be provided on the next page.



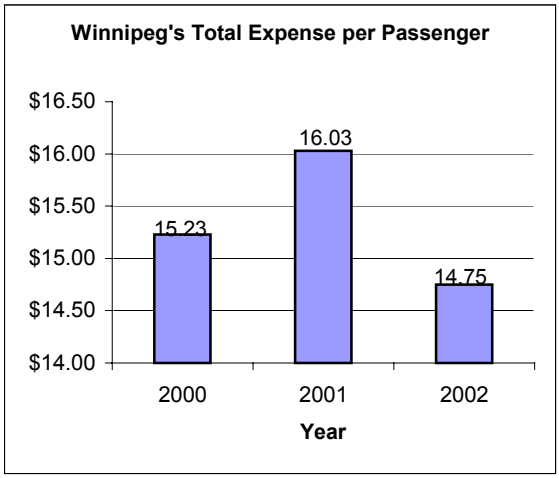
Winnipeg's volume of rides has steadily increased over the last couple of years. Funding increases and cost reductions through the use of contractors and scheduling efficiency improvements from the new IT system (*iRide*) are credited with making these increases possible. However, the volume of rides or requested rides is not a clear indicator of demand.

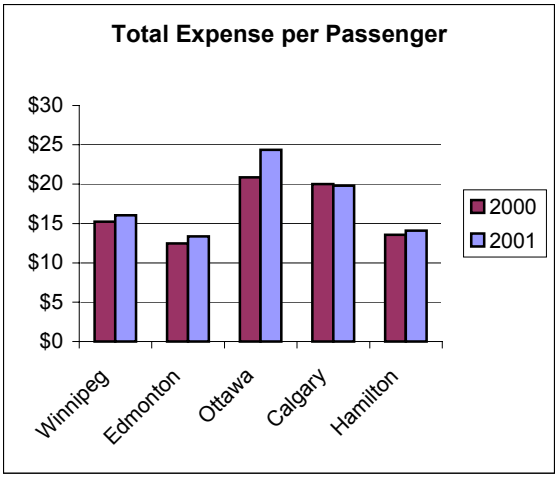


Perceived availability of service contributes to demand levels as does other criteria such as weather.

Total expense per passenger

Efficiency of service delivery is a key factor in determining how many rides a service can provide with a given level of funding.

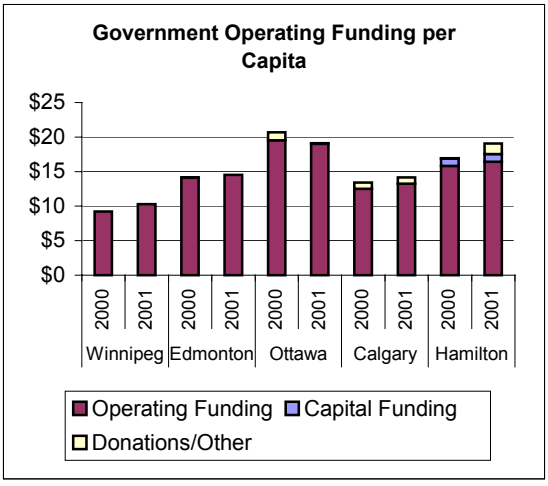




Winnipeg compares favorably with other paratransit services and with the first full-year of the new *iRide* system in place, cost per passenger dropped by 8 %.

Funding

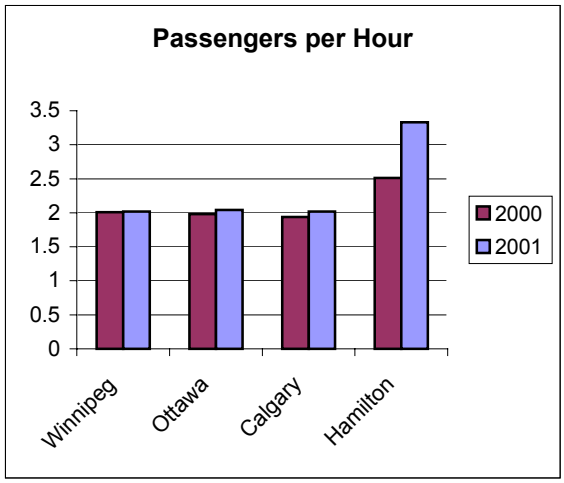
While all paratransit operations collect some revenue from fares, the main source of funding is from government contributions. Winnipeg is on the low end of the spectrum for government contributions to operations. In 2001, Winnipeg received total funding for operations of $10.26 per capita. The other Canadian cities indicated below ranged from a low of $13.22 for Calgary to a high of $19.01 for Ottawa for 2001.



Hamilton and Ottawa also received government funding for capital purposes in 2001. Donations for operating and/or capital purposes augmented some cities' total funding available. Taking this additional funding into consideration, Winnipeg's total per capital funding remained at $10.26. The next lowest was Calgary at $14.19 while the highest was Ottawa at $19.14 for 2001. To fully assess the adequacy of funding, other factors must be taken into consideration. This assessment is beyond the scope of our report; however, some of the factors would include demographics and the availability of alternate modes of transportation for the disabled.

Passengers/vehicle/hour

Productivity for Handi-Transit is measured by the number of passengers carried per vehicle per hour. The main difference between services is the extent to which they provide group trips: those that do report higher rates. With the exception of Hamilton, Winnipeg again compares favorably across similar jurisdictions.

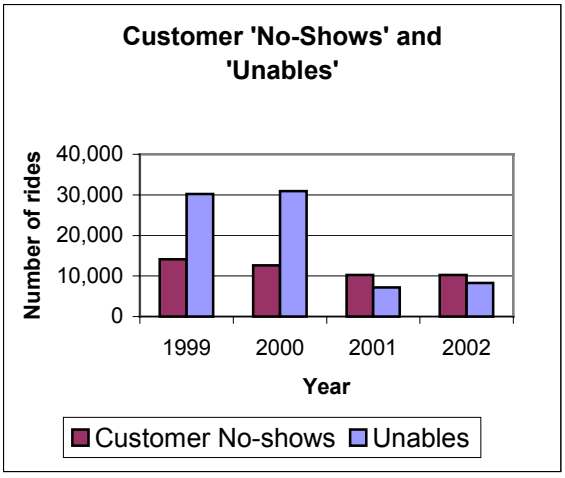


Edmonton did not provide information on this statistic and, therefore, is not included.

Customer no-shows and unables

A ‘no-show’ occurs when a person who has a scheduled trip is not present without legitimate cause, refuses the ride when it arrives, or cancels with less than 30 minutes notice. An ‘unable’ occurs when a registrant’s request for a ride cannot be met.

Although instances of customer no-shows have declined over the years (The 2001 'no-show' data was unavailable), they continue to be a problem that results in inefficiency and service delays. No-shows also result in some requests going unmet. For instance, in 2002 there were 10, 251 no-shows or cancellations at the door. For the same period, 8,316 requests for rides were deemed unable.



Summary of performance results

We have provided information on some of the key performance indicators applicable to a paratransit operation. The results indicate that Handi-Transit is operating efficiently.

At the same time, while the number of rides has increased, there is no clear indication of the real demand that exists in Winnipeg for this service. The number of unables is one measure of demand. However, many people, based on their experience with the service, will not request a ride due to the perception that their request will be denied. This aspect of demand cannot be quantified.

Paratransit operations in other jurisdictions also struggle with trying to define demand and resort to simply providing the best service with the limited dollars available. As the “boomer” generation continues to age, the challenge for paratransit operations will be to predict demand levels so that governments can base their funding decisions on more complete information.

Positioning for the future

The environment in which Handi-Transit operates today is different than it was five years ago, and it is subject to further change in the future. The next section of the report documents our recommendations to improve the current control environment and position Handi-Transit to realize opportunities for the future.

Risk assessment and the audit process

To assess the Handi-Transit environment, we used a risk-based approach to perform this review. This approach involved looking at all business processes of Handi-Transit, understanding the environment in which they operate, and documenting potential risks that could impact the delivery of this service.

We then analyzed each risk using several key sources. First, we reviewed the listing of risks with management and documented the controls used to mitigate each risk. We obtained feedback from customers through a limited customer survey, and we conducted interviews with contractors, special interest group representatives and paratransit representatives in other jurisdictions. We also used a control model to identify key controls that should be in place. The control model is called the *Criteria of Control Model (CoCo)* and was developed by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. The model is described in Appendix 2.

Each risk, with the associated current controls, was reviewed to determine the level of risk remaining. Management performed a self-assessment on the functioning of the current state of control and the Audit Department reviewed this assessment for reasonableness.

This risk assessment was used to focus our resources on specific areas for the audit. The recommendations contained in the report are intended to provide management with actions that will assist in the mitigation of the significant risks or control gaps identified during the audit.

Risk profile

The Risk Profile is a map that indicates the most significant risks facing the Handi-Transit operation at this point in time. We have used *The City of Winnipeg Corporate Risk Framework* to categorize risks by source as shown on the next page. But the Risk Profile has value beyond the conduct of the audit. Management can use the Risk Profile to identify where their resources should be focused to effectively manage the key risks associated with the Handi-Transit operation.

The risk profile of Handi-Transit will change due to changes in the operating environment or as management initiates changes in processes or policies that support the Handi-Transit service. Implementation of the audit recommendations will also change the risk profile as risk management practices are strengthened.

Handi-Transit Risk Profile

Context Risks These risks relate to internal and external factors that impact the environment in which the organization operates or business processes are conducted.			
External Environment	**Organizational Culture**	**Compliance**	**Business Process**
Demand for service increases due to demographic or legislative changes.	Not aware of emerging issues/practices in other jurisdictions.	Contractor does not comply with contract specifications.	Demand for service increases are not anticipated.
Funding cuts from province results in service cutbacks.	Council is not informed of significant changes in HT demand.	HT objectives are not congruent with Administration / Council objectives.	There is a lack of a customer complaint/survey process to obtain and review customer information.
Accident results in lawsuit against City.	A lack of trust reduces effective delegation of duties.	RFP evaluation criteria are not adhered to.	Customers are unaware of HT processes.
	Plans are not implemented.	Customers do not comply with HT service obligations	Stakeholders are unaware of HT objectives.
		Contract is not legally enforceable.	Changes in contractor status are not communicated.
		HT does not comply with regulations/standards.	

Resource Risks These risks relate to the resources used by the organization to accomplish its objectives.			
Human Resources	**Financial Resources**	**Information Resources**	**Physical Assets**
There is a lack of human resources available to HT.	Funding cuts from City results in lower levels of service.	Scheduling system fails or does not maximize resource utilization.	Contractor unable to fulfill all trips assigned due to vehicle failure.
Contractor driver does not receive adequate training.	Contractor holdbacks are inaccurately calculated.	Management information is inadequate.	Vehicle fleet mix is inappropriate to efficiently service requests.
Staff /contractors are not properly trained for all major functions.	Cost of contractor services are high or not in-line with contract rates.	Scheduling system parameters are not adhered to or inaccurate.	
Staff are not aware of changes to HT policies.	Insurance levels are inappropriate for contractor vehicles.	Integrity of system data is compromised.	
	Fare increases do not keep pace with inflation.		

Legend

- Critical risk: CAO involvement essential, inform committee of Council.
- High risk: Senior management involvement essential, inform CAO.
- Moderate risk: management mitigation & monitoring required, inform senior management.
- Low risk: manage by routine procedures.

Observations and recommendations

Our observations and recommendations are categorized by area of risk. It is important to view all recommendations within the context of both current operations and future challenges.

Demand management

In recent years, there has been a significant amount of publicity regarding Canada's aging population and anticipated increase in demand for door-to-door services for seniors. In addition, there has been a heightened awareness by the public as to the rights of the disabled and the goal of mainstreaming as many persons with disabilities as possible. As a result of these two factors, virtually every major city in Canada and the United States is in the process of reviewing its ability to meet these demands. The challenge to each jurisdiction is to meet these demands using a combination of specialized and conventional public transportation in a cost effective manner. These challenges require an understanding of

- what the projected demand for service will be over the short and long-term; and
- how demand may be managed through alternative service delivery options and policy or procedural amendments within budget constraints.

Demand management entails identifying, implementing and monitoring techniques that ensure that an adequate volume of service is available within budget constraints. Gaining a good understanding of the people who use the service and the associated demographic trends enable paratransit management and staff to better manage the demand.

Four main demand management techniques were identified as follows:

- Alternative Service Delivery
- Group Trips
- Feeder System
- Eligibility Criteria Changes

The absence of a complete demand management process means

- Decision makers do not have comprehensive information needed to make informed decisions about future operations.
- Demand may not be diverted to lower cost transportation methods.
- There could be a severe reduction in the level of service if funding does not keep pace with demand.

Taking a proactive approach to measuring and managing demand also reinforces good relations between paratransit operations and the customers served.

1. Handi-Transit should prepare longer-term demand projections and update at regular intervals.

Handi-Transit currently projects an estimate of demand for service approximately one year into the future. Management has not prepared longer-term projections since the volume of service Handi-Transit is able to provide is largely dependent on the level of operating funding received on an annual basis from the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba. It is management's position that it has no assurance that the results of demand projections will have any influence over funding decisions.

We appreciate that there is no guarantees that preparing short and long-term demand projections alone will impact funding allocations to Handi-Transit. At the same time, in the absence of making a strong case for more funding (if that is what the projections indicate will be needed), frozen or reduced levels of funding will be the likely outcome.

The total demand for Handi-Transit services is not known. One component of demand may be measured by the actual rides provided by Handi-Transit. Another component may be measured by the amount of demand that is suppressed through the use of a trip allocation system. This is because customers may believe that requests for lower priority trips will not be met, based upon prior experience. A final component of total demand may be measured by the number of potential customers who simply are unaware of the Handi-Transit service.

Together, these measures would specify what is total demand for Handi-Transit. If known, it would enable management to determine what percentage of demand is currently being met by the available supply of service. Presently, Handi-Transit does not have a realistic view of the total demand for the service because two of the three measures are unknown.

Our discussions with paratransit services in other Canadian cities indicate that the development of an all-encompassing model would be cumbersome, difficult to maintain and often inflexible when a new parameter needs to be added or modified. Being easy to use and update at regular intervals are critical aspects of demand projections. Other Canadian cities are using simple electronic spreadsheets to project demand so that updating is not an onerous task.

At the most basic level, demand for Handi-Transit service is dependant upon

- demographic trends (i.e. aging population, growth in population through net migration patterns and inter-provincial migration), and
- disability rates (particularly those involving blindness and mobility impairments).

Other considerations that affect demand are not easily quantifiable, but should be monitored in the environment. These factors would include

- changes in Health Care Delivery (reducing the length of hospital stays and Community-Based Programming),
- introduction of Easy Access Low-Floor Buses,
- private funding of accessible vehicles at Health Care Facilities,
- increased emphasis on healthier lifestyles, and
- customer perception of Handi-Transit's capacity.

Through a limited amount of research, we were able to conclude that adequate information on seniors and the disabled, necessary for Handi-Transit to formulate demand projections, could be easily attained. The following resources were identified:

- 2001 Census data for Winnipeg including a classification by age bracket;
- April 2002 report entitled *The Long-Term Demographic Trends in Winnipeg's Census Metropolitan Area* prepared by the Conference Board of Canada (includes population data and projections for the period 1987 – 2021);
- December 2002 report from Statistics Canada entitled *A Profile of Disability in Canada, 2001* derived from the *Participation and Active Living Survey* (PALS), a national survey of disabled persons conducted in 2001; and
- Reports and spreadsheets calculating demand for service projections for American paratransit operations.

Data from the United States such as eligibility factors, certification factors and low/high ranges of trip volumes could be reviewed and adjusted for factors specific to Canada.

Based on the Conference Board of Canada, the population of Winnipeg is expected to increase a modest 5.8% from 2001 to 2011 and a further 6.5% from 2011 to 2021. As

the baby-boom generation gets older, however, the average age of Winnipeg's population is expected to rise significantly. The proportion of people aged 65 and over is expected to rise from 13.3% in 2001 to 17.6% in 2021 with most of the growth coming in the last 10 years. Given that approximately 85% of Handi-Transit registrants are currently over the age of 65, the aging population factor will undoubtedly increase the demand for service, particularly from 2011 to 2021.

Recommendation 1

Handi-Transit management should prepare long-term projections of the demand for service and update these projections at regular intervals, as new information becomes available pertaining to the relevant parameters established. We recommend that management start with the Conference Board projections and add additional parameters to calculate the estimated mobility impaired population and projected trip volumes.

Management response

The department will undertake to provide long-term projections for the demand of Handi-Transit service.

Past experience has indicated that the demand for service is much more related to the level of service available than it is to the demographics of the population or the disability rate. The level of service available is directly determined by the budget, which is generally not committed more than one year in advance.

2. Alternative service delivery option – low-floor buses

Similar to other Canadian cities, Winnipeg Transit is moving towards a fully accessible service and is in the process of converting its fleet to low-floor buses in conjunction with its regular bus replacement program. Approximately 33% of the fleet has been converted to date with full conversion anticipated by 2012. Features of these buses include no entry steps, a kneeling feature that lowers the entry level to within ten centimeters of the curb, a ramp for people who use mobility aids, others who are unable to step up into the bus and two spaces designated for wheelchairs or scooters.

It is important to note that low-floor bus service on fixed routes is not an acceptable alternative to door-to-door service for all Handi-Transit customers all of the time. Many customers, due to the nature of their disabilities, may only be physically able to use low-floor buses at certain times. Other barriers that may prevent Handi-Transit customers from using low-floor buses include:

- the distance from the customer's origin and destination to bus stops serviced by low-floor buses,
- accessibility of bus stops and shelters,
- conditions of sidewalks and streets (non-slip surfaces free of snow), and
- general weather conditions.

In addition, the level of disability or age may contribute to a customer's comfort level or self-assurance in not having door-to-door service.

Currently, Winnipeg Transit has established a priority list of routes for the low-floor buses in order to achieve maximum usage. Certain routes have been designated as Easy Access routes where there are large concentrations of Handi-Transit ambulatory customers, large concentrations of seniors and main line routes.

We reviewed other Canadian paratransit services that are converting their bus fleets including Edmonton with 60% converted, Ottawa with 35% and Calgary at 42% converted.

A pilot project in Ottawa offering free fares to their paratransit customers to use conventional transit services resulted in

approximately a 20% reduction in demand in paratransit services for the pilot group over the project period. These results may be skewed in that over 300 customers were contacted in order to get 104 willing participants for the project. These results are similar to a study conducted in Edmonton in 1999, where 22% of Edmonton's paratransit customers were using Edmonton Transit System for some of their trips. 27% of Edmonton's fleet of buses had been converted to low-floor at that time.

All three of these cities have their paratransit and low-floor bus information integrated on their website under an accessible services heading and all three currently offer training to assist disabled with using conventional transit services. In Winnipeg, passengers can obtain information about which routes are serviced by low-floor buses through the *Telebus* or Winnipeg Transit's *Telephone Information Line*. In addition, this information is available online through *Navigo*, *Winnipeg Transit's Online Trip Planner*. There is currently no information regarding low-floor bus service in Handi-Transit's brochure and no reference to it on Handi-Transit's web page. The spring 2003 *Handi-Transit Newsletter*, however, does provide some information on this service. Management indicated that they wanted to have more to offer before they actively started marketing Easy Access service to clients.

Training for disabled on how to use conventional transit services has not been offered to date to Handi-Transit customers, but preliminary discussions have taken place in this regard. Management anticipates that a small percentage (10% or less) of those currently eligible for Handi-Transit will use low-floor buses. We believe that this estimate may be low.

Recommendation 2

Handi-Transit in cooperation with Winnipeg Transit should begin to inform customers of the availability of low-floor buses in Winnipeg and provide information as to where to find which routes are designated as low-floor routes. We also suggest that Handi-Transit management communicate with paratransit services, their own customers and stakeholder groups to identify opportunities to increase the rate of use of low-floor buses by Handi-transit customers. On the basis of this information, Handi-Transit should develop and arrange for the provision of training for Handi-Transit customers on how to access and use low-floor buses. In addition, Winnipeg Transit should train low-floor bus drivers on their responsibilities for providing service to people with disabilities including the securing of wheelchairs and scooters.

Management response

By the fall of 2003, Winnipeg Transit will own and operate 223 low floor buses. This will provide sufficient low floor buses to ensure that the majority of weekday off-peak service, and all Saturday and Sunday service, is wheelchair accessible. At this point, the department will undertake to promote accessible regular transit as a travel option for Handi-Transit registrants.

Winnipeg Transit has provided low floor bus training to groups of Handi-Transit customers as requested and will continue to do so in the future. In addition, Handi-Transit has also investigated a "buddy" system to try to encourage more individuals to use low floor buses, however, it was not possible at the time to find a group of volunteers willing to be involved in such a program.

All bus operators are trained in the use of low floor buses, including the operation of securement devices, and all bus operators have received disability awareness training. The issue of assistance to persons with disabilities using mobility devices on low floor buses is addressed in the Bus Operator Training Manual, which indicates that bus operators are to assist if asked to do so.

3. Alternative service delivery option – group trips

Currently group trips are not offered by Handi-Transit. Part of the reason is that the *iRide* scheduling software does not have the capability of identifying such opportunities.

Offering group trips would promote efficiency in that fewer trips would need to be scheduled and fewer vehicles would need to be dispatched. Partnering with other organizations such as seniors groups may accommodate group trips. *iRide* could also be used to identify clustering opportunities where many passengers may be traveling to one destination (e.g. downtown).

Recommendation 3

We recommend that Handi-Transit management work with the Policy Advisory Committee to evaluate the feasibility of offering group trips and the resulting potential impact on total rides.

Management response

The feasibility of modifications to the Handi-Transit computerized scheduling system is currently being investigated by departmental IT staff. Short of a total rewrite of the system, the ability to accommodate and schedule group trips will be dependent on the outcome of this investigation.

4. Alternative service delivery option – feeder system

A feeder system integrates transit with paratransit services. Handi-Transit does not currently offer this option, and other paratransit services we contacted are also in the planning stages of this demand management technique. Efficiencies could be achieved through the integration of Winnipeg Transit's services whereby passengers would take Handi-Transit to an Easy Access bus terminal and take a low-floor bus from there. We recognize the added difficulty some Handi-Transit customers would face in transferring vehicles during their trip.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that Handi-Transit consult with management of other paratransit services on an on-going basis to learn of their plans and experiences regarding feeder systems for customers with mobility concerns.

Management response

Agreed.

5. Alternative service delivery option – eligibility criteria

Like other paratransit operations, Handi-Transit's customer eligibility criteria were established before low-floor bus service became available. Although most paratransit services have similar eligibility criteria, other jurisdictions are now updating their registration application forms to focus on particular circumstances when a customer can or cannot use low-floor buses. Conditional eligibility may be granted on this basis. For example, a customer may be granted eligibility for paratransit service if low-floor buses do not service their route or if the bus stop is more than a specific distance from the customer's origin or destination. This approach recognizes that some customers are able to use low-floor bus service at least some of the time. A weighting system is being used to assess eligibility for paratransit service, whereby the most marginal candidates are referred for an in-person interview by a panel. Some paratransit services are also addressing how new eligibility criteria might be applied to registrants who qualified under the old criteria and the frequency and means of conducting re-registration processes.

Some paratransit services are updating registrant databases to establish time frames as to when a registrant is considered an 'inactive' customer and when re-registration is required to resume eligibility. The results of this process can give

management a much more accurate picture of the volume of active customers. Once customers who are no longer eligible for service are removed from the active database, processes such as re-registration and communication with registrants become a simpler task.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that Handi-Transit consult with management of other paratransit services on an on-going basis regarding eligibility and re-registration processes and discuss possible changes with the Policy Advisory Committee.

Handi-Transit should review the database of registrants every two years with the intention of transferring users to an inactive status based on date of last service use as well as deleting registrants who are deceased or no longer require the service.

Management response

Agreed.

6. Handi-Transit should monitor emerging legislative trends and potential impacts to the program budget and operations.

The trip priority system has been in place since Handi-Transit service began in 1977. It was initially developed and continues to be refined in consultation with stakeholder groups. It is an effective tool for matching demand with available resources while ensuring that the most critical needs of customers are met.

The 1993 Task Force acknowledged the impact that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Manitoba Human Rights Code would have on the form of public transportation in the future. The Task Force focused on defining the characteristics of what would constitute a "reasonably equivalent" transportation system for persons with physical disabilities. The Task Force acknowledged the financial realities that faced the Handi-Transit service, but also noted the need to provide "sufficient resources to eliminate or at least minimize the need for a trip priority system". The Task Force concluded that "reasonably equivalent" service would be satisfied by an "integrated transportation system" (previously discussed) and a "parallel" transportation system that would accommodate all requests made 24 hours in advance for work, post-secondary and medical trips and a "reasonable number of other purpose trips".

While accepting this definition of "reasonably equivalent" at the time, the Task Force did recognize that a rationing system "creates uncertainty in the lifestyles of persons with disabilities and deprives them of opportunities for integration into society according to their needs, interests and talents". In the United States, for example, The Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990 (ADA) mandates that all conventional public and private transportation vehicles and facilities be barrier free, and that public transit operators provide paratransit services comparable in quality to that of conventional fixed route systems. A United States court decision has interpreted the ADA to mean that restrictions on the number of trips a person can make, waiting lists and other practices that limit the accessibility of paratransit service are prohibited. In addition, next day transportation services for the disabled have been mandated in the U.S.

Although there is currently no national legislation in Canada similar to the ADA, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act was passed in 2001 to improve the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities and to make related amendments to other Acts. We also noted that Plan Winnipeg specifically identifies "universal access" as an important principle.

Handi-Transit management do not anticipate changes to the priority system at this time. They believe that it fairly balances

access with fiscal realities and that the conclusions of the 1993 report are still relevant. Given the legislative environment in other jurisdictions and the general changes that have occurred since 1993 in recognizing the rights of persons with disabilities, we believe that it would be prudent to monitor the situation. It may be necessary, at some point, to revisit the interpretation of "reasonably equivalent" and determine the need for, and financial and operational impacts that would result from, a movement towards a non-restrictive system.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that Handi-Transit management monitor current and proposed changes in relevant legislation and practice in other Canadian cities. Consultation with the community may also become appropriate. Management should be cognizant of the need to ensure that Council is informed of any significant changes that may be pending and the potential budgetary and other impacts that would result from a shift towards a non-restrictive system.

Management response

Agreed

Information technology

Handi-Transit is extremely dependant upon the *iRide* system. The system is used to schedule approximately 1,300-2,000 rides per day and assign them to 66 hourly vehicles as well as assigning additional trips to a flat rate contractor. Failure of this system would result in

- severe service disruption as Handi-Transit staff would be unable to manually develop the schedule by the required time,
- dissatisfied customers, and
- negative publicity.

Since demand for service has exceeded the capacity of Handi-Transit, management must utilize the information at their disposal to efficiently allocate scarce resources. Handi-Transit utilizes a number of systems to enable decision-making by providing business information to management. These system include

- *Handi-View* to provide scheduling information,
- *Perimeter* that provides telephone activity information, and
- *Response* to provide information on complaints/commendations.

1. Opportunities exist to improve service efficiency through improvements to the *iRide* system.

iRide was developed in-house and has improved the efficiency of the contracted resources used by Handi-Transit. In the event of a non-catastrophic disaster, systems could be operational with minimal data loss in a matter of a couple hours. Controls in the area of logical and physical access and logging of updates are also very good.

A comparison of *iRide* against other packages available on the market illustrated

the fact that the system was developed to meet the present and future needs of Handi-Transit. The system

- allows for subscription booking of trips,
- stores a variety of key customer and contractor information,
- utilizes a City of Winnipeg zone matrix to calculate travel time from origin to destination, and
- automatically develops the schedule based on a set of customizable criteria.

From discussions with Handi-Transit management and staff, and through the course of this review, we did note some opportunities to improve the current version of *iRide*. These include

- the ability to identify empty seats in a vehicle and fill with an unable;
- booking larger vehicles for group trips;
- reducing the number of scheduled trips that use more than one vehicle for trips that have similar origins and destinations at similar times;
- the ability to reflect the impact of traveling in different parts of Winnipeg during rush hour; and
- the ability to reflect seasonal issues such as major construction projects.

While we appreciate that modification/enhancements to *iRide* compete with other Transit priorities, we believe that Handi-Transit's reliance on the system, increasing service demands and public visibility make *iRide* a priority.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that Handi Transit management prioritize the opportunities to improve the *iRide* system and formally report them to the Director of Transit. Plans should be developed to address high-priority issues with associated timelines.

Management response

Agreed.

2. Management reporting capabilities should be expanded

With demand anticipated to increase at a pace faster than financial resources, management must be able to rely on information to efficiently allocate scarce resources. The *iRide* system has a variety of reports for management that deal with daily operations. The system generates several summary level statistics for a single day's activities and provides historical comparisons.

Daily activity reports include carried trips, unables, trip reason by priority and mobility (ambulant/wheelchair) and a contractor summary providing the passengers carried per hour. This information is useful to management, but this information is only available the following day. This prevents management from monitoring current activities and being able to make proactive decisions. The impact of missing information has been minimized due to the experience and skill of the current staff. Any turnover in the future, however, could eliminate this contingency.

Historical data is available, however management reports using this data are not regularly generated. As an example, the system can provide the number of unables for each day in May, but this information is not provided in a format that allows trends to be reviewed or to be compared to the previous year.

At the same time, we found that exception or ad hoc reporting beyond the built-in reports is non-existent. IT management were very accommodating in trying to develop reports requested by the Audit Department. We believe that an opportunity exists to improve efficiency by programming

the system to generate reports whenever certain conditions exist.

Enabling the creation of ad hoc reports to include analysis over time will help

management to identify trends and project future results. Plans to mitigate potential negative impacts could then be developed in response.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that information available to management be expanded to include

- viewing status of the current day's activities;
- the ability to view detailed activity over timeframes to analyze for potential trends;
- exception reports to automatically inform management of the occurrence of specific programmed criteria; and
- the ability to develop ad hoc reports.

Management response

The department agrees that the recommended enhancements to the reporting system are desirable and should be prioritized with the iRide improvement plans in recommendation 7.

3. Usage of *Perimeter* phone system reports should be expanded

The *Perimeter* system monitors the booking and cancellation phone lines and has the capability to generate three key reports:

- *Incoming Traffic Analysis Report*,
- *Agent Performance Report*, and
- *Incoming Calls Report*.

The *Incoming Traffic Analysis Report* is used to identify peak and slow periods to assist with staffing decisions and to follow-up on complaints such as difficulty getting through on the phone. This report is only available for one-day periods.

Data is broken down in half hour increments from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and includes the number of calls offered, answered, abandoned before and after the recording announcement (RAN), and received while the system was on night service. It also provides the daily average for speed of answer, call duration and wait to abandon. The system does provide a maximum wait before getting an answer, maximum wait before abandoning and maximum call duration. However, the system has been capped at accepting 10 callers into the queue, so the provision of these latter statistics may not reveal the true picture of wait times.

The *Agent Performance Report* provides details on call activity and time allocation by staff person. This report is available for a day's activity or for longer time periods and is used to review individual staff performance.

The *Incoming Calls Report* is not currently used by Handi-Transit, but could provide the total number of calls received on each line and percentage of calls experiencing delays, no delays, abandoned calls and average conversation lengths. This information would be available for a specified timeframe, again with the limitation of providing a single number for an entire time period. This report would provide management with information on the allocation of resources within the operation by analyzing the percentage of callers receiving a delay when booking and when canceling. The *Incoming Calls Report* also allows management to institute a Grade of Service standard by which to evaluate performance.

Handi-Transit management is currently unable to receive any performance reporting on the confirmation line. Customers do have the ability to receive an automated confirmation response or to talk directly to a staff person if they are using a rotary dial telephone. For customers utilizing the automated confirmation line, the information provided does not include the contractor name assigned to provide their ride. The absence of reporting on this system means that decisions, such as the plan to provide the ability to confirm a trip via the Internet,

are being made without the benefit of complete information.

Recommendation 9

Management should develop performance reporting for the confirmation telephone line similar to what is available for the booking and cancellation telephone lines. Management should also utilize the *Incoming Calls Report* for its ability to provide information over a specified time period.

Other enhancements that should be considered include

- development of a process to track key telephone line performance indicators, at the business unit level, over time;
- developing operational service standards for each telephone line to define customer service standards; and
- adding the name of the contractor assigned to pick up the customer on the automated confirmation line.

Management response

Management agrees with the recommendation regarding the use of the Perimeter System. Changes to the automated trip confirmation will be prioritized concurrent with the IT changes in recommendation 7 & 8.

Complaint/commendation system

The complaint/commendation system is in place to allow customers to express concerns that they have with any part of the service delivery process.

An effective complaint/commendation process provides management with information to assess the quality of the service and

- identifies opportunities for improvement in the quality of service,
- recognizes exceptional performance of staff and contractors,
- recognizes potential warning signs that could result in harm to one or more parties, and
- provides insight into operational performance based on the volume and type of complaints.

1. Promotion of the complaint/commendation process should be included on the website

Contact information for the Handi-Transit complaint/commendation process is advertised in their brochure, newsletter and in the City of Winnipeg telephone book. The Handi-Transit website only lists the general booking telephone line and does not provide any information on the complaint line.

The driver-training manual also provides details on how to file a complaint and the implications if complaints are filed against a driver. Policy Advisory Committee members, contractors and customers that we interviewed were all aware that a complaint process existed, and many stated how well they believed that Handi-Transit staff performed their jobs.

A reasonable three-day turnaround time is expected of contractors to respond to

Handi-Transit staff about a specific complaint. The Handi-Transit newsletter specifies a 14-day passenger complaint turnaround time with staff providing a response regarding the outcome of the complaint by letter, email or phone, whichever the complainant prefers. At the time of this review this new standard had not yet been communicated to staff.

Recommendation 10

The Handi-Transit website should be updated with information about the complaint/commendation process.

Complaint response time frames should be communicated to the appropriate staff.

Management response

The department is preparing improvements to the Handi-Transit section of Transit's website to include all aspects of Handi-Transit including information about the complaint/commendation process.

Staff will be reminded of appropriate complaint response times.

2. Complaint/commendation reporting should be improved

The current complaint/commendation system encompasses a Microsoft Word based document that requires manual re-entry of all customer/driver/contractor information and the logging of complaint/commendation type on a separate document. The *Response* system is a second system staff utilize when necessary to generate a report or when follow-up action is required. Information on complaints/commendations is available through three sources

1. by reviewing each customer/driver file,
2. by reviewing the monthly summary that summarizes by contractor and by type, or
3. by reviewing a report generated from the *Response* system that summarizes complaints by type for a time-period, providing a single number tally.

Information to monitor growth in certain complaint types is not currently available, but could be manually generated through entry of the monthly summary sheets into a spreadsheet format. Information to view status of all complaints or the number of open complaints is only available by staff reviewing files. While the current system is capable of categorizing the complaints/commendations, it categorizes all unsubstantiated complaints into one pool. This practice may obscure trends and growing issues.

A new complaint/commendation system is being developed by the Information Systems Division, but has not yet been implemented. From our discussions with Information Systems and Handi-Transit staff and management, it would appear that the new system does require some enhancements but should remedy the above-mentioned issues. It should also improve staff efficiency by automatically populating data fields from other databases.

Recommendation 11

Handi-Transit management, in consultation with their staff, should develop a listing of requested system enhancements for the new complaint system and formally report them to the Director of Transit. An implementation plan should then be developed with associated timelines.

Reports should be regularly generated identifying category and status of complaints. The creation of these reports can also be used to track complaint/commendation results over extended time periods (until the new system is ready to be implemented).

All complaints should be categorized regardless of whether or not they are substantiated. This would serve to better illustrate trends, highlight growing issues or identify a policy deficiency.

Management response
The department agrees that required system modifications should be identified. These will be prioritized with other IT recommendations in 7, 8, and 9.

The department agrees that an interim reporting system, which categorizes the type of complaint, should be developed and utilized until the new system can be completed.

The department agrees that unsubstantiated complaints should also be categorized.

Performance measurement

The purpose of measuring performance is to ensure accountability and to promote continuous service improvement. Successful management information systems include measurable performance targets. Quantifying targets and tracking performance will

- reduce the risk of bias in the evaluation process;
- facilitate comparisons between actual results, established targets and prior period results; and
- assist in the comparison to similar organizations.

Handi-Transit's information system is capable of producing all of the standard CUTA statistics with varying degrees of ease. Performance measures most commonly used in the industry include

- total passengers carried,
- total average cost per passenger per trip,
- passengers per vehicle per hour,
- total number of unables, and
- total number of customer no-shows.

1. Monitoring the performance and service activities in other jurisdictions would benefit Handi-Transit.

While Handi-Transit monitors the standard statistics internally, there is currently minimal monitoring and follow-up of results in relation to paratransit services. Although there are differences, sometimes significant, between paratransit services, the CUTA statistics should be used as a starting point for evaluation of Handi-Transit in relation to others. Management should followup directly with other paratransit services where unusual variances or opportunities to improve Handi-Transit's performance are identified.

For instance, in 2001, Handi-Transit's percentage of trips offered on a subscription basis was 30% but ranged from 40% - 75% for five other major Canadian cities. (Subscription trips are standing orders for trips made on a regular basis and registrants are not required to call Handi-Transit to confirm such trips.) Handi-Transit management should investigate how this was accomplished in those jurisdictions and what impact, both positive and negative, this could have on the Winnipeg operation.

Recommendation 12

Handi-Transit management should compare its performance results (financial and operating) with those of similar organizations on an on-going basis.

Handi-Transit management should regularly contact other paratransit services to share information to foster performance improvements.

Management response

Agreed. The Transit Department includes comparative statistics from the Canadian Urban Transit Association in its Business plan.

2. The feedback process to gather information from customers, contractors and stakeholder groups should be formalized.

Although Handi-Transit has never formally initiated customer surveys or contractor interviews, management does collect feedback from customers and contractors through the complaint and commendation process and incident report forms. We conducted interviews with members of the Policy Advisory Committee, service contractor representatives and surveyed a small sample of customers. (Appendix 3 provides a summary of the customer survey responses). These sources provided a wealth of information about all aspects of Handi-Transit's operations.

Customer surveys and contractor and stakeholder group representative interviews can provide invaluable feedback. They can identify very specific issues for improvement as opposed to broader performance measures, which at times require considerable research to interpret. Seeking feedback from those directly impacted by Handi-Transit's policies and procedures also sends a powerful message to key stakeholders that their comments are valued and are acted upon.

Information from these sources should be combined with other performance information to identify issues and establish priorities to be addressed. We are pleased to report that management has agreed to elicit feedback from customers through a survey of a larger sample of Handi-Transit customers. The script developed in conjunction with our review will form the basis of this survey and we have agreed to assist Handi-Transit as a separate project. (See Appendix 4 for the survey questions).

Recommendation 13

We recommend that Handi-Transit continue to elicit feedback from customers through the use of an annual survey process.

In addition, Handi-Transit management should formally interview contractor representatives and stakeholder groups for feedback on the service delivery process.

Management response

The department agrees that a regular formal customer feedback process should be undertaken. The department will investigate whether an annual process is optimal.

Feedback from contractors and stakeholder groups is ongoing. It has been our experience that this type of feedback is best obtained in an informal setting.

Compliance

Handi-Transit management must ensure that its staff and contractors adhere to laws and regulations, City of Winnipeg policies and administrative directives and its own policies and procedures. The impact from failing to adhere to one or more of the above items could range from dissatisfied customers to financial liability as a result of legal action. We focused on ensuring Handi-Transit is taking all reasonable means of protecting its customers and contracted drivers.

1. Monitoring of vehicle inspections, drivers licenses, vehicle licenses/insurance and criminal record checks should be done regularly and be documented.

Handi-Transit drivers and vehicles that are also registered with the Taxicab Board of Manitoba are monitored by the Board. Until recently, Handi-Transit did not monitor vehicle inspections, drivers' licenses, vehicle licenses/insurance and criminal record checks beyond initial approval for a Handi-Transit photo identification and license.

Recently, Handi-Transit began ensuring that independent vehicle inspections are done every six months for vehicles not registered under the Taxicab Board. A chart is maintained by vehicle to document this review. Handi-Transit also receives copies of vehicle inspections for vehicles under the Taxicab Board.

Handi-Transit has committed to ensuring all drivers have valid drivers licenses on an annual basis and to obtaining new criminal record checks for all drivers on an annual basis. It has not yet been established as to how this information will be documented and monitored. Deficiencies have been identified with the manner in which vehicle licenses/insurance have been monitored to date; however, management has advised that these will be addressed in the new monitoring and documentation process.

Recommendation 14

Handi-Transit should require all drivers to provide proof of a valid Province of Manitoba driver's license. In addition, Handi-Transit management should develop a process to obtain annual criminal record checks on all drivers. Drivers should be required to inform them of any changes in that status.

Handi-Transit should continue to monitor vehicle inspections and supplement this information with annual proof of vehicle license/insurance coverage.

Management response

Handi-Transit has implemented an annual process of requiring proof of a valid driver's license and criminal record check. Handi-Transit will continue to monitor vehicle inspections and proof of vehicle license/insurance coverage.

2. Adequacy of driver training should be reviewed.

During our interviews with contractor representatives, contractors believed that the policies and procedures manual they were provided with was good, but they noted that only a manual wheelchair is available in the classroom during Handi-Transit's training for demonstration purposes.

Presently, the contractors supplement the training provided by Handi-Transit with their own on-the-job training particularly with respect to the proper securing of the various mobility devices and sensitivity issues in working with the disabled. They advised that, on the job, they work with approximately twenty different types of wheelchairs and scooters with some including respiratory add-ons.

Recommendation 15

Handi-Transit management should review the training provided to new drivers to ensure it remains adequate and relevant. Specific attention should be paid to ensure that the securing of wheelchairs and scooters is adequately covered including the availability of equipment for demonstration purposes within the classroom.

Handi-Transit should evaluate the feasibility of providing a refresher course for any person who has been driving over a certain number of years.

Management response

Agreed.

3. Training provided to Handi-Transit personnel should be expanded.

The typical path for a new staff person to enter Handi-Transit is from regular Transit. Upon joining Handi-Transit, each person will receive on-the-job training and work with a mentor. Some staff have received the sensitivity training provided to the contractor drivers, but this is not standard.

While conducting our survey of Handi-Transit customers, we noted that customers were generally somewhat satisfied with the customer service representatives they spoke to on the telephone when booking and canceling rides. A few comments were received that indicated that representatives were occasionally blunt and did not always answer in a professional manner.

Recommendation 16

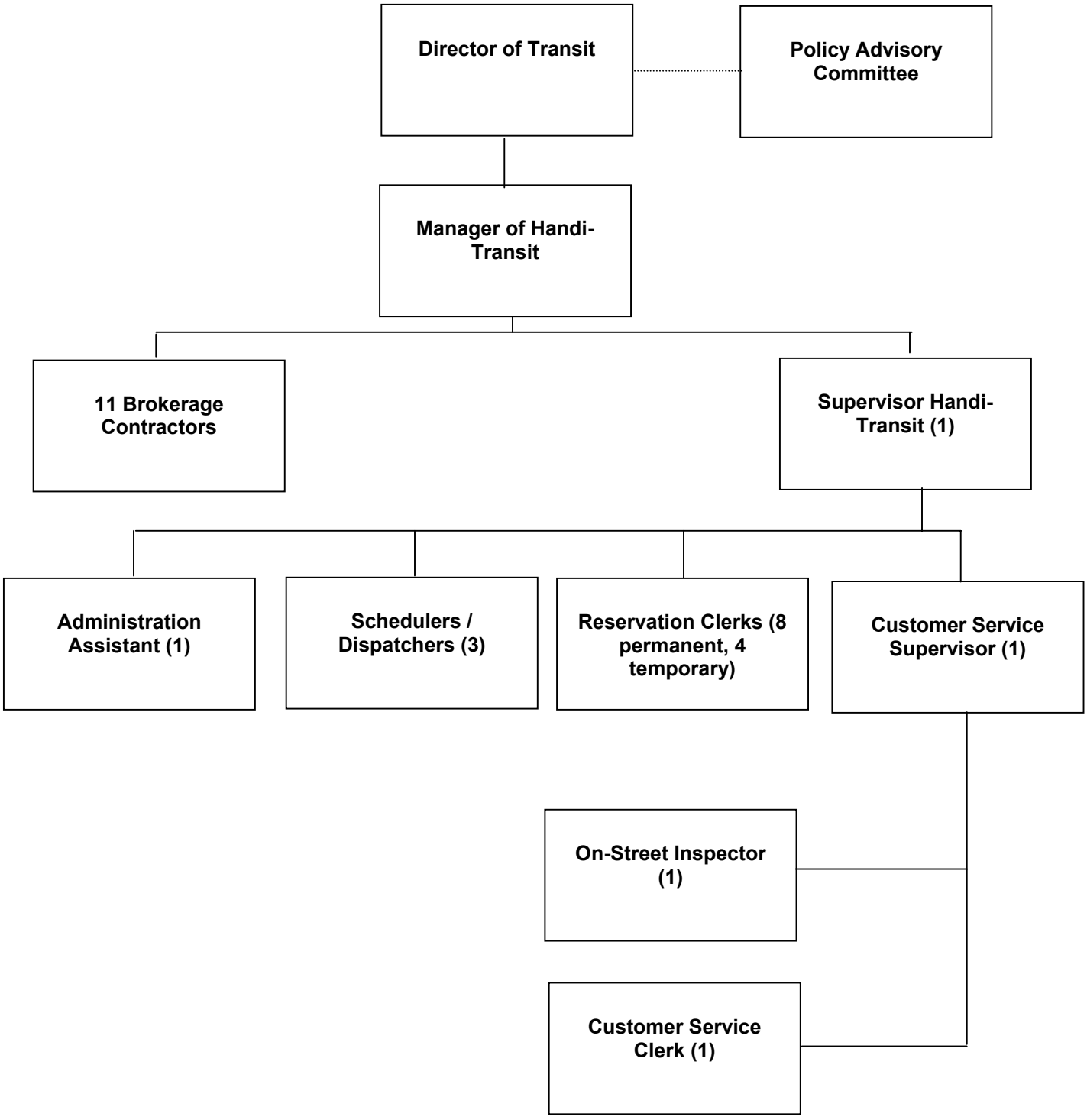
All Handi-Transit administrative personnel should receive basic customer service training including training on working with the disabled and the elderly.

Management response

Agreed.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Organizational Chart for Handi-Transit



Appendix 2: The Criteria of Control Model

> "*There is no such thing as perfect control and there is no such thing as free control… the challenge is to find the right balance*."—Michael Hammer

Since the objectives of our audit include assessing the adequacy of the control environment, we need to begin by explaining what we mean by control. Until recently, controllership was seen as the responsibility of financial staff, and was largely concerned with sound financial management. Modern controllership is based upon a much broader concept of control. It defines **controls** as all the elements that support the achievement of an organization's business objectives, and **risks** as obstacles that may inhibit or prevent an organization from achieving those objectives. Modern controllership consists of those aspects of management aimed at ensuring the organization is *in control*. The message is that *control is everybody's business.*

Formal or hard controls

- Regulations
- Policies
- Procedures
- Standards
- Direct supervision
- Duty segregation
- Physical security

But these controls alone do not guarantee organizational success. In the absence of a strong organizational culture, hard controls are not enough. Dramatic business failures in recent years have demonstrated that the best systems and processes are no substitute for an ethical workforce with competent leadership and clear objectives, staffed by people of integrity.

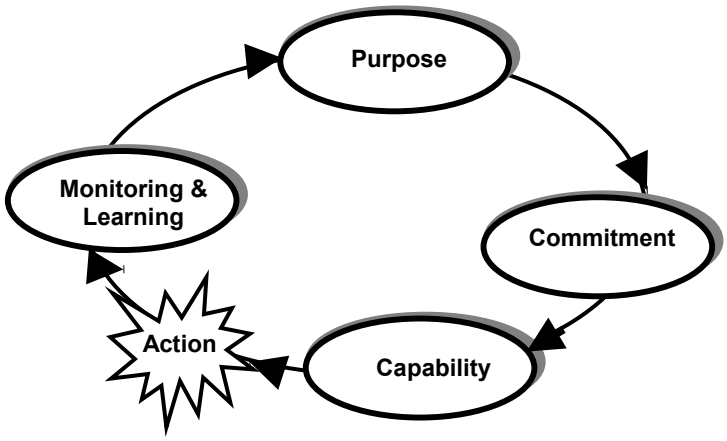
Informal or soft controls

- Ethical values
- Clear objectives
- Leadership
- Competence
- Communication
- Performance measures
- Reward systems

Taken together, the formal and informal controls comprise the main components of a modern management control system.

A *control framework* provides a way of understanding the important elements of control. We used the control framework developed by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants for the purposes of this review. The framework uses the *Criteria of Control (CoCo) Model* that employs twenty criteria and groups these into four essential components of control—*purpose, commitment, capability,* and *monitoring and learning*. The model suggests that effective control over these components is essential to ensure the achievement of business objectives.

The CoCo Model



These control components are found in successful organizations where people

Have a sense of **purpose**

- They know where they are going and how they want to get there.
- They understand risk and opportunity.

Have **commitment**

- They respect and trust each other.
- They share a common vision and sense of what is right and wrong.
- They understand and accept their responsibilities.

Have **capability**

- They know their jobs and have the right skills, tools and systems to get things done.

Monitor what they do and keep **learning**

- They constantly learn from what they do to make things better.

The C*riteria of Control* in the *CoCo Model* can be used as a basis for understanding control in any organization and for making judgments about the effectiveness of control. The twenty detailed C*riteria of Control* follow.

Detailed Criteria of Control

Purpose

A1 Objectives should be established and communicated.

A2 The significant internal and external risks are faced by an organization in the achievement of its objectives are identified and assessed.

A3 Policies designed to support the achievement of an organization's objectives and the management of its risks should be established, communicated and practised so that people understand what is expected of them and the scope of their freedom to act.

A4 Plans to guide efforts in achieving the organization's objectives should be established and communicated.

A5 Objectives and related plans should include measurable performance targets and indicators.

Commitment

B1 Shared ethical values, including integrity, should be established communicated and practised throughout an organization.

B2 Human resource policies and practices are consistent with an organization's ethical values and with the achievement of objectives.

B3 Authority, responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined and consistent with an organization's objectives so that decisions and actions are taken by the appropriate people.

B4 An atmosphere of mutual trust should be fostered to support the flow of information between people and their effective performance toward achieving the organization's objectives.

Capability

C1 People should have the necessary knowledge, skills and tools to support the achievement of an organization's objectives.

C2 Communication processes support the organization's values and the achievement of its objectives.

C3 Sufficient and relevant information should be identified and communicated in a timely manner to enable people to perform their assigned responsibilities.

C4 The decisions and actions of the different parts of the organization should be coordinated.

C5 Control activities should be designed as in integral part of the organization, taking into consideration its objectives, the risks to their achievement, and the inter-relatedness of control elements.

Monitoring and Learning

D1 External and internal environments should be monitored to obtain information that may signal a need to reevaluate an organization's objectives or procedures and processes.

D2 Performance should be monitored against the targets and indicators identified in the organization's objectives and business plans.

D3 The assumptions behind an organization's objectives should be periodically challenged.

D4 Information needs and related information systems are reassessed as objectives change or as reporting deficiencies are identified.

D5 Follow-up procedures should be established and performed to ensure appropriate change or action occurs.

D6 Management should periodically assesses the effectiveness of control in its organization and communicate the results to those to whom it is accountable.

Appendix 3: Summary of customer survey response

In March 2003, our office conducted a telephone survey of a small sample of Handi-Transit customers. The purpose of this survey was to obtain feedback directly from a sample of customers regarding all aspects of Handi-Transit services. The results of the survey assisted us in identifying areas for further review.

Fourteen customers were contacted regarding the survey and 11 (79%) responded. We found that customers were very willing to respond to our questions and are genuinely interested in assisting Handi-Transit to make improvements to the service. The sample selected was representative of all Handi-Transit customers in that approximately two-thirds were ambulatory and one-third were wheelchair or scooter customers. However, due to the small sample size, we will state results in general terms. Handi-Transit management has committed to undertaking a survey of a larger sample of customers to validate these results.

The majority of customers we spoke to take ten or more trips per month with Handi-Transit. Customers are generally pleased with the service overall and are very appreciative that it exists. Most advised that they are willing to tolerate some level of inconvenience, discomfort or challenge, as they do not have an alternative means of travel. Overall, forty-five percent were very satisfied, thirty-six percent were somewhat satisfied and eighteen percent were somewhat dissatisfied. The customers ranged from new to long-time registrants of Handi-Transit. Handi-Transit was unable to provide a ride at some time to all but one of the eleven people we spoke to. Most respondents also indicated that Handi-Transit had failed to pick them up on at least one occasion. The majority of customers advised that they are usually picked up and dropped off on time. Ninety-one percent of customers advised that drivers are usually courteous while, 9% advised that drivers are always courteous. Fifty-five percent of respondents noted that drivers are usually helpful; twenty-seven percent indicated that drivers are always helpful; and eighteen percent said that they are not very helpful.

Although the process of handling complaints/commendations appears to work very well on an individual basis, there were two common comments from almost all respondents. Customers have concerns with the efficiency of the new trip scheduling system and there is dissatisfaction with wait times involved with contacting Handi-Transit by telephone. The majority of customers are somewhat satisfied with the customer service representatives that take their calls. Eighteen percent were somewhat dissatisfied while nine percent were very satisfied.

Forty-five percent of customers we spoke to feel extremely safe when riding in Handi-Transit vehicles. Fifty-five percent generally feel safe. Fifty-five percent advised that they had felt unsafe at least once during a Handi-Transit ride.

Most respondents were aware that Winnipeg Transit offers low-floor bus service on fixed routes. Approximately one-half of these customers have ridden a low-floor bus at least once since becoming eligible for Handi-Transit. Customers also advised us of their concerns regarding barriers to Handi-Transit customers using low-floor bus service.

The above issues will be followed-up as part of the larger customer survey.

We thanked the respondents to our survey for taking the time to provide us with their comments.

Appendix 4: Customer survey questionnaire

I would like to start by getting some information on your experiences with Handi-Transit.

1. In a typical month, approximately how many rides do you take with Handi-Transit? (For the purposes of this question, count going to and from your destination as a single ride)
   - **a)** Less than once in a typical month
   - **b)** One or two times
   - **c)** Three to five times
   - **d)** Six to ten times
   - **e)** More than ten times a month

I would now like to ask you some questions regarding your experiences and expectations of various processes relating to Handi-Transit.

Registration Process

2. How would you rate the process of registering for Handi-Transit Services? (this relates to having your health care professional complete the application form and sending it to Handi-Transit*)*
   - **a)** Very satisfied
   - **b)** Somewhat satisfied
   - **c)** Somewhat dissatisfied
   - **d)** Very dissatisfied
   - **e)** Don't remember

Handi-Transit Information

3. Where would you find it most convenient to get information about Handi-Transit?
   - **f)** Brochure
   - **g)** Phone book
   - **h)** Website
   - **i)** Other (please specify _____) eg. Org'ns such as MLPD, CNIB

Booking a ride:

4. Has Handi-Transit ever been unable to provide your trip?
   - **a)** Yes
   - **b)** No

~~5.~~ On average, how long do you have to wait on the telephone to speak to a customer service representative?
   - ~~**a)**~~ Less than 3 minutes
   - **b)** 3 – 5 minutes
   - **c)** 5 – 10 minutes
   - **d)** More than 10 minutes

6. Did you ever have to wait on the phone so long that you hung up and tried again later?
   - **a)** Yes
   - **b)** No

7. Overall, how satisfied are you with the customer service representative(s) that take your call when booking a ride with Handi-Transit?
   a) Very satisfied
   b) Somewhat satisfied
   c) Somewhat dissatisfied
   d) Very dissatisfied

Confirming a ride:
Confirmation calls are required to give the passenger an accurate pick-up time.

8. Do you use the automated trip confirmation service or do you speak to one of our representatives to confirm your ride?
   a) Automated service
   b) Speak to a representative

9. Overall, how satisfied are you with the process of confirming rides with Handi-Transit?
   a) Very satisfied
   b) Somewhat satisfied
   c) Somewhat dissatisfied
   d) Very dissatisfied

Canceling a ride:
10. Have you ever called Handi-Transit to cancel a ride?
    a) Yes
    b) No (skip to question #12)

11. How satisfied were you with the process of canceling a ride with Handi-Transit?
    a) Very satisfied
    b) Somewhat satisfied
    c) Somewhat dissatisfied
    d) Very dissatisfied

12. Handi-Transit has a policy whereby if a ride is booked and confirmed but the rider either refuses the ride or isn't at the pick-up point up to 5 minutes after the pick-up time, the trip is considered a 'no show'. Are you aware of this policy and that if a rider does this without valid reasons, fines may be imposed?
    a) Yes
    b) No

Pick-up
13. Does the Handi-Transit vehicle pick you up on time and drop you off on time?
    a) Always
    b) Usually
    c) Sometimes
    d) Rarely
    e) Never

14. Has Handi-Transit ever failed to pick you up?
    a) Yes (Specify how many times _____)
    b) No

15. Generally speaking, are the Handi-Transit drivers:
    a) Always courteous
    b) Usually courteous
    c) Not very courteous
    d) Not at all courteous

16. Generally speaking, are the Handi-Transit drivers that pick you up and drop you off:
    a) Always helpful
    b) Usually helpful
    c) Not very helpful
    d) Not at all helpful

The ride

17. Does your Handi-Transit driver always: (Check all that apply)
    a) Ask if you need assistance with your seatbelt?
    b) Ensure that carry-on items are secure?
    c) Ensure mobility aids (wheelchairs, scooters, walkers etc.) are secured properly?

18. Have you ever felt unsafe during a ride on a Handi-Transit vehicle?
    a) Yes
    b) No (skip to question #20)

19. Why did you feel unsafe?
    a) The driver
    b) The way the vehicle was driven
    c) Another passenger
    d) Other (please specify) _____

20. Overall, how safe do you feel when riding in Handi-Transit vehicles?
    a) Extremely safe
    b) Generally safe
    c) Not very safe
    d) Not at all safe

Complaint/Commendation process

21. Have you ever filed a complaint/commendation with Handi-Transit?
    a) Yes
    b) No (skip to question #23)

22. How satisfied were you with the way the complaint/commendation was handled?
    a) Very satisfied
    b) Somewhat satisfied
    c) Somewhat dissatisfied
    d) Very dissatisfied

23. Overall, how would you rate the level of service you receive from Handi-Transit?
    a) Very satisfied
    b) Somewhat satisfied
    c) Somewhat dissatisfied
    d) Very dissatisfied

Low-floor buses

As you may be aware, Regular Transit is in the process of converting it's fleet to low-floor buses to improve accessibility for everyone. Transit refers to this as 'Easy Access Service'. In these last few questions we would like your help in assessing how well low-floor buses are servicing the disabled and elderly citizens of Winnipeg.

24. Were you aware that Regular Transit offers low-floor bus service?
    - **a)** Yes
    - **b)** No (skip to Question 26; question 25 is automatically 'No')

25. Since you became eligible for Handi-Transit, have you ever taken a low-floor bus in Winnipeg?
    - **a)** Yes
    - **b)** No

26. For you, what are the barriers to using low-floor buses?
    - **a)** Health reasons (physically unable to use them)
    - **b)** Low-floor buses don't service all routes
    - **c)** Weather / conditions at bus stops
    - **d)** Bus drivers are less knowledgeable than Handi-Transit drivers regarding your safety and sensitivity to your situation
    - **e)** Other passengers make you feel uncomfortable
    - **f)** Other (please specify) _____

Do you have any other comments you would like to make about Handi-Transit Services or low-floor bus services in Winnipeg?
