Minutes - Executive Policy Committee - June 16, 2004

Minute No. 426
Report - Standing Policy Committee on Public Works - June 8, 2004

Item No. 1 Amendment to the Handi-Transit No-Show Policy
File TT-1.3

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and submits the following to Council:

1. That the Handi-Transit "No-Show" policy be amended as follows:

   A. Handi-Transit will advise the customer by letter that a no-show has occurred and will be recorded on their file. A copy of the "no-show" policy will be attached, and the customer will be invited to contact Handi-Transit to discuss any special circumstances that may have accounted for the "no-show." If the customer contacts Handi-Transit, the no-show may be excused, if it is determined to be beyond the control of the customer.

   B. No fare or charge will be assessed for the first no-show.

   C. In cases where the customer does not show for the first part of a return trip, the return portion of the trip will be cancelled unless the customer has called Handi-Transit to confirm the return portion will be required.

   D. Each successive no-show in any rolling 6 month period* will be assessed an additional charge, which will increase by the value of one cash fare for each no-show (i.e. $1.80 for the 2nd no-show, $3.60 for the 3rd no-show, and $5.40 for the 4th no-show (based on Handi-Transit fares as of June 2004)).

   E. After 4 no-shows in a rolling 6-month period, each subsequent no-show will result in a $15 charge (approximately the cost to the City of providing a trip).

   F. If the customer's no-show "bill" exceeds $30.00, the customer will be suspended from further Handi-Transit service until such time as the customer's indebtedness has been eliminated. The customer will be notified by phone, with a mail follow-up, regarding his/her suspension, which will be effective 10 days from the date of mailing. The suspension will remain in effect until such "bill" owing has been paid, or 6 months, whichever is earlier.

Appeal Process

A. The customer can contact the Supervisor of Handi-Transit by phone, or in writing, to appeal a no-show.

B. If the customer feels that the appeal request has not been resolved in a satisfactory manner, the customer can appeal to the Manager of Handi-Transit in writing, providing his/her rationale for the appeal. The Manager will respond in writing within 2 weeks of receiving the appeal.

***Note:** A rolling 6-month period is the 6 months following the first no-show on the record. Any no-show automatically is expunged from the record 1 day after 6 months of it having occurred.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Report - Standing Policy Committee on Public Works - June 8, 2004

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Steeves,
That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works be concurred in and forwarded to Council.

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 8, 2004, the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works concurred in the administrative recommendation and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

REPORT

RE:	**Handi-Transit Revised No-Show Policy**
FOR SUBMISSION TO:	**The Standing Policy Committee on Public Works**
ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED BY:	**Rick Borland, Director of Transit**
REPORT DATE:	**May 10th, 2004**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the revised Handi-Transit "No-Show" Policy outlined in attachment 1 be approved.

REPORT SUMMARY:

- During any particular day, there are typically 25 to 40 Handi-Transit registrants who do not show up for their scheduled trip. These are referred to as "no-shows."
- As a result of a "no-show" occurring, the system capacity that could have been used to transport another registrant is wasted, resulting in wasted dollars and often an inability to accommodate another request.
- During 2003, the number of no-shows was 9,600. The number of no-shows was greater than the number of "unables" (6,600). Unables are the requests for service made prior to 11:00 AM the previous day that Handi-Transit is unable to accommodate as a result of limited system capacity and/or budget.
- The current "no-show" policy was developed by the Handi-Transit Policy Advisory Committee in 1996 and approved by Council that same year, and reconfirmed by Council in 2000 as a component of the "Handi-Transit Policy and Guidelines" document approved on October 18th, 2000.
- The current "no-show" policy has proven to be non-functional as a result of the extremely heavy administrative burden it places on the Handi-Transit staff. This has resulted in the current policy not being applied effectively to discourage abuse of the system.
- The recommended revised "no-show" policy outlined in attachment 1 will be more effective in discouraging abuse of the system, and administratively more manageable.

Implications of the Recommendation:

General Implications:

	None
	For the organization overall and/or for other departments
X	For the community and/or organizations external to the City of Winnipeg

	Involves a multi-year contract

Comment: The new policy will have an impact on a limited number of Handi-Transit registrants who currently abuse the system by not showing up for their scheduled trips.

Policy implications:

	No
X	Yes

Comment: The revised "no-show" policy will replace the current policy approved in 1996, and reconfirmed by Council as part of its Handi-Transit Policies and Guidelines document approved on October 18th, 2000.

Environmental Implications:

X	No
	Yes

Comment:

Human Resources Implications:

X	No
	Yes

Comment:

Financial Implications:

X	Within approved current and/or capital budget
	Current and/or capital budget adjustment required

Comment:

REASON FOR THE REPORT:

The revised "no-show" policy recommended for approval replaces a previous policy approved in 1996 and reconfirmed by Council on October 18th, 2000.

HISTORY:

In 1996 The Handi-Transit Policy Advisory Committee developed a "no-show" policy in an attempt to deal with an excessive abuse of the Handi-Transit system resulting from registrants not showing up for their scheduled trips.

On October 18th, 2000 Council reconfirmed this policy as a component of its Handi-Transit Policies and Guidelines document.

DISCUSSION:

The current "no-show" policy places an excessive burden on the Handi-Transit administration to contact the "no-show" violators (25 to 40 per day) by phone and discuss the circumstances surrounding the event, the reasons for the "no-show" and ways it can be avoided in the future. The phone call is to be followed up by a letter summarizing the discussion and decisions made. Because of the number of no-shows occurring each day, and the pressures on the staff of Handi-Transit due to the high demand for service, this process is simply not possible.

The current "no-show" policy is outlined below:

11. CURRENT 'NO-SHOW" POLICY

11.1 Definitions

1) *Consumer Responsibility*
   A no-show is defined as consumer responsibility when a person sets an appointed pick up time with Handi-Transit, confirms that time, and then refuses the ride when it arrives or is not present, without legitimate cause. A cancellation prior to 30 minutes of the scheduled pick up is not considered a No-Show.

2) *System Error*
   A system error, in which Handi-Transit could not fulfill their service commitment, includes equipment failure, staff error, miscommunication, etc.

11.2 Actions When a No-Show Occurs

1) *Handi-Transit will telephone the customer and discuss why the appointment was missed. Circumstances surrounding the event and reasons for the No-Show will be discussed to determine if this was a customer or a system No-Show.*

2) *Ways to avoid future situations will also be discussed. This may include asking the customer if there is a person or organization that could provide support to the customer to minimize the possibility of future No-Shows.*

3) *Handi-Transit will follow up the conversation with a letter (along with a copy of the No-Show Policy) to the customer summarizing the discussion and decisions made.*

4) *The standard cash fare will be charged for each Customer No-Show.*

5) *In cases where the customer does not show for the first part of a return trip, the return portion of the trip will be cancelled unless the customer has called Handi-Transit.*

6) *After the fourth Customer No-Show within the last six months, the customer will be notified in writing and charged a penalty of $10.00 in addition to the cash fare.*

7) *If the customer refuses to pay the cash fare and penalty within 60 days, or if the Customer No-Shows reach a total of five within the last six months, a Review Committee (a panel of 3 Handi-Transit Users from the Operations Advisory Committee) will review the case with the customer and a representative from Handi-Transit. The customer will be notified by mail of the initiation of this process. Organizations or individuals may be invited at the request of the customer.*

8) *The Review Committee will assess the situation and determine an appropriate response on a case-by-case basis and may consider an educational approach, involve outside assistance, or impose a suspension of services for a limited time period.*

9) *For customers who repeatedly come before the Review Committee, a progressive approach will be taken to develop appropriate action.*

10) *The Review Committee will notify the customer in writing within 10 days after the hearing.*

11.3 Appeal Process

Step One: *The customer can contact the Supervisor of Handi-Transit to appeal a No-Show. If the customer feels that the appeal request has not been resolved in a satisfactory manner, the consumer can go to the next step of the appeal process, which involves a review by an outside panel.*

Step Two: *The Review Committee will hear the customer's appeal and make a decision regarding the appropriate action if required. Appeals may be made in writing within 60 days of notification. The customer will be notified in writing within ten days of the hearing.*

Under the current policy, once the number of "no-shows" reaches 5 in a six month period, a panel of users is empowered to review the case with the customer and determine an appropriate course of action on a case-by-case basis. For repeat offenders, a progressive approach is to be taken.

Because of the involvement of a panel of users in this process and the time frames involved, this component of the current policy has also proved non-functional.

The revised policy that is recommended, deals with the practical limitations of the current policy by leaving the process in the hands of the Handi-Transit administration. Under the proposed policy, a progressive approach would be taken in dealing with "no-show" abusers of the system. After 4 "no-shows" (for which no acceptable explanation has been provided) in a rolling 6 month period, a $15 charge would be assessed for each further "no-show."

If a registrant's "no-show bill" exceeds $30, they will be suspended until the bill is paid, or six months, which ever occurs first. Once the bill has been paid, the registration will be reactivated immediately. The theory behind the $15 charge is that this is approximately the present cost of providing a Handi-Transit ride, and the money collected can be used to accommodate another request, which could have been accommodated in the first place if the "no-show" had not occurred. An appeal process is also contained in the recommended policy.

Financial Impact Statement **Date:** May 10, 2004

COMMENTS: There is no financial impact regarding this policy change. The objective of the policy change is to provide a policy that is administratively workable and discourages the waste of valuable Handi-Transit resources.

J Ruby

Acting Manager of Finance & Administration

IN PREPARING THIS REPORT THERE WAS CONSULTATION WITH:

Handi-Transit Policy Advisory Committee
Manitoba League for Persons With Disabilities – Transportation Coalition Committee

THIS REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

Department: Transit Department
Division: Handi-Transit
Prepared by: Rick Borland

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Appendix 1 - Revised "No Show" Policy - May 10th, 2004

When a "No-Show" Occurs:

1. Handi-Transit will advise the customer by letter that a no-show has occurred and will be recorded on their file. A copy of the "no-show" policy will be attached, and the customer will be invited to contact Handi-Transit to discuss any special circumstances that may have accounted for the "no-show." If the customer contacts Handi-Transit, the no-show may be excused, if it is determined to be beyond the control of the customer.

2. No fare or charge will be assessed for the first no-show.

3. In cases where the customer does not show for the first part of a return trip, the return portion of the trip will be cancelled unless the customer has called Handi-Transit to confirm the return portion will be required.

4. Each successive no-show in any rolling 6 month period* will be assessed an additional charge, which will increase by the value of one cash fare for each no-show (i.e. $1.80 for the 2nd no-show, $3.60 for the 3rd no-show, and $5.40 for the 4th no-show (based on Handi-Transit fares as of June, 2004)).

5. After 4 no-shows in a rolling 6 month period, each subsequent no-show, will result in a $15 charge (approximately the cost to the City of providing a trip).

6. If the customer's no-show "bill" exceeds $30.00, the customer will be suspended from further Handi-Transit service until such time as the customer's indebtedness has been eliminated. The customer will be notified by phone, with a mail follow-up, regarding his/her suspension, which will be effective 10 days from the date of mailing. The suspension will remain in effect until such "bill" owing has been paid, or 6 months, whichever is earlier.

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Step Two – If the customer feels that the appeal request has not been resolved in a satisfactory manner, the customer can appeal to the Manager of Handi-Transit in writing, providing his/her rationale for the appeal. The Manager will respond in writing within 2 weeks of receiving the appeal.

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