

## **Meeting Notes, Custom Transit Roundtable, “Beyond the Boundaries”**

**Moderators – Bob Allen, Farwest handyDART, Victoria, & Brian Warner, Regional District of Nanaimo**

Phil - P.N.A Transit Ltd., Port Alberni	Stephanie – Township Transit, Abbotsford
Mel – Farwest Transit Services, Kelowna	Andrea - Township Transit, Abbotsford
Jim – Translink	Darren – Watson & Ash, Campbell River
Cliff – Five Five Transport, Quesnel	Steve – BC Transit
Sherry - Five Five Transport, Quesnel	Sharman – Trail Transit Services
Cathy – Carefree Society, Prince George	Dianne - Farwest Transit Services, Kamloops
Monica - Carefree Society, Prince George	Tom - Translink
Laura – Regional District of Nanaimo	Alvin – Farwest Group
Marj – Sunshine Coast Regional District	Lillian – Pacific Transit Cooperative, Vancouver
Oreen – Cranbrook Transit	Debbie – Princeton Community Services

### **Ambulatory passengers on lift**

Customer must be seated on an approved walker with seat and working brakes.

### **Staffing**

Properties having difficulty finding and retaining experienced employees.

### **Eligibility criteria**

Operators are limited in what information they can ask from the customer at the time of registration. Human Rights laws protect people from having to give some personal information. However you can always ask if there is some particular piece of information you feel you need, and the customer may or may not provide it to you.

### **Suitability of Polar vehicle**

Vehicles cannot fit in some driveways. In such cases almost all communities have rules that ask customers to meet the bus on the street. Steve Segal is going back east to view newer types of custom accessible vehicles that are coming onto the market, of which there are a few low floor examples, to see if any will suit our needs.

### **Manual vs. software for dispatch**

With smaller systems it is quicker to use pen and paper than software. Some systems have designed spreadsheets to use.

### **Training**

Resources for training are not sufficient to keep up with new types of mobility aids. Training time for new operators ranges from 4 to 15 days depending on the size of the operation. Steve handed out a new training video disc and announced that a BC Transit Train the Trainer session will be held in May of 2007. New Custom Transit Driver's Manuals are also being developed which could possibly be ready for the session in May. To save training funds Victoria handyDART allows new applicants that have been approved for training, ride along on a regular run, to ensure that the duties are what the applicant is expecting.

### **Large wheelchairs and small drivers**

Safety is the determining factor when moving mobility aids. If a driver is concerned for the safety of himself or the customer then assistance should be sought either from the dispatch office, another driver or a friend or relative of the customer. There are private companies that make a small portable ramp to assist with large w/c onto curbs.

### **Loading wheelchairs through back door vs. side door**

Steve said that loading through the rear of the vehicle is common with all of the BC Transit custom buses in the province except 3 or 4 Navistars.

### **Types of guide animals**

Some properties are encountering new kinds of guide animals from snakes to monkeys. In some cases guide dogs have been trained to ride the lift with visually impaired mobility aid users by placing their front paws on the customers shoulder and the back paws straddling the customers feet or resting on the foot pads.

### **Lift capacity**

If the lift rises from the ground then stops the driver should accept that the capacity has been exceeded and not try to 'help' it past this point. Drivers are expected to accompany all customers while on the lift. Lift capacity is never to be exceeded, as this is a safety issue.

### **Scooters**

New challenges are created for the drivers as scooter design continually changes. It has been determined by some operators that some of the newer inexpensive types sold in department stores cannot be safely secured. Is the WC19 code something that BC Transit should incorporate into its safety guidelines and procedures? Each operating company should develop a relationship with the mobility aid vendor in their community which helps to stay apprised of new technology. This also helps our customers if the mobility aid shops are familiar with our standards.

### **Job applicants**

It is becoming common for operating companies to have physical fitness standards for their new driver applicants and have built this into their hiring procedures.

### **Short restraint belts on lifts**

Most operating companies have not had complaints about the length of the restraint belts on Braun lifts, but those sites that have may have been sent vehicles that need a retrofit. Fleet support should be contacted to ensure that these belt lengths are the same in all vehicles. Safety features cannot be bypassed, and mobility aids must be loaded facing into the bus and restraint belts on the lift must be used.

### **Driver seats**

The driver seats in vehicles designated as Community Buses are what the vehicle manufacturer issues as standard equipment. Unlike handyDART operators these drivers are in the seat almost as much as conventional operators. The seats wear out and it is very hard to find an upholstery shop that can rebuild them correctly which eventually leads to driver complaints. Those companies that have driver complaints should go through their OH & S committees.