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1. Introduction

1.1 About BC Transit

BC Transit is one of the most robust and complex public transportation services in British Columbia. Serving every part of B.C. except the Lower Mainland, this provincial crown corporation has more than 2,900 transit professionals across the province and oversees a fleet of 1,200-plus vehicles in 57 transit systems, serving 51 million riders annually. More than 130 communities, including First Nations, Regional Districts and Municipalities, depend on BC Transit to meet their unique transportation needs.

BC Transit's 25-year Transit Future plan embraces direct feedback from customers, resulting in a vision for supporting the need to grow economic vitality, preserve green integrity and develop liveable neighborhoods that demonstrate the integration of all sustainable modes of transportation.

1.2 Experience to Date

BC Transit has a long history of working to make transit more accessible for all residents of British Columbia. As the definition of accessibility has evolved, BC Transit strives to continuously improve and evolve to better meet the needs of our customers. The following is the history of transit's different facets of accessibility from service delivery to employment to infrastructure.

handyDART

In 1981, the first handyDART systems were launched in BC for people with a disability were in Prince George, Kamloops, Kelowna and Victoria. We added an additional five systems in 1982 and now, in 2023, we have 27 systems with handyDART service.

handyDART, by BC Transit definition, requires customers to register in order to use the program and provides door-to-door service. We also offer 'On Request' service which does not require registration and provides curb-to-curb service to customers. We currently have 26 systems that offer a form of On Request service.

IDEA Journey

In 2021, driven by the commitment to becoming an even more accessible and inclusive employer, BC Transit started its Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) journey by:

- Co-creating an IDEA vision and a roadmap for implementation;
- Conducting external scans and internal assessments to learn about the makeup of BC Transit's workforce (through Diversity Demographic Surveys), current IDEA practices (through an IDEA Best Practices Assessment) and levels of inclusion (through an Inclusion Survey);

- Implementing a mandatory IDEA training for all people leaders on inclusion literacy, unconscious bias, intercultural fluency, how to be an ally and offering IDEA learning opportunities for employees, including webinars, lunch and learn sessions, e-learning courses and “Insights Discovery training” to capitalize on communication diversities and preferences and enhance team dynamics;
- Creating communications and social media stories highlighting employees’ experiences of diversity and inclusion at BC Transit (this includes Strategic Talent Attraction Specialist Adam Bishop’s [video](#) as part of the [Presidents Group](#) Disability Video Series)
- Facilitating accessible recruitment and applying Gender Based Analysis + (GBA+) lens to eliminate gender biases in job descriptions and postings;
- Having BC Transit’s CEO joining the Presidents Group, a network made of change-driven BC business leaders who are champions for more accessible and inclusive workplaces.
- Partnering with WorkBC and the Presidents Group to promote a more diverse and inclusive workforce;
- Participating in the Presidents Group Pledge to Measure by capturing data on the number of employees with disabilities. The overall disability results are shared on the Presidents Group website every.
- Supporting employee-driven initiatives and highlighting accessibility and inclusion key dates and movements.

In April 2022, BC Transit established an IDEA Forum, a diverse and cross-functional group of employees that comes together monthly to discuss and action matters related to diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility at BC Transit. Employees who identify as having a disability are part of this Forum.

The IDEA Forum works on initiatives and recommendations across three domains:

- **Capacity Building:** Develop an engaging IDEA culture that builds trust, participation, and inclusion;
- **Communication and Engagement:** Act as IDEA champions to drive genuine two-ways dialogue, engage with peers, bring back ideas and feedback to establish a shared understanding of IDEA across BC Transit, identify barriers, opportunities and practical solutions to support workplace equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion;
- **Feedback and Advice:** Provide support, feedback and advice to various IDEA Working Groups responsible for advancing IDEA Priorities for the organization.

GBA+

GBA+ is analyzing how people of different genders and other intersecting factors are affected by decisions and understanding how different types of people may experience the same situation differently. GBA+ has been identified as one of BC Transit’s Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) priorities for 2022/23, is a key activity in the 2022/23 Corporate Business Plan and is outlined as an expectation in BC Transit’s Mandate Letter from the Province.

BC Transit completed a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) Strategy in 2022. The Strategy identifies four pillars: education and engagement, collaboration and cross-organizational awareness, data collection and analysis and recommendations and action areas. BC Transit has advanced GBA+ by:

- Establishing a GBA+ Working Group, led by Corporate Strategy and with members from Transit Planning, Enterprise Data and Analytics, Safety and Standards, and Infrastructure.
- Adding demographic questions to public surveys to better understand the transit experience for different customer groups.
- Developing a Transit Experience and Inclusion survey to understand any barriers to taking transit, or any ways BC Transit can make its services more accessible and inclusive to the wide range of customers it serves.
- Encouraging uptake of the Government of Canada GBA+ training.

BC Transit GBA+ Working Group has identified three goals:

- Make transit experience more inclusive for everyone.
- Eliminate barriers in taking transit.
- Improve understanding of what would make our services more inclusive to customers.

ATAC

ATAC (Accessible Transit Advisory Committee) is currently only in operation in the Greater Victoria area. Created in 2018, the purpose of ATAC is to advise the Victoria Regional Transit Commission and BC Transit on transit for persons with a disability in the Victoria Region, including review and comment on plans, projects and operating policy and guidelines.

Infrastructure

One of the main goals of the recent Victoria Administration Building (VAB) renovation project, which successfully concluded in spring 2022, was to increase accessibility and support diversity and inclusion by removing and preventing accessibility barriers. The building now has some new accessible and inclusive features, including:

- Elevator;
- Accessible wayfinding signage, including right-hand braille;
- Accessible shower;
- Roll under countertops and sinks in the kitchens;
- Multi height eating areas;
- Appliances installed at heights that align with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
- Adjustable sit-stand workstations;
- ADA compliant heights for all light switches;
- Power touchless automatic door openers for washrooms, entry and exits;
- Improvements on entrance "grade" change (gradual elevation).

Another new feature is universal and accessible single-occupancy washrooms. Universal washrooms are an important part of making our workplace safe, accessible and welcoming for people of all abilities and for those who don't feel safe or welcome in washrooms designated for men or women only. Providing accessible and inclusive spaces and features is an essential step in BC Transit's IDEA journey.

1.3 Acknowledgments

We acknowledge with respect that BC Transit delivers our mission on the ancestral territories of Indigenous Peoples across British Columbia, and their historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Internal Staff

BC Transit would like to thank the internal staff who have a passion for continuous improvement and accessibility. Every department has engaged in making all element of BC Transit more accessible, from our service to the workplace.

Accessibility Community

BC Transit would also like to acknowledge the open dialogue and support channels provided by Crown Agencies and accessibility experts around BC. Through consultations, feedback, and lived experience, there has been an overwhelming involvement and passion driving our plan.

2. Framework Guiding our Work

2.1 BC Transit Core Values

At BC Transit, our employees live by our six core values:

1. Safety
2. Innovation
3. Customer service
4. Teamwork
5. Trust & respect
6. Community

3. About our Committee

In collaboration with other crown agencies across BC, the framework for the committee was built by encompassing inclusivity across the organization. The Committee is comprised of eight

members. Four members are appointed from internal positions that directly support areas of transit dealing with accessibility and touch on our three main buckets both internal and external:

- People
- Service
- Built environment

These people have shown passion towards an accessible organization and the work they have already done in this realm. The remaining four members were appointed through an expression of interest, highlighting the need for people who are passionate and want to take action in creating positive change.

4. Consultations/Research Conducted

Since 2020, BC Transit has commissioned Leger to conduct an annual study of users to measure handyDART usage as well as gauge satisfaction with the service.

The main objectives of the study are:

- Understand the current usage of handyDART and regular bus service
- Understand awareness, perceptions and usage needs of supplemental taxi programs
- Gauge satisfaction with handyDART service
- Identify key opportunities for service expansion
- Identify demographic factors tied to satisfaction levels
- Identify the preferred method of trips booking and management

The Key Findings of the survey for 2023 are:

- handyDART ridership remains stable compared to 2022
- handyDART service availability remains the same
- handyDART users continue to be satisfied overall with the service provided, with a directional increase from 2022
- 31% riders are interested in electronic payments or using a website/app to book handyDART trips, a direction increase of 3-points from 28% last year
- Awareness, use, and satisfaction with the Taxi Saver program saw slight decrease

IDEA

In summer 2022, BC Transit conducted an Inclusion Survey to invite feedback from all employees regarding their experience working at BC Transit and to learn about how inclusive and accessible our workplace is for our employees.

The results of the survey have highlighted that employees have different experience(s) within BC Transit's culture.

Because of this, the IDEA Forum is exploring that more through facilitated focus groups. One of the survey's top areas of focus is People with Disabilities and to validate the results and provide further information and insight on inclusion in the workplace, the IDEA Forum has invited employees who identify as having a disability to participate in focus groups.

Focus Groups have been facilitated in April 2022 and the IDEA Forum is currently reviewing the results, developing a report with specific recommendations to improve the experience of colleagues with disabilities and colleagues who belong to additional inequity experiencing groups.

GBA+

In summer 2023, BC Transit developed a Transit Experience and Inclusion Survey. The purpose of this survey is to understand how different people experience transit. The survey was developed by the GBA+ Working Group and was reviewed by the IDEA Forum. The survey was launched as a pilot to employees in May/June 2023 and will be launched to the public in August 2023.

Infrastructure

In January 2023, BC Transit retained Meaningful Access Consulting (MAC) to conduct an accessibility review of the Victoria Administration Building (VAB) to determine if Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Certification could be obtained and if additional accessibility improvements were needed. It was determined by the consultant that the VAB could proceed with RHFAC (Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification) adjudication process to become RHFAC certified without further building modifications. The consultant identified four key areas BC Transit would need to complete in order to obtain RHFAC Gold Certification. Investments will be made over time in an effort to achieve Gold Certification. This consultant also conducted a review of the on-street infrastructure design guides and provided recommendations for improved accessibility.

5. Barriers Identified

5.1 People

Internal Surveys (IDEA/GBA+)

The 2022 Inclusion Survey results identify the following key themes:

- Respondents who identified as living with a disability were less likely to rate top-2 box with 9 of the metrics compared to those who were not living with a disability.
- Only 63% of Disabled Persons rated top 2-box when asked if they were encouraged to contribute compared to 74% of those not living with a disability.

- Comfortable speaking out is an area of focus for the organization, however, for Disabled Persons only 44% of respondents felt comfortable speaking out (top 2-box) compared to 58% of those who did not identify as living with a disability.
- For those respondents who were unsure whether they were living with a disability, 3 metrics fell below 40%. While all respondents scored psychological safety low, only 36% of employees who were unsure if they were living with a disability rated this statement top-2 box.

The following key themes emerged from the internal pilot of the Transit Experience and Inclusion Survey and these will be compared with the results from the external survey being conducted in summer 2023:

- People with disabilities were more likely to have experienced incidents or harassment or safety while using transit
- Having seats available while using transit was a top priority for people with disabilities
- Most respondents who indicated that they had a disability indicated they felt neutral or somewhat dissatisfied with the accessibility of public transit vehicles and bus stops for people with disabilities.

5.2 Service

handyDART

The handyDART service is often forgotten when projects are developed and therefore frequently fall out of scope for implementation. This can be seen in regard to service span and payment options.

The BC Bus Pass program, which supplements low-income earners in obtaining an annual bus pass, is not allowed to be used on a handyDART bus limiting those with a disability to pay more to ride transit than those without.

ATAC

Currently, the ATAC meetings are held during the day at the Victoria Transit Centre. This provides limitations on who can apply to be a member, if they have a job, and can be a physical barrier for those who don't live near the transit center. Presentations are often done in PowerPoint or on a visual display and forethought to include a mechanism for those who are sight impaired is often forgotten.

5.3 Built environment

Infrastructure

Meaningful Access Consulting identified the following items that are required if BC Transit desires that the VAB be RHFAC Certified Gold:

- Audible and visual fire alarms are required in all shared and private (e.g. washroom) areas.
- Signage needs to be adjusted and additional signs are required to provide a consistent wayfinding strategy. This includes tactile signs mounted on the latch side of doors (e.g. washrooms, emergency exits, first aid room), blade signage down long hallways and wayfinding indicators at decision points.
- Tactile indicators need to be added to the exterior steps at the main entrance as well as the stairs descending from the public parking area to the staff parking area.
- A portable assistive listening device (FM system or hearing loop) is required to be available at reception for use in any meeting room. An FM system allows auditory information to be transmitted directly into someone's hearing aid or cochlear implant via a microphone.

The first three items would aid people who have vision loss or low vision navigating the building. The fourth item would improve the ability for people who have hearing loss to hear the speaker during group meetings.

The consultant also reviewed BC Transit's design guide for on-street infrastructure and provided recommendations which BC Transit is considering incorporating in future design guide updates. The recommendations included:

- Minor adjustments to bus stop layouts
- Standard tactile surfaces
- Standard tactile/braille and digital/auditory elements featured at bus stops

The Infrastructure Design Guide is reviewed regularly, and the consultant's recommendations will be considered for future updates. BC Transit is not responsible for the design and construction of bus stops however we do provide government agencies with design recommendations which they may or may not incorporate into the final construction.

Our 3-Year Plan

Our plan is based on the 6 guiding principles:

- Inclusion
- Adaptability
- Diversity
- Collaboration
- Self-determination
- Universal design

6.1 People

1	Continue to provide accessibility related training and inclusion learning opportunities to all BC Transit leaders and employees.	2023 - ongoing
2	Continue to promote Accessibility awareness key dates (including National Access Ability Week, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Disability Employment Month etc.)	2023 - ongoing
3	Continue to be a member of the Presidents Group and participate in the Pledge to Measure by capturing and sharing data on the number of employees with disabilities.	2023 - ongoing
4	Continue to be a member of the Inclusive Employer Hiring Hub which focuses on offering employment to people with disabilities.	2023 - ongoing
5	Conduct an Inclusion Survey every two years to learn how accessible and inclusive BC Transit is for its employees.	2024
6	Review internal policies, procedures and processes to identify barriers and opportunities to increase accessibility in recruitment and retention.	2024-2025
7	Provide accessibility training to the Strategic Talent Attraction Team to ensure adaptability in making the recruitment process more accessible and inclusive.	2024-2025
8	Train relevant employees on the National Accessible Design for the Built Environment standards in capital planning for facilities and the built environment.	2023-2025
9	Conduct a Transit Experience and Inclusion Survey to understand how different people experience transit and make recommendations for implementation	2023-2024
10	Create a GBA+ online course specific to BC Transit for MyPath.	TBD

6.2 Service

1	Develop system specific annual surveys to determine opportunities for improvement	2023 - ongoing
2	Purchase provincial dispatch software solution that allows on-line booking and improved efficiencies to optimize bus capacity	2023 - 2024
3	Update BC Transit website information to make information on handyDART more accessible and easier to navigate	2023
4	Create proactive presentation opportunities to share information on the accessibility of transit – both conventional and custom	2023 - ongoing
5	Create standards for accessibility training requirements for all subcontracted operations provincially	2024

6.3 Built environment

Infrastructure

1	Accessibility consultant to provide review and recommendations of Infrastructure design guidelines	2023
2	Incorporate and update guidelines with respect to on street infrastructure and all buildings	2023 - 2024
3	New construction and major renovations will exceed BC Building code where possible	Ongoing
4	Build to CSA Standards <i>B651-18 Accessible design for the built environment</i>	Ongoing
5	Incorporate Rick Hansen certification through new construction design process	2023 - Ongoing
6	Educate internal stakeholders how to advance accessibility in all projects where possible	2024 - Ongoing
7	Create standard training for internal stakeholders responsible for infrastructure projects	2024
8	Review existing facilities (provincially) based on Rick Hansen audit findings and allocate funds to increase accessibility	2024-2025

Website, Digital, and Media Content.

1	Research and Knowledge repository of articles in relation to ongoing accessibility best practices for digital content	2023 - ongoing
2	Adding description alt tags to images on our website to better support people with visual impairments	2023 - ongoing
3	Reviewing and changing links with inaccessible language – Transition from language like “Click Here” to “Service Alerts”	2023 - ongoing
4	Researching new Alerts System which include accessibility updates such as higher contrast colours and large, visually distinct buttons	2023 - ongoing
5	Public facing videos require a custom SRT file (enabling programmed, more accurate closed captions)	2022 - ongoing
6	Leverage RGD standards for accessible graphic design of website content	2023 - ongoing
7	Research better text-to-speech tools in digital pdf reports	2024-2025
8	Collaboration with the President’s Group Marketing and Communications to stay up-to-date on best practices	2023 - ongoing

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

Our Voice of the Rider surveys are done six times annually. Each quarter, we have a shorter Transit Rating Survey that gives us feedback and bi-annually we send out a more comprehensive Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The focus for evaluation of the committee will be internal metrics to measure the percentage of response to the total number of feedback instances. To ensure timeliness, this will be done in conjunction with a metric that measures the aging of requests to ensure that responses are done within the quarter that the feedback was given.

7. How to Give Us Feedback

Please provide us feedback on our plan. A braille version of the plan can be requested through any of our feedback channels listed below. We will be updating our plan in the new year of 2024, incorporating feedback we receive from the public.

Feedback can be provided by:

Phone: (250) 382-6161

Email: bctransitaccessibility@bctransit.com

Mail: 520 Gorge Rd East, Victoria, BC, V8W 9T5

The Accessibility Committee will respond to feedback on a quarterly basis (Jan, Apr, Jul, Oct) by working with our internal subject matter experts. We will look to incorporate ideas where feasible, integrate with our surveys, and update our plan where applicable. Our plan will be revised, updated, and approved through our senior leadership team on a yearly basis.