

Request for Decision

2010 Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit, Handi Transit Services

Presented To:	Audit Committee
Presented:	Tuesday, Aug 09, 2011
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Type:	Presentations
File Number:	2010GRTH07B

Recommendation

The Auditor General recommends that:

1. Recommendations in the attached Auditor General's report entitled "2010 Audit Of Greater Sudbury Transit Services - Handi Transit" be adopted.
 2. This report be forwarded to the City's Transit Committee for information.
 3. This report be forwarded to the City's Accessibility Committee for information.
- (See attached report)

Signed By

Auditor General
Brian Bigger
Auditor General
Digitally Signed Aug 2, 11

Auditor General's Office

Audit Committee Report

2010

***Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit
Services***

Handi Transit

Brian Bigger, C.G.A

Auditor General, City of Greater Sudbury

2010 Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit Services Handi Transit

Audit Overview

Fieldwork Complete Date:	December 14, 2010
Draft Report Date:	March 2, 2011
Final Report Date:	July 12, 2011
To:	Roger Sauve, Director Transit Services
From:	Brian Bigger, Auditor General
Audit Number:	2010GRTH07B

Summary

Attached is the Auditor General's report entitled "2010 Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit Services - Handi Transit".

The objective of the audit was to evaluate the quality of stewardship and opportunities to enhance value for money in operations through more effective, economical and/or efficient management of Handi Transit Services.

It is clear that the City's has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to improving accessibility. With significant guidance and support of the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Transit Committee, Transit Services accessible transportation initiatives have resulted in very high levels of satisfaction being expressed by Handi Transit users. In fact, The City of Greater Sudbury's Handi Transit services have been so successful, that demand has grown by 40 percent since 2005, to deliver 117,799 rides in 2009. Over the same time period, operating costs increased by 51 percent (\$908,000), averaging ten percent per year. The Auditors have noted that the Total Operating Cost of this program was \$1.8 million in 2005, however, if the rate of growth observed between 2001 and 2009 continues, this program could cost in excess of \$4.8 million per year by 2015.

The attached report contains six recommendations along with a management response to each of the recommendations.

Recommendations

The Auditor General recommends that:

1. Recommendations in the attached Auditor General's report entitled "2010 Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit Services - Handi Transit" be adopted.
2. This report be forwarded to the City's Transit and Accessibility Committees for information.

Financial Impact

Audit Impacts

Implementing the recommendations contained in this report will improve management's ability to manage the balance between satisfying the continuous growth in demand for services, and the perceived value for money achieved through Handi Transit operations.

The extent of any resources required or potential cost savings resulting from implementing the recommendations in this report is not determinable at this time; however, annual savings exceeding \$275,000 could be achieved if Transit Services successfully encouraged a 10% shift of eligible user rides to our conventional transit system.

Comments

The Auditor General's report entitled "2010 Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit Services - Handi Transit" is attached as Appendix 1. Management's response to each of the recommendations contained in this report is attached as Appendix 2.

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Signature



Brian Bigger, Auditor General

Attachments

Appendix 1: Greater Sudbury Handi Transit Services Program Audit

Appendix 2: Management's Response to the Auditor General's Audit of Greater Sudbury Handi Transit Services

Auditor General's Office

Main Report

2010

Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit Services

Handi Transit

Brian Bigger, C.G.A

Auditor General, City of Greater Sudbury

This audit was performed by the Auditor General pursuant to section 223.19 (1.1) of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c.25 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, as set by The U.S. Government Accountability Office).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why we conducted this review

The Auditor General's 2010 Audit Work Plan included a program audit of the City's Transit Services Division. The intent in including the audit of program management and controls in the work plan was to systematically evaluate the quality of stewardship over public funds, and the achievement of value for money in operations throughout the organization. This review is part of a series of program audits intended to provide recommendations for improvement across all programs over a six year period.

Objectives of the review

The Auditor General's Office applied their inherent risk ranking to determine the higher risk areas within Transit Services that were to be included in the scope of the divisional program audit. Due to the size of the audit, we have decided to report separately on Handi Transit.

Within the scope of this report for Handi Transit Services, the auditors did evaluate the quality of stewardship and the achievement of value for money through delivery of Handi Transit Services. In order to evaluate the achievement of value for money through operations, the Auditors looked for clarity in direction, expected outcomes and desired levels of service delivery tied to financial results and projections.

A risk based approach was taken

In an environment of significant fiscal challenges, average annual growth in demand, and expenditures for Handi Transit have exceeded 10% since amalgamation. The question to be asked is "at what point is optimal value for money achieved?" Recommendations made in this report relate to the opportunity to clarify the level of service that the City is striving to achieve and are supportive of ongoing initiatives to ensure that these services are available for those who rely on them most.

Audit methodology

With Transit Management's input, the Auditor General's Office developed a ranking of inherent risks to determine the higher risk areas within Handi Transit. These risk areas were included in the scope of the audit.

The audit methodology included the following:

- Conducted interviews with Transit management;
- Conducted interviews with employees of Student Transportation Inc.;
- Conducted an interview with the Chair of the Accessibility Committee;
- Reviewed and analyzed relevant background information and operating information;
- Reviewed bus stop design standards
- Reviewed and discussed findings with management.

We followed generally accepted government auditing standards

We conducted this audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Our review identified the following:

Summary of key issues and recommendations

- Improvements are required in planning to demonstrate the achievement of value for money
- Five initiatives to encourage persons with disabilities to use conventional transportation services

The following report contains six recommendations. The implementation of these recommendations will contribute to improvements in the ability to evaluate the quality of management of public funds and the achievement of value for money in delivering Handi Transit Services to the public. They will also allow Transit Services to manage service volume and financial pressures, while ensuring that the levels of service and availability are maintained for those people who need it most.

HANDI TRANSIT BACKGROUND

Our city has a long history of accessible transit initiatives

In 1993, the former City of Sudbury introduced a Full Accessibility Plan for Sudbury Transit with a goal of ensuring “easier access”. At that time, Sudbury Transit began acquiring buses with accessibility features.

Prior to the current contract, Handi Transit Services were delivered through a number of independent contracts, each limited to service within boundaries of the former City of Sudbury and former outlying municipalities.

Accessible transit services have grown significantly since the award of a harmonized service contract in 2002

In 2001, Council approved a 5 year harmonization plan between Handi Transit and Conventional Transit Services that sought to remove these geographic boundaries. In 2002, Council approved the removal of the Handi Transit boundaries and adopted a central dispatch system. Leuschen Bros. was awarded the first new harmonized contract in 2002. The contract commenced in May 2003 and extended for five years until May 2008. Handi Transit services are currently being provided under this contract by Student Transportation Inc. as Leuschen Bros. Limited was purchased by Student Transportation Inc. (STI) in mid 2010.

In 2003, Council approved holiday service for Handi Transit users, providing service on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. In 2004, Council approved the addition of two new Handi Transit buses to meet ridership demands. In 2005, Handi transit became fully harmonized with the conventional system.

General terms of the contract

Under the terms of the contract, STI provide Handi Transit services on behalf of the City. STI is to provide all the labour, material, equipment and supervision necessary to provide the service. They also manage the list of registered users, take bookings, dispatch the vehicles and collect fares. They are also responsible for the maintenance of the vehicles and inspections as established by the Province of Ontario and the Highway Traffic Act (Reg. 611, section 4, section 5, section 85-1 and all related schedules and subsections). The contract can be, and to date has been, renewed on a yearly basis until May 2012.

In 2011, Handi Transit will operate with fourteen specialized accessible buses, (supplemented with conventional taxi services) and all sixty Conventional Transit buses will provide low-floor accessible service over regular transit routes.

HANDI TRANSIT OBJECTIVES

**Transit Services –
“Removing geographic
barriers to employment and
social services”**

“Public transportation services contribute to the social and ecological health of our community by removing geographic barriers to employment and social service opportunities and by reducing the environmental and infrastructure costs of transportation.”¹

**Integrated to the degree
possible**

According to the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan, April 2003, it was the City’s goal “to integrate as many riders as possible on our accessible conventional transit system while providing a parallel system for those citizens who cannot access our highly accessible route system”.

**Fully respects the rights and
dignity of persons**

This mirrors the Ontario Human Rights Commission regarding public transportation in which it states that the goal of public transportation is to have “a system that is accessible, that is integrated to the degree possible, that fully respects the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, older Ontarians, and families with young children, and that provides appropriate alternatives for those who are unable to use even the most accessible conventional services.”

**Handi Transit is intended to
provide public
transportation to people
who cannot use the City’s
conventional transit system**

In the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s view, full accessibility includes an integrated conventional system and a specialized Handi Transit system. Handi Transit is intended to provide public transportation to people who cannot use the City’s conventional transit system.

**Eligibility requirements
ensure that Handi Transit is
a cost effective,
appropriate alternative for
those who are unable to use
even the most accessible
conventional services**

In order to qualify for Handi Transit service, an application form must be completed and signed by a physician. The current qualifications are if an individual cannot climb or descend three steps of a Greater Sudbury Transit bus; walk a distance of 175 meters; or are visually impaired, yet are able to utilize Handi Transit independently. The physician can indicate whether the applicant will require the Handi Transit service permanently or temporary.

¹ http://www.greatersudbury.ca/cms/index.cfm?app=div_transit&lang=en

HANDI TRANSIT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The City has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to development and support of inexpensive and accessible transportation options for those who are unable to use even the most accessible conventional services.

A 2005 Oracle poll indicated a very high satisfaction rating with the service and the operators

Handi Transit rides almost doubled between 2003 and 2005

Users of Handi Transit have more than doubled between 2001 and 2009

Converting conventional transit buses to low floor buses should be completed

- In 2005, Handi transit became fully harmonized with the conventional system.
- In January 2005, a poll was conducted for the City of Greater Sudbury Accessibility Advisory Committee. Sudbury Transit provided Oracle with a database of 1,000 Handi Transit customer names. The Oracle poll randomly selected 300 customers, and asked them to rate their satisfaction with the service provider's dispatchers, drivers, and buses. Oracle's report indicated high levels of Handi Transit satisfaction with those elements of the service.
- 2006, the Accessibility Advisory Committee presented the results of the 2005 Oracle poll to Council, also advising that "Handi Transit rides had almost doubled in three years from 42,616 rides in 2003 to 82,851 rides in 2005"².
- Between 2001 and 2009, the number of Handi Transit rides has more than doubled, going from 56,915 rides to 117,799.³
- Between 2001 and 2009, the number of Handi Transit users has more than doubled, going from 1,090 users to 2,219.⁴
- Ongoing conversion of the conventional transit bus fleet to 100% low floor accessible buses will be achieved in 2011

² Accessibility Advisory Committee, 2006 presentation to Council

³ Provided by Student Transportation Inc.

⁴ Provided by Student Transportation Inc.

by mid 2011

CUTA has developed guidance to help transit systems work towards sustainability

Transit has applied or implemented many measures aimed at enhancing social inclusion and accessibility

The Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) has developed guidance to help transit systems work towards sustainability. Social inclusion and accessibility is one objective in establishing a sustainable transit system. Some of the measures CUTA uses to determine sustainability are as follows:

- Driver training to improve service for those with disabilities
- Travel training programs for people with disabilities
- Barrier-free vehicles and infrastructure
- Travel information for people with sensory impairments
- Announcement / display of information in vehicles and at stops
- Accessible systems for customer feedback

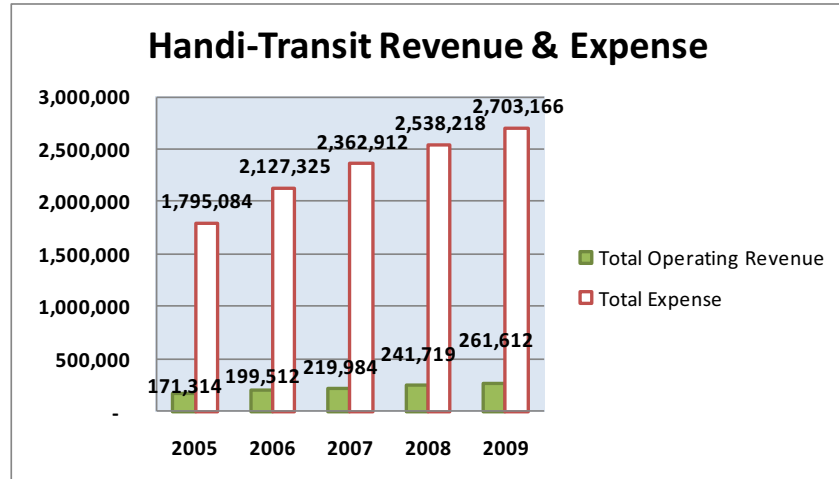
Transit has implemented many of these sustainability measures.

HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND OPERATING TRENDS

Financial and Operational Highlights (CUTA)

While Handi Transit operating revenues have increased 53 percent or \$90,000 through collection of Handi Transit fares, operating costs have increased 51 percent or \$908,000. As a result, contributions from the General Tax Levy and from the Gas Tax have been increasing significantly.

Operating revenues are continuing to grow at approximately 10% of operating expense

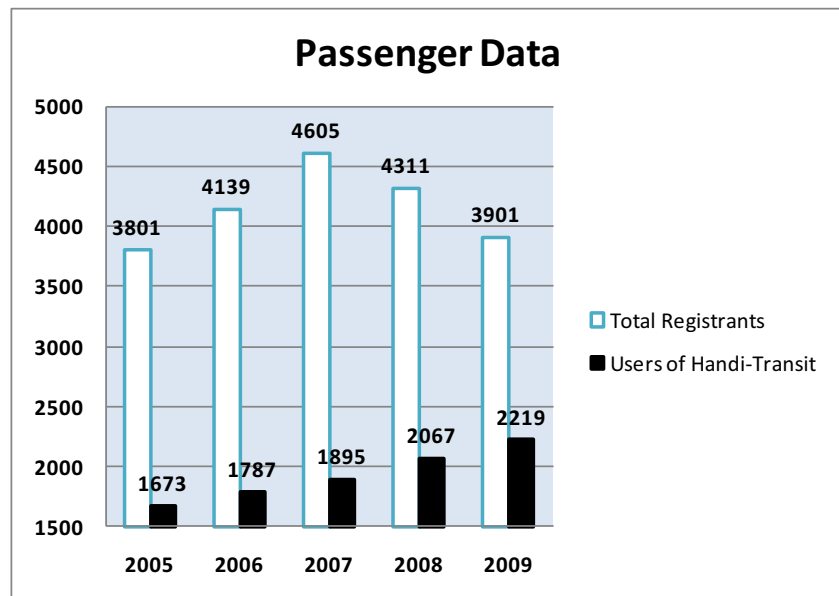


Registrant list maintenance is evident

Exhibit 1 – Growth in operating expenses relative to operating revenues⁵

Exhibit 1 depicts the latest five year trend in operating revenue and operating expense. The operating revenue to operating cost ratio has been maintained at between nine percent and ten percent over the past five years (from 2005 to 2009).

Five year growth of active Handi Transit users is significant



The growth in number of users has been continuous over the last ten years

Exhibit 2 – Number of eligible registrants and active Handi Transit customers⁶

⁵ CUTA Ontario Specialized Transit Services Fact Book, 2005 to 2009

The growth in number of rides provided has been continuous over the last ten years

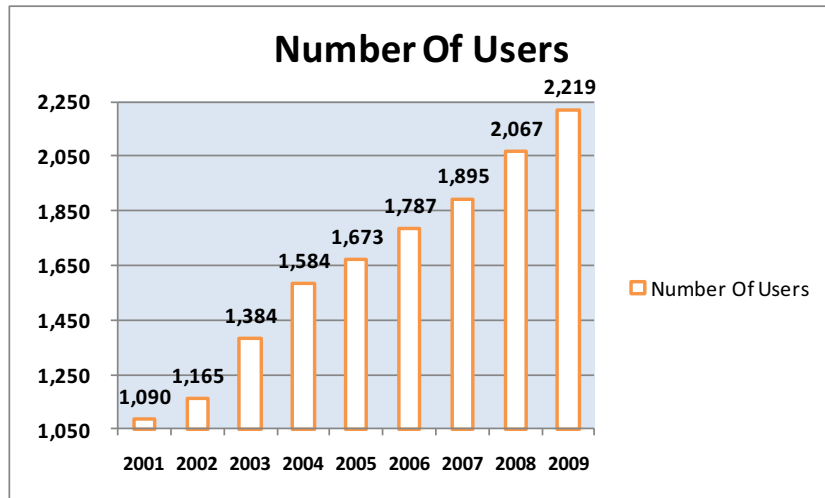


Exhibit 3 – Growth trend. Number of active Handi Transit users over the last ten years⁷

The usage reflected by average rides per user has remained reasonably constant

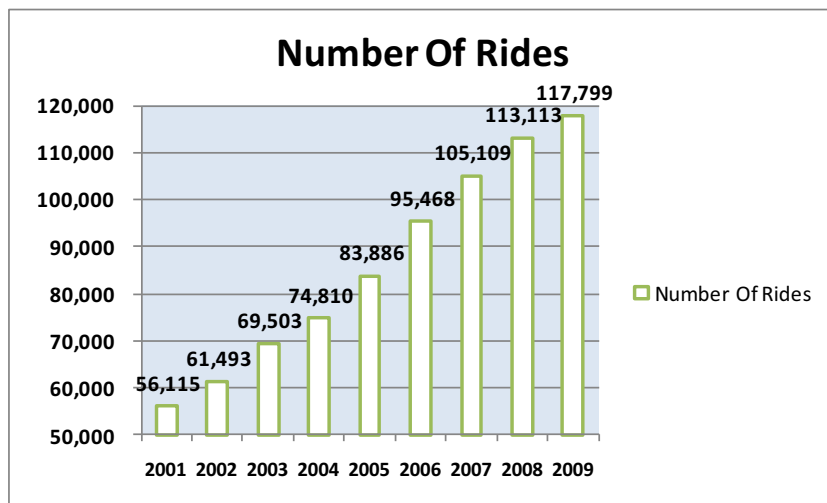


Exhibit 4 – Growth trend. Number of rides provided over the last ten years⁸

⁶ Provided by Student Transportation Inc.

⁷ Provided by Student Transportation Inc.

⁸ Provided by Student Transportation Inc.

In 2008, users averaged approximately 55 rides per user in Greater Sudbury, compared to a median of 21 for the cities listed

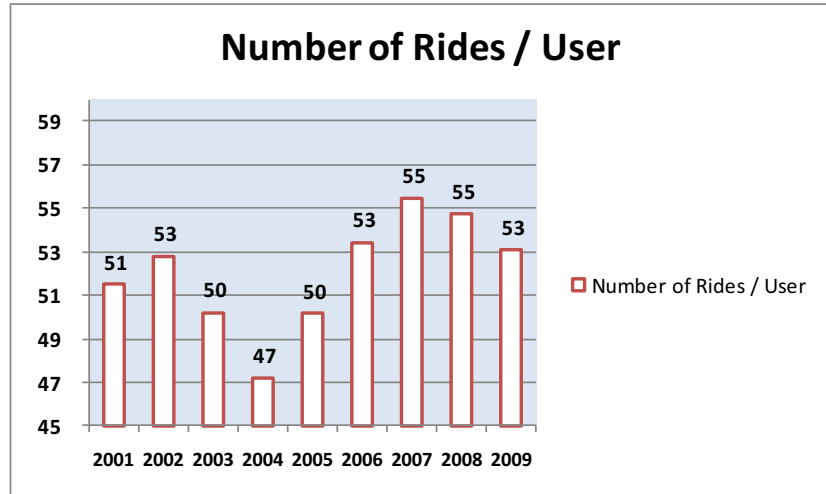


Exhibit 5 – Average number of rides per user. Greater Sudbury Handi Transit⁹

Exhibit 6 below, compares our program with programs of other cities with similar population, the City of Greater Sudbury Handi Transit program shows a high number of trips per registered user. Greater Sudbury Handi Transit reported 55 trips per active registrant, as compared to a median of 21 for the cities listed below.

In 2008, the number of rides provided on Greater Sudbury Handi Transit was greater than other comparable cities

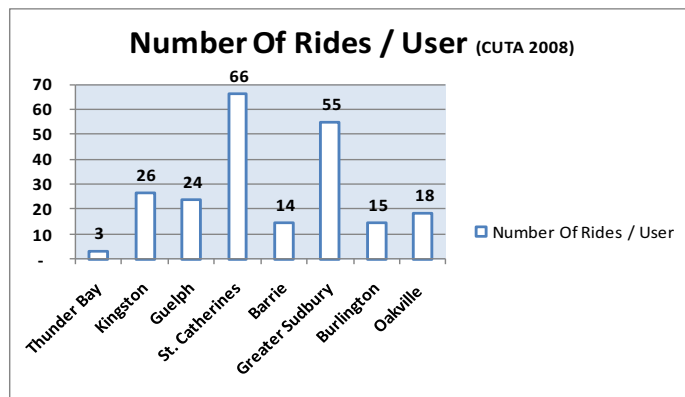


Exhibit 6 – Average number of rides per user comparison.¹⁰

⁹ Provided by Student Transportation Inc.

¹⁰ CUTA Ontario Specialized Transit Services Fact Book, 2008

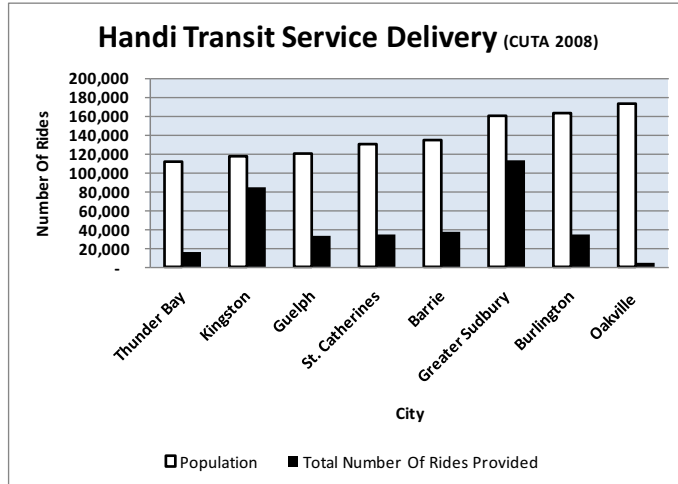


Exhibit 7 – Total number of rides provided comparison¹¹

AUDIT RESULTS

A. IMPROVEMENTS IN PLANNING REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF VALUE FOR MONEY

Rising Costs and Demand for Handi Transit Services

As ridership increases, fixed monthly costs become less and less a factor in total costs paid for this service. As a result, net operating costs for Handi Transit have closely followed the growth in ridership. Costs have risen 51 percent over the past five years. Increases have averaged 10 percent per year from \$1.8 million in 2005, to \$2.7 million in 2009, and required \$2.4 million of additional funding over program operating (fare) revenues. This trend is expected to continue.

As ridership continues to increase, the portion of

¹¹ CUTA Ontario Specialized Transit Services Fact Book, 2008

fixed costs for providing the service continues to decline

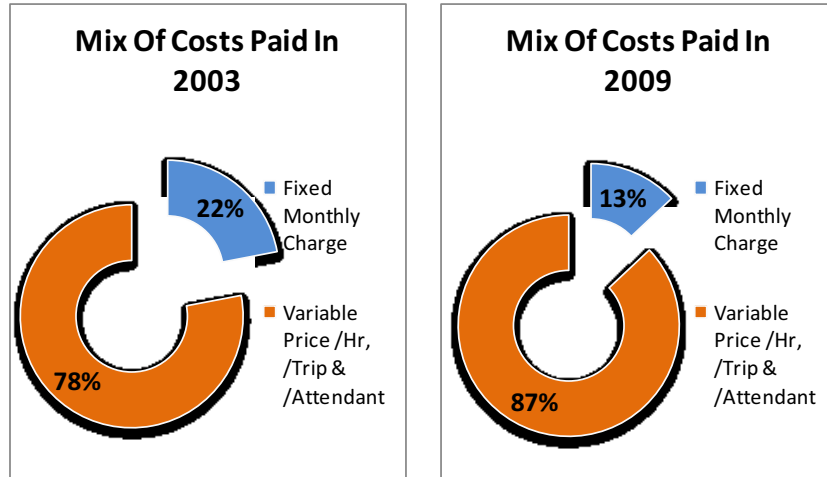


Exhibit 8 – Shift in proportion of fixed vs. variable costs as per the Handi Transit agreement

According to the 2005 Oracle Poll, 53% of Greater Sudbury’s Handi Transit users were over the age of 65, and 70% of Handi Transit users were over the age of 55.

According to Statistics Canada, the age of the population is expected to accelerate rapidly

The number of Ontarians with disabilities is expected to grow as the population ages

Since 1996, taxis have been used to supplement Handi Transit buses in order to meet demand

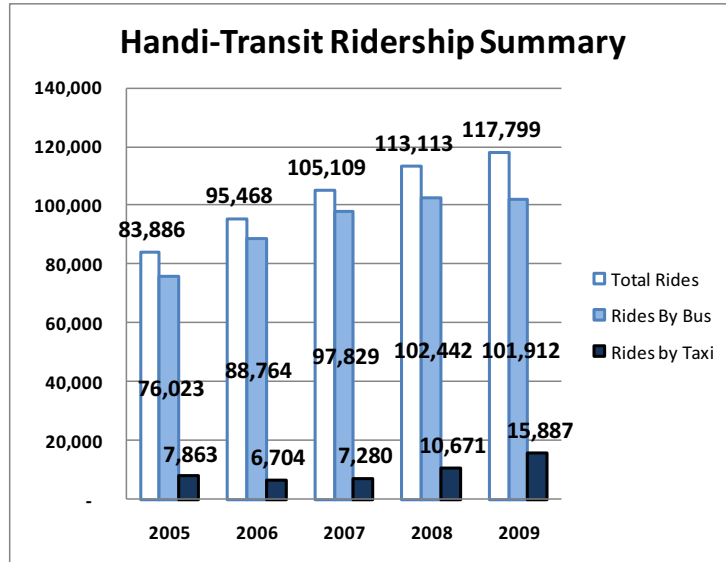
The government estimates that more than 1.8 million Ontarians have a disability, and the number is growing as the population ages. According to Statistics Canada, “the ageing of the population is projected to accelerate rapidly, as the entire baby boom generation turns 65.” “The number of senior citizens could more than double, outnumbering children for the first time.” Furthermore, “projections show that seniors would account for between 23 percent and 25 percent of the total population by 2036, nearly double the 13.9 percent in 2009.”

The Taxi service is currently being offered to Handi Transit customers within the boundaries of the former City of Sudbury. The average cost of these taxi rides were about \$3 less than the average cost of a ride in the Handi transit bus, and also tend to improve the availability of Handi Transit buses for customers with mobility devices.

In 2009, the number of rides provided on Handi Transit buses decreased by 530 rides, while there was an increase of 5,216 taxi rides provided. The City has supplemented the Handi Transit bus service with taxi rides since 1996 to keep up with peak demand. Taxis are only used for ambulatory customers travelling within the City, as most taxis cannot accommodate mobility devices. The Auditors note that since 2005, the

number of taxi rides provided to Handi Transit riders have doubled. This is further evidence of the demand for this door-to-door service.

Between 2008 and 2009, the number of rides provided on Handi Transit buses decreased by 530 rides, while there was an increase of 5,216 taxi rides provided



The City's average cost for a round trip ride on Handi Transit is approximately \$46

Exhibit 10 – Illustrates the number of rides (both with Handi Transit buses and taxis) provided under the Handi Transit Program over the past five years.

The City's cost of a round-trip Handi Transit ride ranges between \$33 and \$118 depending on pickup and drop off locations. The average round-trip cost for Handi Transit was approximately \$46 in 2009.

Financial Pressures Due To Demand

It is unclear how much further productivity can be increased with the existing number of buses

As the demand for Handi Transit services has continued to increase each year, the Auditors note that the productivity of the buses has also significantly improved over the years. In 2005 the average number of rides per bus was approximately 5,800 and by 2009 it had risen by 26 percent to approximately 7,300. However, it is unclear how much further productivity can be increased with the existing number of buses.

If the trend in demand continues, by 2015 the program will cost \$4.3 million in excess of program fare revenue under the current revenue/cost structure

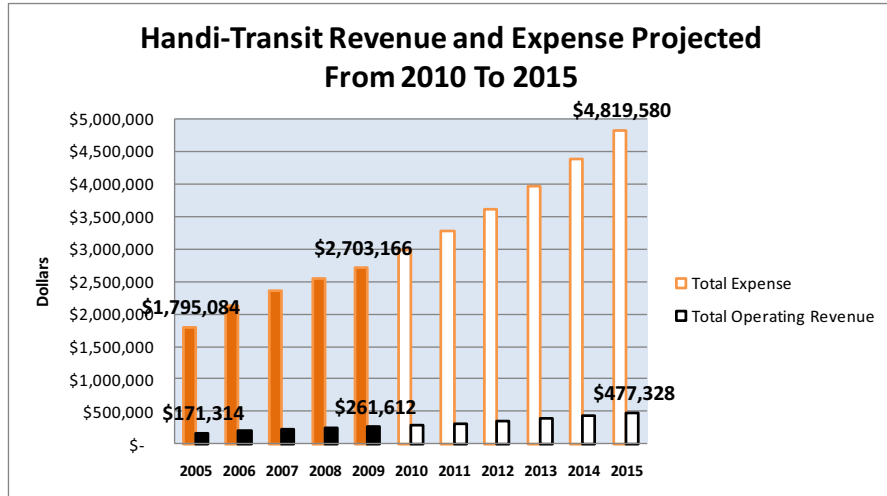


Exhibit 9 – Actual Handi Transit revenue and expense from 2005 to 2009 and projected revenue and expense from 2010 to 2015.

The total number of rides provided by Handi Transit, have increased by 40 percent over the past five years. If the trends in demand, expenses and revenues continue over the next 6 years, by 2015 expenses for Handi Transit is projected to be just over \$4.8 million, and the City will have to find \$4.3 million of additional funding in excess of program fare revenues.

Transit Committee and Council members need to consider program targets, performance measures and operating trends, prior to approving staff’s proposed strategic direction and annual budget requests.

When the Auditors first began this audit (August last year), the most recent Business Plans documented by Transit Services (2007-2008) were developed in 2006, to “establish strategic direction, priorities, organizational improvements and operational strategies”¹² for various departments within the City. Greater Sudbury Transit developed two goals, one for parking and one for transit. The Transit goal was “To provide a safe and comfortable transportation for the community by implementing the recommendations developed from the Ridership Growth Strategy.”¹³ There was no specific goal for Handi transit.

It is not clear that Transit Committee and Council members have had the opportunity to consider program targets, performance measures and long term operating trends tied to long term financial implications Long term financial implications need to be considered in approving staff’s

¹² Business Plans 07-08 City of Greater Sudbury

¹³ Business Plans 07-08 Growth and Development Department

The City needs to balance the growth of the program while considering current fiscal challenges

proposed strategic direction and annual budget requests as this information cannot be found in those presentations to Council.

Management have continued to stimulate growth and recommend enhancements to this program. Both on September 2010, (during the course of the audit), and on February 14th, 2011 (after the Auditors initial findings had been discussed with management), have presented updated plans, and received endorsement from the Transit Committee.

Management has assured the Auditors they recognize that the ridership numbers have shown significant growth for Handi Transit, and that they believe that the City is “simply reaching the service levels that are reflective of the demand in our community”.

Although the program is clearly growing leaps and bounds in popularity, it is difficult to balance today’s fiscal challenges and assess the achievement of value for money without clear direction, expected outcomes and desired levels of service for this program. Simply put, the Auditors need Management to clarify at what point in this seemingly continuous program expansion will optimum expenditures and value for money be achieved?

Recommendations:

1. Transit should put together a long term strategy for Handi Transit that considers the impact of the continuous growth in demand for Handi Transit Services on future costs. Expected long term outcomes, desired levels of service and funding needs for this program should be clearly identified to enable an evaluation of the achievement of value for money.

B. INITIATIVES TO ENCOURAGE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO USE CONVENTIONAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Free Bus Transfers and Incentives to Maximize the Use of

Conventional Transit

There needs to be ongoing assessment of user needs

The ongoing assessment of rider needs is key to managing a Transit service and achieving value for money in a sustainable transit system.

Draft OADA regulation requires conventional transit providers to identify initiatives to encourage use of conventional transit

The draft Ontario regulation made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, “Integrated Accessibility Standards” s41. (1) (a) states that as part of the accessibility plan, conventional transportation service providers shall “identify initiatives to encourage persons with disabilities who are, or were, eligible for specialized transportations services, to use conventional transportation services”. Transportation service providers shall meet the requirement by January 1, 2013.

A trip priority system is currently in place

Due to high demand for the service, a trip priority system is in place. A trip priority system aides in matching demand with the available resources while ensuring that the most critical needs of customers are met. The priority system currently used is as follows:

1. Work
2. School
3. Medical
4. Other – i.e. leisure, shopping, social, church, etc.

Prioritizing trips can have isolating effects

Regular trips for work or school are booked automatically from month to month. Trips must be booked at least two working days in advance.

Prioritizing trips can have isolating effects as they can cut people off from social, recreational and other services. Therefore, with increasing demand and limited supply and budget constraints, there needs to be further investigation and analysis into various transit options to ensure there are viable, sustainable transportation options for all citizens of the City.

Handi Transit service needs to be available for those

Even where conventional transit system accessibility has been optimized, there will always be the need for Handi Transit services for those who are still unable to use the conventional transit system. Knowing that the number of people using Handi Transit has increased by approximately 33 percent over the past five years, the auditor’s concerns

who need it

are with the availability of Handi Transit services for the people who need it most. With increasing demand for Handi Transit, this may reduce the number of spaces available for people dependent on the availability of Handi Transit services for social outings, leisure, shopping, etc..

Having 100% low floor buses provides the City the opportunity to shift some users to conventional transit which is the goal of the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan

By mid 2011, Greater Sudbury's entire transit fleet will be made up of low floor accessible buses. Having a transit fleet that is 100 percent accessible provides Transit the opportunity to shift some users of the Handi Transit service to Conventional Transit which relates directly to the goal of the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan.

A 10% shift in users to conventional transit would have a potential cost savings of over \$275,000

One initiative can be offering free rides incentives and bus transfers on the conventional transit system. If Greater Sudbury Transit were able to shift as little as 10 percent of Handi Transit users over to conventional transit, there would be potential cost savings of over \$275 thousand dollars per year. In this scenario, the City would forgo the conventional transit round-trip fare of \$4.10, but would save the cost of the Handi Transit ride which is on average \$46. A 10 percent shift of rides would not create any additional costs for the conventional transit system as this represents only a 0.25 percent increase in conventional ridership. Offering free transfers to, and rides on conventional transit for riders eligible to use Handi Transit, would provide an option that would benefit all.

This option also considers a few additional points. Using conventional transit will eliminate the need to book trips in advance. By using transfers, not all trips need be to a single destination and back home. Another benefit of the use of conventional transit services may be to shorten the length of time necessary to complete a trip.

The most difficult part of an excursion via Transit may be getting between one's home and either the first destination, or the last destination. Once a rider is on or near the transit system, concurrent trips need not always be via Handi Transit.

By shifting service delivery from the Handi Transit system to the conventional transit system, there is opportunity to ensure there is capacity to handle the demand for those who cannot use conventional transit without increasing the size of the Handi Transit fleet.

Transit Services does provide a transit travel training program, and has spent much effort on driver training which also help those unsure on how

they may use conventional transit, understand schedules, routes and stops.

Recommendations:

- 2. Transit Services should offer free ride incentives (limited trials), and bus transfers (to conventional transit), to encourage riders eligible of Handi Transit. This will encourage increased use of, and familiarity with the conventional transit system.**

Review of Eligibility Requirements

Current eligibility requirements for Handi Transit were developed before Transit's fleet were comprised of 100% low floor buses

In order to qualify for Handi Transit service, an application form must be completed and signed by a physician. Currently, eligibility for Handi Transit Services is established if an individual cannot climb or descent three steps of a Greater Sudbury Transit bus; walk a distance of 175 meters; or if they are visually impaired and yet able to utilize Handi Transit independently. The physician can indicate whether the applicant will require the Handi Transit service permanently or temporary.

Eligibility requirements and application process vary amongst various cities within Canada

Different cities within Canada have different eligibility requirements for Handi Transit. Some have refined their eligibility requirements to consider seasonal needs, while other Cities require extensive in person applications rather than relying on a certification form the applicant's primary care physician.

It is also important to note that low-floor buses on fixed routes are not an acceptable alternative to door-to-door service for all Handi Transit customers all of the time. Seasonal, winter conditions for example, often make conventional transit services impractical for many people.

Under the draft Integrated Accessibility Standards, there are to be three categories of eligibility to qualify for specialized transit services;

Conditional eligibility considers environmental or physical barriers in the conventional transit system

- unconditional eligibility,
- temporary eligibility, and
- conditional eligibility.

The conditional eligibility category allows cities to establish criteria where a person may be limited to using specialized transit when certain environmental or physical barriers limit their ability to consistently use conventional transit. With that understanding, the auditors believe that there is opportunity for some people to shift some or all of their transit use back to conventional transit while improving the levels of service experienced by those who need it most.

Management have cautioned the Auditors against making significant changes to eligibility rules saying that “it would be premature to change eligibility rules to discourage people from moving throughout our community”.

The reader must recognize that Handi Transit’s eligibility requirements were established before Transit had 100 percent low floor buses. Having a 100 percent accessible fleet gives the City the opportunity to re-evaluate the criteria for using Handi Transit.

Recommendations:

3. **With Transit’s fleet comprising of 100 percent low floor buses by mid 2011, Transit Services should take the opportunity to work with the Accessibility Committee to revisit the eligibility requirements for Handi Transit, and to evaluate the possibility of offering seasonal passes.**

Analysis of Rider Pick-Up / Drop off Locations and Routes

Barriers for using conventional Transit:

- **Distance from origin or destination to bus stop**

Barriers such as the distance from a customer’s origin and destination to bus stops, the accessibility of the bus stop and shelters, conditions of sidewalks and streets, and general weather conditions, will affect the customer’s ability to use the conventional transit system.

- Accessibility of bus stop
- Condition of sidewalk or shelter
- General weather conditions

City staff had not obtained pick up and drop off data from the Handi Transit provider to consider in route and stop planning and analysis

Top pick up and drop off locations for Handi Transit in 2009

The 2010 Rider Guide did not indicate that accessible buses were on routes that serviced some of Handi Transit's top pick up locations

Route planning and analysis for people eligible to use Handi Transit has been left to the service provider. When the Auditors asked for data to inform them of the most frequently used destinations for Handi Transit, the service provider easily provided this information, however, it was also noted that City staff had never asked for this information in the past.

The Auditors obtained all the pickup and drop off locations for Handi Transit from Student Transportation Inc. for 2009. From this information, the Auditors were able to determine the top pick up and drop off locations during the year. The table below is a listing of a sample of some of the top pick up and drop off locations for Handi Transit.

Location Name	
Laurentian Hospital	VON Day Care
YMCA	CEC Wood Lavoie
New Sudbury Shopping Centre	Adele Samson
Pioneer Manor	Jarett Centre Webbwood
I Can Independence Centre	York Extendicare

Laurentian Hospital was the number one pick up location for Handi Transit. According to Transit's Summer 2010 Rider Guide, route 500 University via Paris stops at Laurentian Hospital, however, none of the buses in the Rider Guide indicate that the bus on the route was an accessible bus. The 501 bus (Regent/University) also stops at the hospital, but only every second bus between 7:00am and 6:00pm was designated as an accessible bus in the Rider Guide.

- Recommendations:**
4. Management should collect the pickup and drop off data for all Handi Transit rides from the Handi transit service provider. This data can aide management in future route planning and bus stop placement decisions on the conventional transit system.
 5. As it is current Transit policy that drivers can make a special request stops, this information should be communicated through Transit's website, and other information sources.

Focus On Accessibility of Bus Stops Nearest Handi Transit User Destinations

There is currently a draft Ontario Regulation made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 regarding Integrated Accessibility Standards. Paragraph 47 addresses transit stops and states:

Draft AODA regulations regarding integrated accessibility standards

- a. Conventional transportation service providers, in respect of transportation vehicles to which this section applies, shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to board or de-board a transportation vehicle at the closest available safe location, as determined by the operator, that is not an official stop, if the official stop is not accessible and the safe location is along the same transit route.
- b. In determining where a safe location may be situated for the purposes of subsection (1), the conventional transportation service provider shall give consideration to the preferences of the person with a disability.
- c. Conventional transportation service providers shall ensure that operators of their transportation vehicles report to an appropriate authority where a transit stop is temporarily inaccessible or where a temporary barrier exists.
- d. This section applies to the following:
 - i. Transit buses.
 - ii. Motor coaches.
 - iii. Streetcars.
- e. Conventional transportation service providers shall meet the requirements of this section by January 1, 2012.¹⁴

Draft legislation does not provide guidance for bus stop accessibility. It does require the City to identify planning for accessible stops and shelters in its accessibility plan

The draft legislation does not provide a definition of an accessible stop. Under the duties of municipalities, they “shall consult with its municipal accessibility advisory committee, the public and persons with disabilities in the development of accessible design criteria to be considered in the construction or replacement of bus stops and shelters.” They must also “identify planning for accessible bus stops and shelters in its accessibility plan”.

In a presentation at the 2007 International Conference on Mobility and

¹⁴ Ontario Regulation made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Integrated Accessibility Standards, 47. (1) to (5)

Bus stops and their immediate surroundings are often the weak link in the bus system for people with disabilities and older adults

Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons (TRANSED) hosted by Transport Canada, it was noted that “bus stops and their immediate surroundings are often the weak link in the series of trip segments required for usage of a bus system by people with disabilities... and older adults.” Access and safety issues are the reasons for older adults and people with disabilities being reluctant to ride the bus.

The City does not currently have specific standards for bus stop location or design

According to the City’s Engineering department, the City does not currently have specific standards for bus stops. Standards might consider whether stop locations should be before or after an intersection, and the number of official stops actually required. Also, there are no specific standards for landing pads, grading, etc. When a bus stop is placed on a boulevard, the City’s grades for curbs and sidewalks are used as a standard for a bus stop. On rural roads, there are no standards.

From the Handi Transit data, the top 30 pickup locations were plotted on a map using Global Positioning System (GPS) software. Bus stops within a 175m and 450m radius were also plotted.

The auditors visited a few of these bus stops and noted the following regarding access:

Auditors visited some of the top 30 pickup locations for Handi Transit and noted the following:

Some bus stops are not close by buildings that offer services for the elderly and/or disabled. For example, there is no bus stop within 175 meters of the Adele Samson Centre or the I Can Independence Centre, yet both of these stops were in the top 10 pickup locations for Handi Transit. The Adele Samson Centre is located on York Street, and the closest stop is on Paris St.

Some bus stops are not close to buildings that offer services for the elderly or disabled

Adele Samson Centre

The Adele Samson Centre is located on York Street, and the closest stop is on Paris Street

I Can Independence Centre

The Centre's closest stop is located on Haig Street, which is just over 175 meters from the centre



The I Can Independence Centre's closest stop is located on Haig Street, which is just over 175 meters from the centre.

Finlandia

Currently, the bus route goes off 4th Avenue onto Finlandia property to access a stop on the route.

Having a bus stop on the property gives residents the option to either use Handi Transit, or conventional transit services.



Finlandia (right) is an excellent example where Transit has put a bus stop on Finlandia property to serve the residents

Corner of Haig Street and Byng Street

There are no amenities such as shelters or benches at a stop closest to two of the top ten Handi Transit pick up locations

there.



The bus stop below is at the corner of Haig Street and Byng Street. It is the closest stop to the I Can Independence Centre as well as the apartment complex in the background. This apartment complex is also one of the top ten pick up locations for Handi Transit. Therefore, this stop would be the closest bus stop for two of the top ten pick up locations. There are no amenities at this stop such as shelters or benches.

None of the City's bus stops had route or timetable information.

Citizens have put up signs at this location indicating the route and schedule



Signage is important for those riding transit. Citizens need to know where the bus stops are and when the next bus is coming. None of our bus

All stops should be labeled and the sign placed before the stop

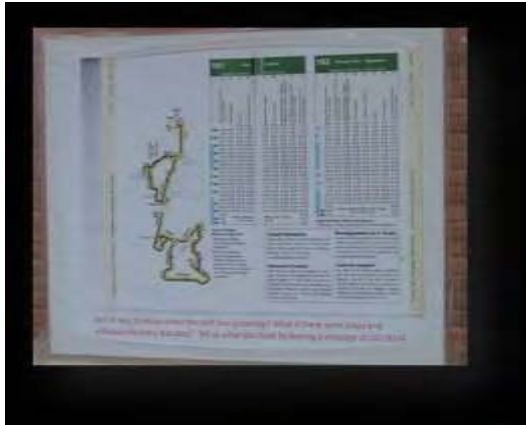
At this location, there is no Greater Sudbury Transit sign

The former City of Sudbury sign was found at a few locations. This sign has an incorrect phone number for Transit as well as incorrect route times

Any improvements in accessibility of stops improves the transit system for the entire population the transit system serves.

Accessibility improvements can be used to achieve a more integrated transit system

stops have route or timetable information on them.



The picture on the left was a sign put in one bus stop by a citizen that shows the route and the schedule of the bus that goes to the stop. Being unfamiliar and unsure of how to access and use the transit system may deter people from using conventional transit.

All stops should be labelled as a transit stop and the signs should be placed before, not after the stop for increased visibility. Signs can be considered a marketing tool for Transit, so they should be clearly visible. In the picture on the right, there is no Transit sign.



There are still old City of Sudbury bus stop signs at various locations throughout the City. The Finalandia bus stop also had an old City of Sudbury route sign with an incorrect phone number for Transit as well as incorrect route times.



Any improvement in the accessibility of stops improves the transit system for the entire population the transit system serves. Improved vehicle accessibility, improved bus routing and scheduling, improved accessibility

guidelines and standards for bus stops and improved snow removal not only benefits those with accessibility constraints, but also benefits all users of the conventional transit system. These improvements can be used to achieve a more integrated transit system.

Recommendations:

- 6. There are currently no City standards for designing accessible bus stops and/or bus shelters. It is a good practice for standards to be developed that would improve the accessibility of the transit system for all riders. Management should give accessibility maintenance and design priority to conventional system bus stops that are in close proximity to important destinations for Handi Transit users.**

CONCLUSION

This report contains six recommendations related to improvements in the Handi Transit Services program.

Our recommendations relate to the need to:

- **Clearly identify expected long term outcomes, desired levels of service and funding needs for this program, to enable an evaluation of the achievement of value for money.**
- **Identify incentives to encourage use of conventional transit such as offering free ride incentives (limited trials) and transfers to conventional transit, for riders eligible to use Handi Transit.**
- **Work with the Accessibility Committee to revisit the eligibility requirements for Handi Transit, and to evaluate the possibility of offering seasonal passes.**
- **Collect the pickup and drop off data for all Handi Transit rides from the Handi transit service provider. This data can**

aide management in future route planning and bus stop placement decisions on the conventional transit system.

- **Improve communication of the existing Transit Services policy offering special stop requests through Transit's website, and other information sources.**
- **Give accessibility maintenance and design priority to conventional system bus stops in close proximity to important destinations for Handi Transit users.**

Implementing the recommendations contained in this report will improve management's ability to manage the balance between satisfying the continuous growth in demand for services, and the perceived value for money achieved through Handi Transit operations.

The extent of any resources required or potential cost savings resulting from implementing the recommendations in this report is not determinable at this time, however, annual savings exceeding \$275,000 could be achieved if Transit Services successfully encouraged a 10% shift of eligible user rides to our conventional transit system.

Auditor General's Office

Management Response

2010

***Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit Services
Handi Transit***

Brian Bigger, C.G.A

Auditor General, City of Greater Sudbury

Appendix 2

Management Response: 2010 Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit Services - Handi Transit

Rec No	Recommendation	Agree (X)	Disagree (X)	Management Comments: <i>(Comments are required only for recommendations where there is disagreement.)</i>	Action Plan/ Time Frame
1	Transit should put together a long term strategy for Handi Transit that considers the impact of the continuous growth in demand for Handi Transit Services on future costs. Expected long term outcomes, desired levels of service and funding needs for this program should be clearly identified to enable an evaluation of the achievement of value for money.			Transit has had a long term strategy for many years which is why we are ahead of most transit properties in Canada when it comes to accessible transit buses. We are a young City with new services being provided to all communities within our municipality and as such we are simply determining what our actual service levels will ultimately be.	
2	Transit Services should offer free ride incentives (limited trials), and bus transfers (to conventional transit), to encourage riders eligible of Handi Transit. This will encourage increased use of, and familiarity with the conventional transit system.			Transit has a full action plan in place including an approved advertising campaign which will have as a goal to provide handi transit customers with the information required to make the decision to move to the conventional system. This has been communicated to the Transit Committee and Council on two separate occasions.	
3	With Transit's fleet comprising of 100 percent low floor buses by mid 2011, Transit Services should take the opportunity to work with the Accessibility Committee to revisit the eligibility requirements for Handi Transit, and to evaluate the possibility of offering seasonal passes.			In reviewing all comments provided by the auditor it is clear that the main goal of reviewing eligibility criteria is to remove people from the handi transit system.	
4	Management should collect the pickup and drop off data for all Handi Transit rides from the Handi transit service provider. This data can			Included in Staff's plan is to work with the service provider to continue to remove barriers and to	

Appendix 2

Management Response: 2010 Audit of Greater Sudbury Transit Services - Handi Transit

Rec No	Recommendation	Agree (X)	Disagree (X)	Management Comments: <i>(Comments are required only for recommendations where there is disagreement.)</i>	Action Plan/ Time Frame
	<p>aid management in future route planning and bus stop placement decisions on the conventional transit system.</p>			<p>integrate the two systems where possible.</p> <p>We will work on coordinated dispatch as well as providing portions of rides on the conventional and Handi Transit systems.</p>	
5	<p>As it is current Transit policy that drivers can make a special request stops, this information should be communicated through Transit's website, and other information sources.</p>			<p>Transit's stop request system has been in place for more than 20 years. The communication of this service has gone out in several different formats.</p>	
6	<p>There are currently no City standards for designing accessible bus stops and/or bus shelters. It is a good practice for standards to be developed that would improve the accessibility of the transit system for all riders. Management should give accessibility maintenance and design priority to conventional system bus stops that are in close proximity to important destinations for Handi Transit users.</p>			<p>We will follow Ontario standards as developed.</p>	