MEMORANDUM

LNTC-C 17-2019

Subject: Specialized Transit Study - Update

Date: Wednesday, November 20, 2019

To: Linking Niagara Transit Committee

From: Kumar Ranjan, Transportation Lead, GO Implementation Office

The Specialized Transit Study (the Study) is nearing completion and draft recommendations are outlined below for Committee's reference. Staff intends to bring forward the Study report early in 2020 following additional consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) to positively shape these recommendations for the implementation phase. The need for additional consultation was identified following comments from AAC members after the draft recommendations were presented at the November 14, 2019 AAC meeting.

One of the key concerns of the AAC relates to the eligibility and certification process which recommends an in-person assessment. In order to assess potential impacts versus benefits, a draft implementation plan would need to be detailed. Both staff and AAC members recognize the need for fulsome consultation in the development of the draft implementation plan.

Support from the AAC for the recommendations of the Study is critical. As such, the AAC has been engaged as a key stakeholder with a September presentation to the Committee prior to bringing forward the draft recommendations. In light of recent comments related to the final recommendations, staff intends to engage with the Accessibility Advisory Committee Working Group (AACWG) to review and shape the recommendations followed by a presentation to the AAC in January 2020 before bringing the final recommendation to the LNTC for consideration.

With these Study recommendations feeding into the Transit Governance Study currently underway, staff will engage with the AACWG in late November or early December and will seek to secure an AAC meeting in early January to receive their endorsement.

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

_____

Kumar Ranjan,
Transportation Lead,
GO Implementation Office

Specialized Transit in Niagara Region

The draft recommendations are as follows:

I. Eligibility & Certification

1. Process be centralized under a single entity.

2. A single application form be used by all specialized transit operators.

3. Application form - available on-line and ability to complete & submit.

4. Remove the requirement for validation by a health care professional.

5. In-person assessments be introduced as part of this process.

6. Applicant's certification reflect categories of: *unconditional, temporary, and conditional (trip-by-trip).*

7. Re-certification every 5-years

II. Trip Reservation & Scheduling

1. The reservations/trip request and scheduling functions be centralized under a single entity.

2. Enable registrants to make reservations/trip requests by telephone, app and/or web-portal (*One-Call/One-Click* capability).

3. Scheduling (route optimization, allocation of resources) to use state-of-the-art, commercially available software with a robust scheduling algorithm.

III. Development of Policies, Procedures, and Performance Metrics

1. Governing entity develop a robust set of policies, procedures and performance metrics. Policies and procedures to include but not be restricted to:
    - Advance booking requirements
    - Scheduling windows
    - Cancellations and no-shows
    - Fare policy
2. Advance discussions focused on community collaboration (e.g., Niagara Health)

3. Performance metrics to reflect industry norms regarding key performance indicators (KPIs) including requirements for service monitoring, contract compliance and CUTA reporting.

IV.   Service Delivery (Dispatch and Trip Management)

1. Core specialized transit services to be provided by, and to a level of service at least equal to that as currently provided by the aggregate of the municipal and regional specialized transit providers.

2. Supplement existing core services by the use of taxis and/or transportation network companies (TNCs) to accommodate trip requests during times of day, days of week, or areas of service, when the deployment of hourly service would not meet prescribed performance metrics or to provide 'overflow' capability.

3. Use supplemental services, as described above, to accommodate future travel demand/expansion of specialized transit services.

V.   Greater Link/Integration with Fixed-Route Transit Services

Recognizing that specialized transit is shared ride public transit for those unable to use accessible fixed route transit, and with an eye on a greater link or integration with accessible fixed-route transit, the following are recommendations:

1. Apply conditional (trip-by-trip) eligibility whereby for specialized transit registrants categorized as 'conditional' and where conditions can be determined (e.g., seasonal, climate/weather, topography, accessible paths of travel, proximity of trip origin/destination to fixed-route service, etc.).

2. Develop incentives and policies to address travel/mobility demand management strategies that may include but not be restricted to: travel/mobility training, fare policy, trip discovery/planning capabilities, etc.

VI.   Next-Generation Mobility

The following next-generation mobility (operations, service delivery, and technology) strategies be advanced:

1. Introduce a Same-Day Service pilot for Specialized Transit through partnerships with taxi and/or transportation network companies (TNCs)

2. Technology enhancements that include:

- Real-time passenger information including the broadcast (text message or telephone call) of vehicle arrivals.
- Self-service capabilities through an app and/or web portal to address registration, trip planning, reservations, confirmations and cancellations.

3. Mobile (cashless) payment.

Implementation Plan within the context of Transit Governance Study

Short-Term (0 to 2 years)	
• Harmonizing application form • Centralized eligibility & certification process • Development of policies, procedures, and performance metrics	• Centralized scheduling • Expanded use of supplemental services • Same-Day Pilot Program
Medium-Term (2 to 5 years)	
• Technology – real-time info., self-serve capabilities, cashless payment	• Greater integration with fixed-route transit