



**To:** Mayor and Councillors

**Date:** November 28, 2025

**From:** Lloyd Bie, P.Eng.  
Director, Transportation

**File:** 10-6500-01/2025-Vol 01

**Re:** **HandyDART Service Delivery**

At the Regular Council meeting of November 24, 2025, a delegation presented the report *Access for Everyone? – Publicly Operated HandyDART in Metro Vancouver, March 2023*. The report was referred to staff for review in advance of the TransLink Board's consideration of the HandyDART delivery plan at their December 3, 2025 Board meeting.

This memorandum provides staff's review of the delegation's materials advocating for TransLink to bring HandyDART in-house. It also summarizes staff's review of TransLink's reports published November 25, 2025, which recommend keeping a contracted delivery model for HandyDART through a modernized agreement focused on improved customer service outcomes and financial sustainability.

## **Background**

HandyDART is TransLink's personalized service for customers who are unable to use conventional transit due to disability. TransLink sets the service levels, policies, standards and ultimately has accountability for the service. HandyDART service is used by over 32,000 Metro Vancouver residents with diverse accessibility needs. In 2024, a total of 1,165,800 HandyDART trips were delivered. Approximately 7 per cent of all HandyDART trips originate in Richmond.

Delivery of HandyDART currently involves TransLink, Coast Mountain Bus Company and a specialized third-party operator, Transdev. HandyDART has been delivered as a contracted service since its inception in the 1980s. Contracting paratransit is common among similar sized transit systems in North America. TransLink also uses a contract model for the delivery of other services including the Canada Line, the West Coast Express and community shuttles.

## **Review of Delegate Submission**

The key issues concerning HandyDART service in the delegate's report (Attachment 1) along with staff's review of each issue are presented below. Staff also met with TransLink on November 26, 2025, to gain insight into HandyDART operations and have included additional information addressing the delegation's concerns.

**Concerns with Increasing Taxi Usage:** Supplementing paratransit service, like HandyDART, is a common practice among all transit systems.

Taxis help manage capacity, provide service outside of operational hours, maintain service continuity during emergencies or mechanical issues and effectively manage costs. An advantage with taxi service over a HandyDART vehicle for some users is convenience. HandyDART customers typically share a ride resulting in an indirect route. A trip dispatched to a taxi is typically a direct ride for customers to their destination. TransLink provides a lower percentage of overall trips using non-dedicated HandyDART providers. In 2023, 24 per cent of HandyDART trips were delivered by taxis, compared to 28 per cent in Toronto and 55 per cent in Calgary. New York City, the largest system in the US, now delivers over 62 per cent of paratransit trips with non-dedicated vehicles.

Approximately 75 per cent of HandyDART customers are ambulatory and some customers have expressed the preference of taxis over the HandyDART bus due to the lower profile of the taxi. Without the use of taxis, approximately 270,000 HandyDART trips a year would have to be declined.

**Full Public Ownership and Operation to Increase Service Reliability:** HandyDART is one of TransLink's highest rated services. In 2024, customer satisfaction scored 8.8 out of 10, the second highest score ever recorded by TransLink. The customer satisfaction for regular bus service was at 7.7 and the Canada Line received a 7.8 out of 10 in 2024. Last year 99.6 per cent of requested HandyDART trips were delivered and 91 per cent of all trips arrived on-time.

**Service Has Fallen Behind Need: HandyDART trips per person 65+ declined 22 per cent (2008–2019) and in 2022 were about half of 2008 levels:** Staff reviewed the historic HandyDART data as presented in the delegate's report and see that the sharp decline referenced from 2020 to 2022 was attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, HandyDART data from 2021 to 2024 in Table 1, illustrates the number of trips taken by passengers over the age of 65 has nearly doubled. The data also illustrates that the highest number of trips are by 20 to 40-year-olds who use HandyDART service more regularly to commute to school or to work.

**Table 1: HandyDART Performance Data**

	Handy DART Performance Data								
	# Trips	Service Hours	Ease of Booking Rating	Availability	Highest Average Trip Rates Ages	# Trips 65+	Average Trips Per Customer 65+ a year	Average Trip Distance	New Customers
2024	1,165,800	555,400	8.9/10	91% on time	25-39	~695,000	28	10.0 km	7,400
2023	1,175,900	544,400	8.4/10	91% on time	25-39	~647,500	29	10.1 km	7,400
2022	964,800	452,100	8.3/10	92% on time	20-34	~508,000	25	10.4 km	6,500
2021	695,642	415,278	8.9/10	90% on time	20-34	~379,000	20	12.7 km	5,300

**Insourcing to Stabilize and Benefit Workforce:** Transdev's HandyDART operators work under a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) negotiated between their union and Transdev. The current CBA provides HandyDART operators nearly the same benefits as CMBC community shuttle operators, along with higher wages than CMBC community shuttle operators, employee and retiree transit passes and participation in the Municipal Pension Plan (MPP) for eligible employees. TransLink advises there was some workforce instability during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, this has since stabilized.

## **Review of TransLink's HandyDART Customer-First Plan and Delivery Model**

TransLink initiated a comprehensive review of HandyDART delivery in June 2024. TransLink Management recommends that the Board of Directors endorses the HandyDART Customer-First Plan, which outlines 19 targeted initiatives developed through engagement (Attachment 2). The report recommends the TransLink Board approves a HandyDART Customer-First Plan with 19 targeted initiatives and proceed with implementation.

The plan acknowledges that advocacy groups including the delegation to Richmond City Council, unions, disability rights coalitions, and senior citizen organizations have strongly advocated for full public operation of HandyDART. The modernized agreement aims to address the service level concerns expressed by stakeholders by achieving stronger oversight, performance and accountability standards, rather than bringing the service fully in-house.

### **Provincial Government Direction**

TransLink's proposed plan is consistent with Premier David Eby's mandate letter of January 16, 2025, to the Minister of Transportation and Transit, Mike Farnworth. The letter includes the expectation that the Minister ensure the provincial transit services are being delivered in a way that is cost-effective for taxpayers, responsive to the concerns of transit riders, and not duplicative of administration, by reviewing the private delivery model for provincial transit systems starting with HandyDART.

### **Customer-First Plan**

The 19 initiatives of the Customer-First Plan include upgrades to booking and dispatch software, enhanced operator training, facility planning to support fleet modernization and electrification and better coordination with provincial partners. These initiatives are intended to make HandyDART more responsive, cost-effective, and inclusive, while maintaining continuity of service during contract transitions

TransLink reviewed a fully in-house model for HandyDART and concluded it would be more expensive for taxpayers with no direct customer-experience benefit. The potential increase in annual costs to the TransLink budget would be \$20 million to \$70 million a year. To address the financial impact of an in-house model, additional funding and/or service reductions would be necessary, which at this time would be a significant challenge for TransLink

Increased costs are associated with TransLink's current lack of internal paratransit operation or management structure. TransLink does not have the in-house expertise and capacity to provide this specialized service, and a fully in-house model is expensive due to increased administrative overhead, need for new management roles, and higher operating costs per trip. The contracted approach leverages specialized operators' expertise and maintains financial sustainability.

Instead of changing the ownership model, the Customer-First Plan focuses on measures that directly address the issues advocates have raised:

- Strengthened performance and accountability standards in a “modernized contract,” especially for non-dedicated (e.g., taxi) providers, to improve reliability, safety, and transparency;
- Investments in booking and dispatch software, data systems, and customer-facing communication to reduce wait times, improve scheduling, and support more spontaneous travel;
- Enhanced operator training, quality-of-care initiatives, and a coordinated internal HandyDART team at TransLink to give the public agency more oversight and capacity even while operations remain contracted; and
- Facility and fleet planning, including future electrification.

### **December 3, 2025 -TransLink Board Meeting**

The TransLink Board will make a decision regarding approval of the proposed HandyDART Customer First Plan on December 3, 2025. This decision regarding governance of HandyDART rests with the Board and not the Mayor’s Council. The Mayor’s Council is responsible for high-level, strategic decisions like approving long-term plans and setting the overall direction for the transportation network, while the TransLink Board is responsible for the operational and financial decisions to implement those plans. Should the Board approve the recommended Customer First Delivery Plan, TransLink will continue to implement the recommended 19 step initiative plan to reform the HandyDART service and also commence a procurement process for a third-party operator.

TransLink services 21 municipalities in addition to Electoral Area A and Tsawwassen First Nation. Four Councils (Langley City, North Vancouver, New Westminster and Burnaby) and four Mayors (Surrey, Vancouver, Langley Township and Port Coquitlam) have supported the initiative to bring HandyDART in-house.

TransLink also received letters from the public and stakeholders. Letters from several taxi companies indicate support for the current delivery model of HandyDART. These letters describe how taxi drivers are integrated into the HandyDART system and provide flexible, on-demand capacity that prevents trip denials.

TransLink hosted two HandyDART Customer First Plan webinars on Thursday, November 27, 2025 and Friday, November 28, 2025 for stakeholders. Staff attended the first session.

Other than the delegation, City staff have not directly received any concerns from the public regarding HandyDART service.

November 28, 2025

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Should you have any questions regarding this information, please contact Lloyd Bie directly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lloyd Bie'.

Lloyd Bie, P.Eng.  
Director, Transportation  
(604-276-4131)

SH:sh

- Att. 1: Report: *Access for Everyone? – Publicly Operated HandyDART in Metro Vancouver*  
2: HandyDART Customer-First Plan & Delivery Model Review

# **Access for Everyone?**

## **Publicly Operated HandyDART In Metro Vancouver**

**March 2023**



**By Eric Doherty – Ecopath Planning  
[www.ecoplanning.ca](http://www.ecoplanning.ca)**

**For Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724**

### **About the Author**

Eric Doherty is the principal of Ecopath Planning. His consulting practice focuses on improving community resiliency and livability, including for people with disabilities, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts. His education includes an MA from the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning, where he specialized in transportation planning. Examples of his other projects are available at [www.ecoplanning.ca](http://www.ecoplanning.ca)

### **Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724**

ATU Local 1724 represents the workers in the Greater Vancouver regional area with the paratransit service known as HandyDART. We are the operators, office workers, mechanics and road supervisors that serve the elderly and those with special needs. More information is available at [www.atu1724.com](http://www.atu1724.com)

Cover photo – TransLink - <https://buzzer.translink.ca/2021/03/translink-launches-handydart-modernization-program/>

Photographs by Eric Doherty except as noted

Updated in Sept 2023 to correct an error in Figure 4 and associated text

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## Summary

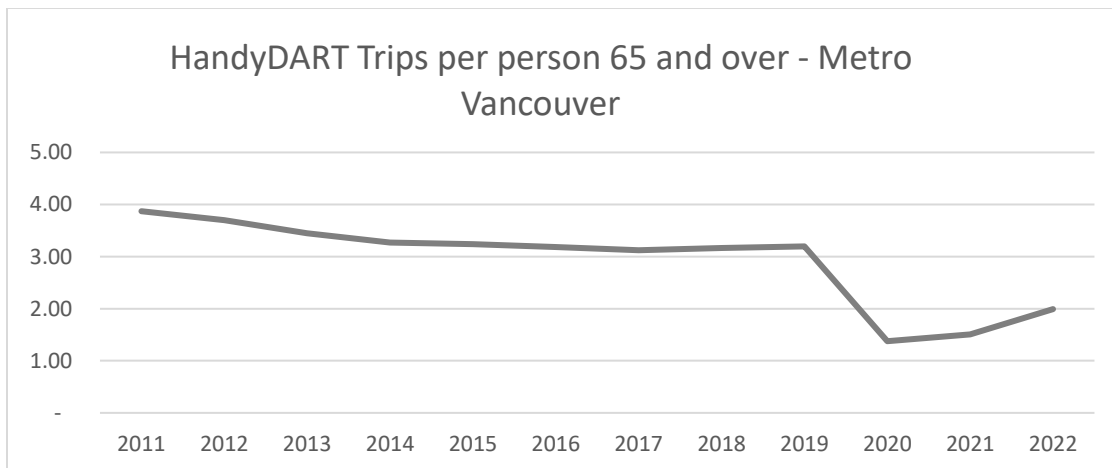
In early 2022 The TransLink Mayors' Council and Board of Directors adopted Transport 2050, which aims to create a “fairer and more just and inclusive transportation system that truly delivers on the promise of Access for Everyone.” TransLink admits that in “the past, transportation justice has not been central to our regional mission and so, as a region, we have catching up to do.”

However, not only does Transport 2050 mostly ignore the challenge of population aging it also makes HandyDART riders almost invisible. HandyDART (and associated terms like paratransit and custom transit) are barely mentioned.

This is not only a TransLink responsibility. The minister responsible for TransLink states that the provincial government has been a “partner in developing Transport 2050 since its inception.” TransLink is a creation of the provincial government, receives provincial funding, and has a legislated responsibility to consider all relevant provincial objectives including those regarding HandyDART provision.

The rates of disability for British Columbia range from 13% for the 15 to 24 age group to 51% for people 75 and over. This year the oldest people in the baby boom generation turn 78, and in the coming decade providing the services and urban environment older seniors need will be a defining social and political challenge in Metro Vancouver and across the country.

### HandyDART service per senior was dropping even before pandemic

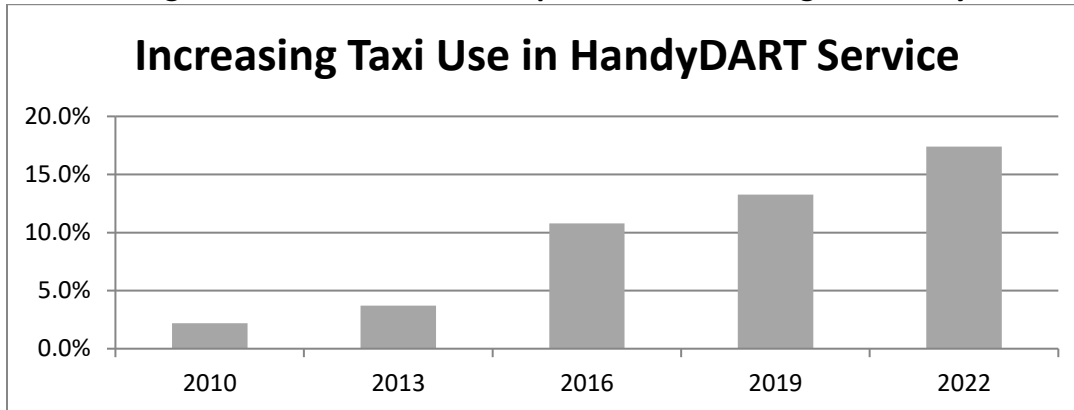


The number of HandyDART trips per person 65 and over declined significantly between 2011 and 2019, as shown in the graph above. In 2019, before the COVID pandemic, TransLink provided twenty two percent less HandyDART service per person 65 and over

than in 2008. *In 2022, with demand again outstripping supply as pandemic restrictions eased, TransLink provided 1.99 trips per senior, only half the HandyDART service per person 65 and over than in 2008.*

In 2022 the percentage of taxi trips also reached 17%, reflecting the inability of the private contractor to attract, train, and retain workers in a tight labour market. This also seems to reflect a disregard for targets set in TransLink plans – the previous TransLink 10 Year Plan called for reducing the percentage of taxi trips to 7% by 2021.

**Taxi usage has climbed to 17%, despite TransLink’s target of 7% by 2021**



Experience in Metro Vancouver and elsewhere shows that substituting taxis for dedicated custom transit vehicles results in sub-standard safety and service, often without any real reduction in costs.

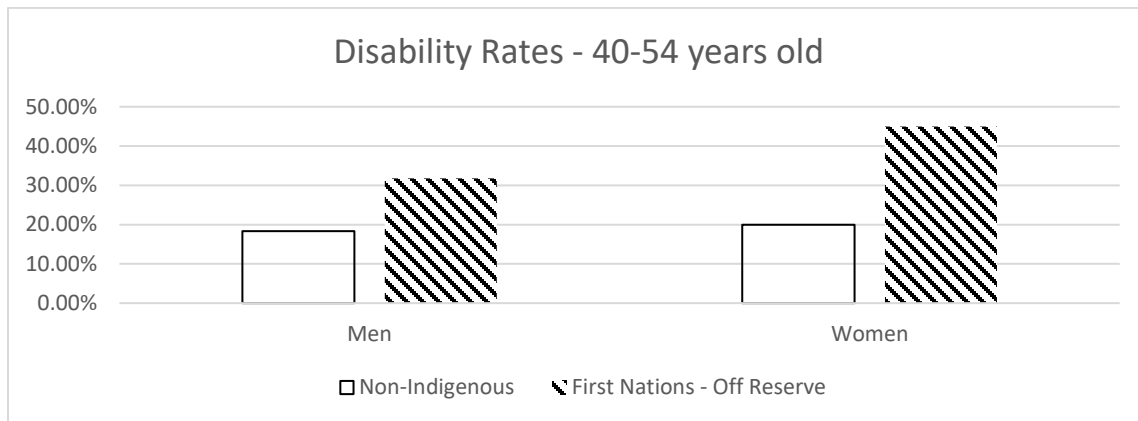
In 2017 the Mayors’ Council on Regional Transportation noted that TransLink’s 2017 “10-Year Vision . . . will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region.” The same report states that HandyDART service “expansion in the Mayors’ Vision is expected to address the increased demand to some degree, but analysis shows that it is likely insufficient to catch up or keep pace with need.”

The Legislature’s Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services budget consultation reports have also recommended “increasing accessible transportation options such as HandyDART” (or similar wording) for several years running.

Disabilities caused by COVID-19 will increase the need for HandyDART service, and other mobility options for people with disabilities, in both the short and long term. These disabilities will also reduce the availability of workers able to do the physically and mentally demanding work of operating a HandyDART vehicle and assisting passengers.

Transport 2050 notes that Indigenous people emphasized the need for “improved accessibility for people with disabilities and mobility challenges.” However, it does not recognize that Indigenous people have much higher rates of disability than the general population. For example, the rate of disability for First Nations women 40 to 54 years old is 45%, more than double the rate for non-Indigenous women the same age as shown below.

### The disability rate of First Nations women is more than double that of non-Indigenous women 40-54 years old



If Access for Everyone is to include Indigenous Peoples, TransLink needs to greatly improve accessibility for persons with disabilities (including HandyDART service) region wide but particularly on reserve lands and other areas with high indigenous populations.

### Public HandyDART Provision Essential for Increasing and Improving service

The rationale for contracting out transit services has been that as workers have less job security working for a private contractor, wages will be enough lower to offset the corporations profit margin and additional administrative expenses. However, with an aging population and the effects of the COVID pandemic, transit agencies across North America are having great difficulty attracting and retaining enough qualified workers.

**Stability is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified workers**

Over the last few years, TransLink’s HandyDART operations have been in the hands of four different corporations. Every time a new contractor takes over, years of efficiency gains are lost as new management implements new procedures. Employee morale suffers along with efficiency, quality of service, and workplace health & safety. Stability is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified workers.

Contacting out also means that TransLink staff do not gain the knowledge and experience they would if involved directly in HandyDART operations. It seems likely that Transport 2050 would not have the glaring gaps it has regarding aging and HandyDART if TransLink staff were directly involved in providing HandyDART service.

Large for-profit operators have a history of performance issues that affect riders and consume large amounts of transit agency staff time – including problems related to low wages and resulting staff turnover. Part of the problem is that it is impractically complex to align public service with the profit motive in large public transit systems – a contract that covered all aspects of quality service would be enormously complex and difficult to enforce.

Multiple disability rights organizations have supported in-house HandyDART service as a way to improve staff retention, on the basis that experienced operators provide better and more sensitive service.

The intractable problems with contracting out custom transit services, and the recognition of the benefits of living wages and decent working conditions, have resulted in a number of jurisdictions directly providing paratransit as a public service. The Regional District of Nanaimo, City of Nelson, District of Powell River and the Sunshine Coast Regional District all chose to provide BC Transit HandyDART and conventional transit directly as a public service rather than pay a multinational corporation to do so.

The BC government's recent decision that about 5,000 health care workers should be "once again directly employed by the government and health authorities" was based on the evidence that "employees who feel secure and safe in their jobs provide higher-quality care for people, and in turn employers can attract and retain staff at a higher and more consistent level."

### **Proper public sector comparator needed**

At this point, it is essential that TransLink conduct a proper and unbiased Public Sector Comparator (PSC) to compare the costs and benefits of continued outsourcing to insourcing of HandyDART. TransLink committed to do a multiple accounts evaluation PSC in 2016, but then reneged on this commitment.

HandyDART riders should be involved in selecting the criteria to be considered. And the union representing HandyDART workers should be involved in selecting the company to do the work, and have input into the design of the PSC. The full PSC, not just a summary, should be made public.

### **Electrification of HandyDART requires permanent facilities**

Electric transit vehicles have multiple benefits for riders including quieter smoother operation, and better air quality inside and outside the vehicle. These benefits are more important for HandyDART riders, many of whom have conditions exacerbated by pollution, than for the general public. Transitioning TransLink’s conventional bus fleet to quiet clean electric power while leaving the HandyDART fleet burning fossil fuels would be discriminatory and incompatible with the Transport 2050 commitment to equity.

However, it is not practical to electrify TransLink’s HandyDART fleet without permanent, publicly owned, operations and maintenance centres. All of TransLink’s HandyDART centres are leased temporary facilities. These, sometimes substandard, temporary facilities are also a factor in high staff turnover – substandard facilities translate into substandard working conditions.

It is time for TransLink to do what BC Transit Victoria has already done, and get funding from the provincial and federal governments for permanent operations centres with equipment for charging electric HandyDART vehicles. This would shift a significant proportion of the cost of HandyDART from TransLink’s operating budget to a capital expense. Capital expenses are eligible for federal and provincial funding, so this could be a major financial benefit for TransLink.

### **Multiple benefits of quality HandyDART**

There are many benefits to providing good quality transit service that is accessible to all, and poor quality paratransit is never a good choice. Quantifying the economic and social benefits of improving HandyDART service are beyond the scope of this study. But, given the costs and negative social consequences of inadequate service, improving HandyDART service is a very good investment.

*Failing to increase the amount of high-quality door-to-door custom transit service would impose substantial costs on the public health system and family care givers, as well as infringing on the rights of the increasing population of people living with disabilities.*

### **Access for Everyone – sidewalks, bus lanes, rolling & more**

Improving the conventional transit system, the sidewalk network, and numerous other features of our communities is essential to creating the “Access for Everyone” that Transport 2050 claims to aim for. Many, but not all, of these measures are mentioned in Transport 2050. And there is considerable potential to moderate the increase in HandyDART service that will be required, with adequate investment and re-allocation of road space. Some of these changes can also increase the efficiency of HandyDART service.

Some of the measures that have the potential to increase accessibility and moderate the need for HandyDART service increases include:

- Increasing regular transit service frequencies, and using larger buses, to reduce overcrowding.
- Improving transit priority measures, including transit lanes that can be used by HandyDART, and equipping HandyDART vehicles to activate transit signal priority.
- Installing accessible public washrooms at major transit transfer points.
- Creating many more high-quality bike and roll routes, and welcoming people riding power wheelchairs and mobility scooters to use these facilities.
- Building and improving sidewalks and crosswalks region wide. Transit is not accessible without good quality sidewalks all the way to and from the transit stop.
- Improving bus stops, with more transit shelters with spaces to sit and park wheelchairs out of the rain.
- Locating affordable housing, including for seniors and people with disabilities, in walkable areas with good quality transit.

Even with all these measures, a large increase in HandyDART service still will be needed.

### **Reallocating investment to meet Transport 2050 goals**

The provincial government has set a target of reducing light duty vehicle kilometres traveled 25% by 2030, and is making action to meet this target central to the forthcoming BC Clean Transportation Action Plan. And it makes no sense to spend billions widening highways if your objective is to have much less traffic in the future.

Funding should be shifted away from highway expansion, which makes traffic worse and increases greenhouse gas pollution, to public transit infrastructure including permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

**A balanced examination of insourcing HandyDART should be one of the first steps towards Access for Everyone**

In 2021 the Capital Regional District (CRD) voted to advocate for transportation investments that contribute to meeting regional sustainable transportation, affordability, and greenhouse gas reduction targets. A similar policy in Metro Vancouver could see billions of dollars shifted to transit capital projects, including new permanent HandyDART facilities, over the next decade.

### **Conclusion**

TransLink has some catching up to do, and a balanced examination of insourcing HandyDART should be one of the first steps towards Access for Everyone.

### 1) Introduction & context

This report documents a compelling case for a HandyDART system in Metro Vancouver that is publicly operated (rather than being contracted out), has highly prioritized access to the road network along with transit buses, and is electrified along with the rest of TransLink’s fleet. It is also crucial that HandyDART service is increased to meet the present need and keep up with the increasing number of people with disabilities in the region, which is largely linked to our aging population.

The promise of “Access for Everyone”, set out by TransLink and the Government of BC in Transport 2050, cannot be met without meeting these conditions.

HandyDART is a custom transit service for people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities who cannot use the regular transit system for at least some trips. HandyDART is not just for older seniors. The people who benefit from HandyDART include children on their way to school and specialized programs, young adults on their way to work and medical appointments, and middle-aged people going to rehabilitation programs. Any one of us – even young able-bodied people – could be using these kinds of services next year on a temporary or permanent basis; however, the probability of needing custom transit service increases greatly with age.

#### **The promise of Transport 2050 – Access for Everyone**

In early 2022 The TransLink Mayors’ Council and Board of Directors adopted Transport 2050, which boldly promises “Access for Everyone”.<sup>1</sup> Their message lists key “Challenges and Opportunities”, which include:

- “the accelerating climate emergency whose destructive impacts we are now clearly feeling”
- “the affordability crisis leaving many struggling”
- “relationship with Indigenous Peoples”
- “recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”

Notably absent from this list of challenges, and Transport 2050 as a whole, is Metro Vancouver’s aging population. Population aging translates to a higher number of people with disabilities (as discussed in section 2 below).

The Mayors’ Council and Board states that “each of these challenges also present us with an opportunity to do better — to become the just, equitable, inclusive, and carbon-free region we aspire to be.” P4

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<sup>1</sup> [www.translink.ca/plans-and-projects/strategies-plans-and-guidelines/transit-and-transportation-planning/transport-2050](http://www.translink.ca/plans-and-projects/strategies-plans-and-guidelines/transit-and-transportation-planning/transport-2050)

By ignoring the challenges of our aging population, Transport 2050 repeats the mistakes of the past, at the same time as promising to change and do better in the future:

“The transportation future we want is one where no one gets left behind.

To create this fairer and more just and inclusive transportation system that truly delivers on the promise of Access for Everyone, we need to take steps to help lessen the struggles and reduce the barriers that people face. In the past, transportation justice has not been central to our regional mission and so, as a region, we have catching up to do.” P 19

Not only does Transport 2050 mostly ignore the challenge of population aging it also makes HandyDART riders almost invisible. HandyDART (and associated terms like paratransit and custom transit are barely mentioned). The one HandyDART shown in the whole document is far in the background, behind a skateboarder. Making the most vulnerable transit riders invisible is a serious flaw in a document that is supposed to guide transportation in Metro Vancouver in the next crucial decade and beyond. TransLink has some serious “catching up to do.”

### **Provincial and regional district responsibility**

Transport 2050 also promises to break down the conflicting silos that have led to so many contradictory policies, and so much finger pointing between levels of government, in the past. It includes a letter from George Heyman, then Minister Responsible for TransLink, claiming that the provincial government has been a “partner in developing Transport 2050 since its inception” and that they are “supportive of the steps Transport 2050 takes towards advancing reconciliation and social equity to make it easier for everyone to travel around the region and access opportunities” (p 5).

Similar promises have been made in the past, but there are some indications that the provincial government may be making a real change of direction. The upcoming Clean Transportation Action plan is one example of the potential for positive change at the provincial level.

It is helpful to recognize that TransLink is a creation of the provincial government, receives provincial funding, and has a legislated responsibility to consider all relevant provincial objectives including those regarding paratransit (HandyDART) provision.

Transport 2050 notes that the “South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act requires TransLink to “consider regional land use objectives, provincial transportation and economic objectives, and provincial and regional environmental and emissions reduction objectives.” P 35

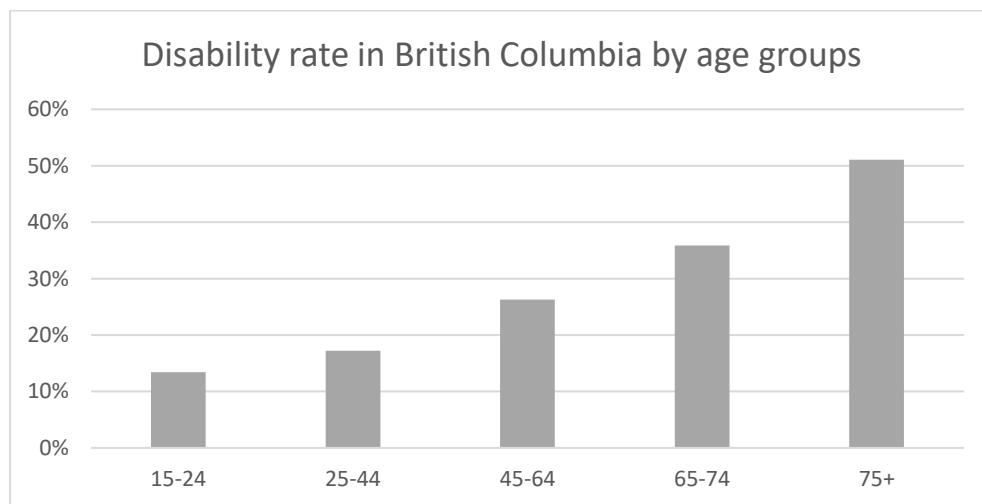
## 2) Aging population, growing HandyDART demand, and human rights

In 2017 the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation released a backgrounder titled *HandyDART: A Backbone of Provincial Healthcare*, which notes that TransLink's 2017 "10-Year Vision . . . will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region."<sup>2</sup>

**"Providing the services and urban environment older seniors need will be a defining social and political challenge"**

In the same year, Statistics Canada was conducting the most recent Canadian Survey on Disability. The rates of disability for British Columbia, ranging from 13% for the 15 to 24 age group to 51% for people 75 and over, are shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 – Disability increases with age, particularly past age 70**



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability<sup>3</sup>

The 2021 census revealed important information on Canada's aging population. The Canadian Press reported that "seniors over the age of 85 are the fastest-growing age group in the country, marking another milestone on the slow march to what experts warn will be a crisis in care for the country's elders. . . . The pace of aging is expected to accelerate with every new candle added to the boomer generation's birthday cake."<sup>4</sup>

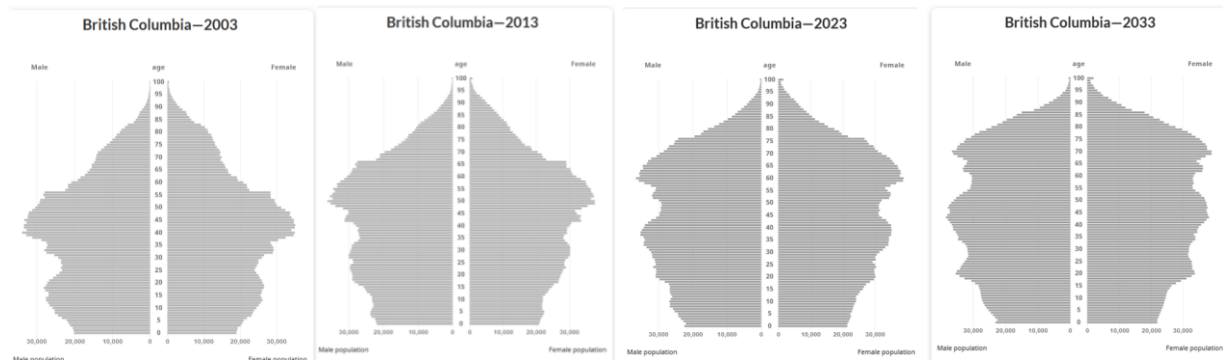
<sup>2</sup> [ecoplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Mayors-Council-HandyDART-backgrounder-April-2017.pdf](https://ecoplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Mayors-Council-HandyDART-backgrounder-April-2017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2019035-eng.htm](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2019035-eng.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [www.timescolonist.com/national-news/2021-census-shows-number-of-seniors-over-85-expected-to-triple-in-next-25-years-5303975](https://www.timescolonist.com/national-news/2021-census-shows-number-of-seniors-over-85-expected-to-triple-in-next-25-years-5303975)

This year the oldest people in the baby boom generation turn 78, and in the coming decade providing the services and urban environment older seniors need will be a defining social and political challenge in Metro Vancouver and across the country. Figure 2, the Statistics Canada age ‘pyramids’ (which become less and less pyramid shaped over time) below illustrate the scale of change over the past two decades and the coming one.

**Figure 2 – Age ‘pyramids’ show impact of Baby Boom generation aging 2003 - 2033**



Source: [www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/pyramid/index-en.htm](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/pyramid/index-en.htm)

The boomer generation is generally healthier and more active than previous generations, but disability increases sharply after age 70. A key question is how to provide the needed services so a larger proportion of older seniors can live independently, and transportation is a key and often neglected component of that.

The Canadian Press notes that “Wait-lists for long-term care beds can already stretch on for years, leaving people stuck in hospitals because there is nowhere else for them to go, or families struggling to care for their loved ones at home.” But the boomer generation had fewer children than previous generations, so a larger proportion don’t have family to provide care such as driving them to medical appointments and social activities. In addition, a significant proportion of the children of boomers don’t own cars or have driver’s licences. Meeting the “Access for Everyone” aspiration of Transport 2050 means that people with disabilities of any age should not have to have family who can drive them in order to live well.

More HandyDART service can reduce long-term care and hospital stay expenses. The BC Seniors Advocate states “On average, a long-term care bed costs taxpayers \$27,740 more per year than two hours of daily home support.”<sup>5</sup> Good paratransit service is one of the crucial supports that allows people to live independently.

<sup>5</sup> [www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/report-home-support-review/](http://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/report-home-support-review/)

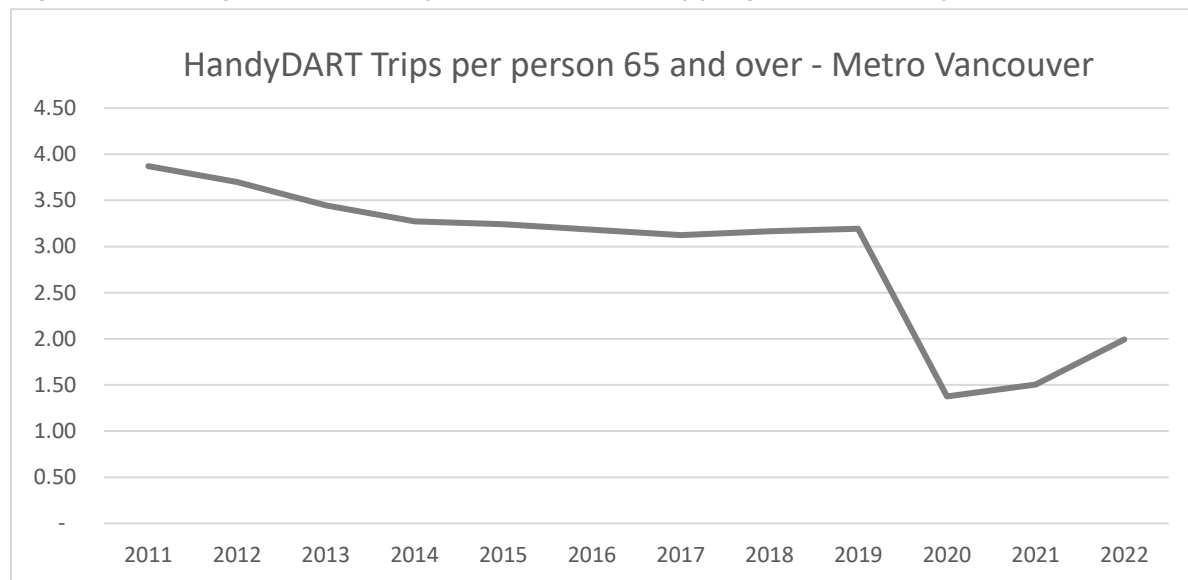
During the pandemic, substandard privatized long-term care cost lives and drove the societal recognition that public and non-profit provision of services to vulnerable populations is superior to what for-profit corporations provide.

TransLink held the number of HandyDART trips per capita approximately constant over the last decade, until the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the number of HandyDART trips per person 65 and over declined significantly between 2011 and 2019 as shown in Figure 3 below. In 2011 TransLink was providing 3.87 trips per year for every person 65 and over (down from 4.07 in 2008). By 2013, when the crisis of HandyDART service was documented in the report *Metro Vancouver's Aging Population and the Need for Improved HandyDART Service*, and widely reported in the media, the level had dropped to 3.45.<sup>6</sup> From 2017 to 2019 the levels ranged from 3.12 to 3.19 trips per person 65 and over.

**The number of people with disabilities will increase at almost twice the rate of population growth**

In 2019, before the COVID pandemic, TransLink provided twenty two percent less HandyDART service per person 65 and over than in 2008. *In 2022, with demand again outstripping supply as pandemic restrictions eased, TransLink provided 1.99 trips per senior, only half the HandyDART service per person 65 and over than in 2008.*

**Figure 3 - HandyDART service per senior was dropping even before pandemic**



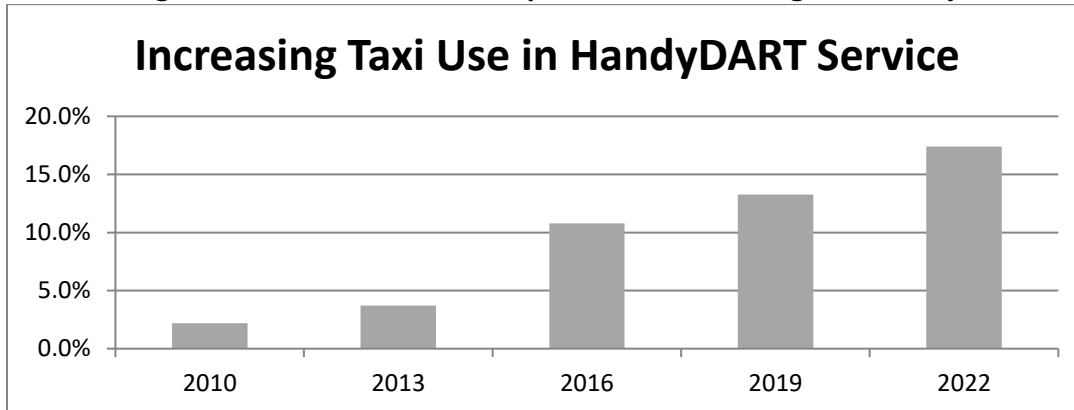
Data Sources: TransLink Data & Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf](http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf);  
[www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/handydart-trip-denials-up-670-since-2008-says-group-1.2433056](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/handydart-trip-denials-up-670-since-2008-says-group-1.2433056)

<sup>7</sup> January 2023 [www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710013501](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710013501)

In 2022 the percentage of taxi trips also reached 17%, reflecting the inability of the private contractor to attract, train, and retain workers in a tight labour market. This also seems to reflect a disregard for targets set in TransLink plans – the previous TransLink 10 Year Plan called for reducing the percentage of taxi trips to 7% by 2021.

**Figure 4 Taxi usage has climbed to 17%, despite TransLink’s target of 7% by 2021<sup>8</sup>**



Source: TransLink data

Experience in Metro Vancouver and elsewhere shows that substituting taxis for dedicated custom transit vehicles results in sub-standard safety and service, often without any real reduction in costs. The low pay and resulting high turnover in the taxi industry creates intractable problems. These serious issues with taxis in HandyDART service are discussed in the Appendix, and in more detail in the 2017 report *Metro Vancouver’s Aging Population and the need for Quality HandyDART Service*.<sup>9</sup>

According to Human Resources and Skill Development Canada, due to an aging population, the number of people with disabilities in Canada will increase at almost twice the rate of population growth through 2036.<sup>10</sup> Metro Vancouver has many of the specialized medical facilities in British Columbia, such as the G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre. Many with severe disabilities and serious medical conditions – particularly older people – will likely relocate here to access specialized healthcare in the coming years.

## **TransLink acknowledged HandyDART crisis in 2017, but not in Transport 2050**

In March 2017 TransLink published documents revealing that TransLink provides less HandyDART service per capita than comparable transit agencies. One document states:

<sup>8</sup> 2022 data updated to correct an error in the original version of this report.

<sup>9</sup> [ecoplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf](https://ecoplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> HRDC (2011) *Federal Disability Report* Figure 1.9.

Demand for HandyDART Currently Outstrips Supply and is Anticipated to Grow: Up until late 2016, there had been no increase in HandyDART service since 2009 . . . we heard from many customers that it can be difficult to get a trip when needed and that many customers have stopped calling out of frustration. In addition, HandyDART is currently providing fewer trips per capita than our peer custom transit agencies, which indicates that there is likely latent demand for the service. Furthermore, recent BC Stats projections indicate the number of people in Metro Vancouver aged 70 or older will increase by 55% over the next ten years, which could translate into a greater need for HandyDART service, as the incidence of disabilities increases at this age.

The same report states that HandyDART service “expansion in the Mayors’ Vision is expected to address the increased demand to some degree, but analysis shows that it is likely insufficient to catch up or keep pace with need.”<sup>11</sup>

The next month, the Mayors’ Council chimed in with this statement:

**The 10-Year Vision would still leave Metro Vancouver with half the service provided in similar Canadian cities**

“The 10-Year Vision will increase this service by 30% [but] will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region. This service shortfall is in large part a reflection of the lack of provincial support for this service. . .

The Mayors’ Council is calling on all B.C. political parties to . . . commit to improving service above and beyond the 30% increase proposed in the 10-Year Vision, so our residents have access services at a level comparable to other major Canadian cities.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no real acknowledgement of the need for increased HandyDART service in Transport 2050. The terms “HandyDART”, “custom transit” and “paratransit” are completely absent from the Transport 2050 executive summary. Transport 2050 does discuss the impacts of our aging population, stating “As our population ages, seniors transitioning away from driving — and encountering new accessibility challenges — will require more safe and comfortable choices, particularly as more people ‘age in place’.”

**TransLink provided twenty two percent less HandyDART service per person 65 and over in 2019 than in 2008.**

<sup>11</sup> Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Outcomes and Recommendations (March 22, 2017) [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HandyDART-Service-Review-March-2017.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HandyDART-Service-Review-March-2017.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [mayorscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Backgrounder-HandyDART-1.pdf](http://mayorscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Backgrounder-HandyDART-1.pdf)

However, this passage is found on page 161 and is not followed up with any substantive discussion of the need for improved HandyDART service.

Transport 2050 could be a step backwards, not forward, in TransLink's journey towards providing "Access for Everyone".

### **Legislature committee recommends more HandyDART**

The Legislature's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services BC Budget consultation reports have recommended "increasing accessible transportation options such as HandyDART" (or similar wording) for several years running including 2023.<sup>13</sup>

*A large and rapid increase in HandyDART service is needed to restore service to pre-COVID levels and reverse this reduction in service relative to need.*

Adequate HandyDART service is essential for many seniors and people with disability to live independently rather than going into long-term care, and the ongoing COVID pandemic will add to the need.

### **COVID has created more need for HandyDART**

A significant, but not yet well documented, percentage of the Canadian population has been disabled by COVID-19 already. Some of these disabilities will be permanent, and some will last for years. Those affected include all age groups including children, younger working age people, and seniors who were healthy and active before contracting COVID.<sup>14</sup>

Disabilities caused by COVID-19 will increase the need for HandyDART service, and other mobility options for people with disabilities, in both the short and long term. These disabilities will also reduce the availability of workers able to do the physically and mentally demanding work of operating a HandyDART vehicle and assisting passengers.

The ongoing COVID pandemic is having severe impacts on older seniors and people with disabilities.<sup>15</sup> The federal *COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group Report* documented access related harms including "social isolation and loss of access to supports [and] loss of access to services crucial to well-being, including occupational therapy, mental health services, and maintenance/repairs of disability aids."<sup>16</sup> Improved HandyDART service is one way of reducing this ongoing harm.

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<sup>13</sup> Quote is from p96 of Budget 2022 report -

[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/finances/budget/consultations](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/finances/budget/consultations)

<sup>14</sup> E.g. [www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-tsunami-of-disability-is-coming-as-a-result-of-long-covid/](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-tsunami-of-disability-is-coming-as-a-result-of-long-covid/); [www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/mar/30/long-covid-coronavirus-covid-pandemic-health](http://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/mar/30/long-covid-coronavirus-covid-pandemic-health); [www.webmd.com/covid/news/20230306/long-covid-takes-toll-on-health-care-system](http://www.webmd.com/covid/news/20230306/long-covid-takes-toll-on-health-care-system)

<sup>15</sup> [thetyee.ca/Analysis/2022/03/30/Stop-Leaving-Disabled-People-Behind/](http://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2022/03/30/Stop-Leaving-Disabled-People-Behind/)

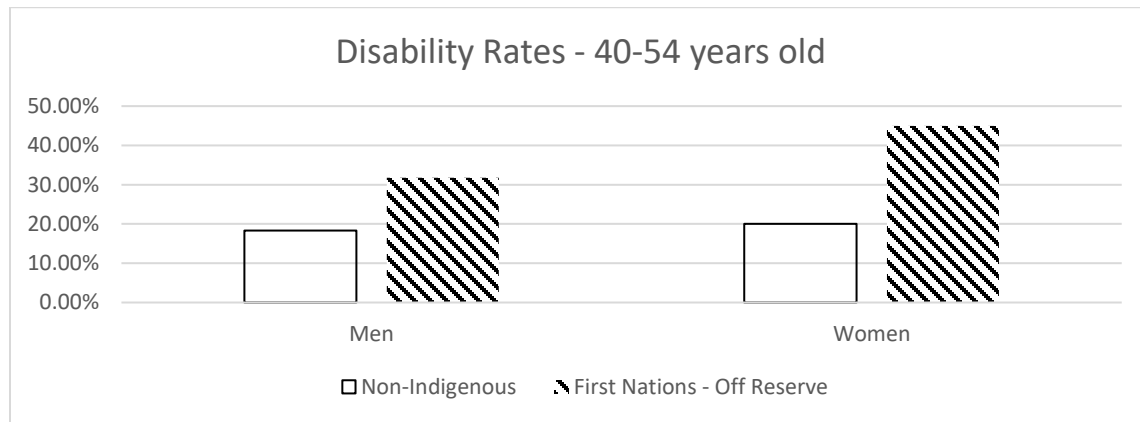
<sup>16</sup> [www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/disability-advisory-group/reports/2020-advisory-group-report.html#h2.03](http://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/disability-advisory-group/reports/2020-advisory-group-report.html#h2.03)

## Indigenous peoples and disability

Transport 2050 notes that Indigenous people emphasized the need for “improved accessibility for people with disabilities and mobility challenges” in the consultation phase. However, crucial context is missing from Transport 2050.

The British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS) asserts that the “Indigenous population of Canada experience a disability rate much higher than that of the general population, at approximately 30% to 35%”.<sup>17</sup> This is backed up by Statistics Canada, which produced a study of disability rates of Indigenous peoples in Canada for the first time in 2019.<sup>18</sup> For example, the rate of disability for First Nations women 40 to 54 years old is 45%, more than double the rate for non-Indigenous women the same age as shown in Figure 5 below.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 5. The disability rate of First Nations women is more than double that of non-Indigenous women 40-54 years old**



Source: Statistics Canada - *Indigenous people with disabilities in Canada* (2019).

In this study Statistics Canada states that

“In Canada, disability is defined using the social model of disability, which takes into account not just a person’s impairments or task difficulties, but also the added impact of environmental barriers to create disability. These environmental barriers can be... attitudinal resulting in discrimination and exclusion.”

By this definition, inadequate transit service (particularly HandyDART service) increases disability rates among Indigenous people and the general population rather than merely worsening conditions for persons with disabilities.

<sup>17</sup> [www.bcands.bc.ca/](http://www.bcands.bc.ca/)

<sup>18</sup> [www.straight.com/news/1336741/statistics-canada-reports-high-rates-disability-among-inuit-metis-and-reserve-first](http://www.straight.com/news/1336741/statistics-canada-reports-high-rates-disability-among-inuit-metis-and-reserve-first);

<sup>19</sup> P3 [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2019005-eng.pdf?st=OX64TB2s](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2019005-eng.pdf?st=OX64TB2s)

TransLink 2050 states that:

“Indigenous communities were purposefully isolated from society, causing marginalization, economic disparity, and impacts on the health and safety of Indigenous Peoples. TransLink collectively acknowledges that past decisions have shaped our region’s current transportation system, including access and mobility options being unavailable for many Indigenous communities” P 10.

These health impacts combined with the lack of “access and mobility options” translate to elevated disability rates. If Access for Everyone is to include Indigenous Peoples, TransLink needs to greatly improve accessibility for persons with disabilities (including HandyDART service) region wide but particularly on reserve lands and other areas with high indigenous populations.

### **3) Public HandyDART essential for increasing and improving service**

The rationale for contracting out transit services has been that as workers have less job security working for a private contractor, wages will be enough lower to offset the corporations profit margin and additional administrative expenses. However, with an aging population and the effects of the COVID pandemic, transit agencies across North America are having great difficulty attracting and retaining enough qualified workers.

Decent wages, working conditions and future prospects are now essential for attracting enough workers to maintain, never mind increase, service. And TransLink is failing to attract and retain workers to their HandyDART service.

Over the last few years, TransLink’s HandyDART operations have been in the hands of four different corporations. TransLink terminated their contract US based MV Transportation group (MVT Canadian Bus) and entered into a contract with UK-based FirstGroup in 2017. This transfer was controlled by TransLink, but nevertheless caused considerable disruption.

However, in 2021, EQT AB of Sweden bought out FirstGroup’s North American operations and subsequently separated the transit and school bus operations. In 2022 EQT sold the division that operates HandyDART for TransLink to Transdev, which is headquartered in France. TransLink had no control over these two transfers between multinational corporations.

Every time a new contractor takes over, years of efficiency gains are lost as new management implements new procedures. Employee morale suffers along with efficiency, quality of service, and workplace health & safety.

The cost of HandyDART is inflated due to the funding of profit and the cost of administering contracted out services meanwhile creating instability that conventional transit is not burdened by. Stability is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified workers and there is presently a nearly unprecedented shortage of qualified workers.

Contacting out also means that TransLink staff do not gain the knowledge and experience they would if involved directly in HandyDART operations. It seems likely that Transport 2050 would not have the glaring gaps it has regarding aging and HandyDART if TransLink staff were directly involved in providing HandyDART service.

The original shift of all TransLink HandyDART services from mainly non-profit contractors to the series of for profit corporations had decidedly mixed results. The consolidation to one contract reduced some of the previous problems with trips between zones served by different contractors. However, other problems emerged with service quality and efficiency. The 2012 TransLink Commissioner's report states:



HANDYDART RIDER SPEAKS TO MEDIA

"The consolidation of operations to one contractor does not appear to have produced any economies of scale. Instead, slippage has occurred in service cost efficiency and effectiveness, as well as productivity."<sup>20</sup>

The privatization of HandyDART services also had a negative impact on HandyDART riders, including poor service and a strike largely resulting from MVT's attempt to eliminate pensions for workers.<sup>21</sup>

Privatization in conventional public transit service has a poor track record – most notably the disastrous experience from the UK, including the London Underground 'public private partnership' which cost the public billions and went bankrupt in 2007.<sup>22</sup> The problems with trying to create and enforce contracts that create financial incentives for providing good service have proven to be immense, and the failures

**A contract that covered all aspects of quality service would be enormously complex and difficult to enforce**

<sup>20</sup> Shirocca Consulting (2012) TransLink Efficiency Review. P 42.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew Burrows (Nov 25, 2009) *Georgia Straight* "HandyDart strike leaves disabled passengers out in the cold"

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Todd Litman (2011) *Contrasting Visions of Urban Transport - Critique of "Fixing Transit: The Case For Privatization"* Victoria Transport Policy Institute [vtpi.org/cont\\_vis.pdf](http://vtpi.org/cont_vis.pdf); CUPE (2008) *Metronet P3 failure 'spectacular'*; Centre for Civic Governance (2016) *Back in House: Why local governments are bringing services home*. [columbiainstitute.eco/research/our-latest-publication-is-out-back-in-house-workbook-why-local-governments-are-bringing-services-home/](http://columbiainstitute.eco/research/our-latest-publication-is-out-back-in-house-workbook-why-local-governments-are-bringing-services-home/)

have been extremely costly both in terms of financial cost and the impact of poor transit service on individuals and society.

In the conventional transit sector large for-profit operators have a history of performance issues that affect riders and consume large amounts of transit agency staff time – including problems related to low wages and resulting staff turnover. As one former public sector manager with experience with contracting out put it:

“If you had a contractor that wanted to run the business and not maximize their profit at every turn, then it would be fine . . . As it tends to work out, you’re spending 85 percent of the time making sure that they’re doing everything in the contract instead of doing the things you need to be doing”<sup>23</sup>

The idea that the poor treatment of employees and poor service to riders goes hand in hand is illustrated by the fact that some full time paratransit drivers in the US have to rely on food stamps to feed their children. For example, speaking at an event organized by the Washington Interfaith Network (an affiliate of the Metro Vancouver Alliance) Karen Reed spoke about how her and her daughter rely on social services and were homeless for three months despite her working far more than full time hours for First Transit.<sup>24</sup> Corporations that pay substandard wages and impose miserable working conditions when they can get away with it cannot be expected to treat vulnerable riders with any more consideration.

**Poor treatment of employees and poor service to riders goes hand in hand**

### **Private Contracts Impractically Complex**

In the book *A Very Public Solution* the late Australian transportation planning professor Paul Mees put forward a compelling and well documented case that for-profit companies should not be involved in coordinating and planning functions in conventional public transit. Mees explains that it is impractically complex to align public service with the profit motive in large public transit systems.<sup>25</sup> The same argument applies to custom transit – a contract that covered all aspects of quality service would be enormously complex and difficult to enforce.

### **The public solution**

In 2005 the Coalition of HandyDART Users (CHU) published a report calling for HandyDART to be operated as a subsidiary of TransLink rather than being contracted out. One of the

<sup>23</sup> Zusha Elinson (March 9, 2013) “MV Transportation woes go beyond Tahoe” *Lake Tahoe News*. [laketahoenews.net/2013/03/mv-transportation-woes-go-beyond-tahoe](http://laketahoenews.net/2013/03/mv-transportation-woes-go-beyond-tahoe)

<sup>24</sup> Video by ATU Local 689 (Jan 10, 2015) *Metro Access Operator Karen Reed tells Mayor Bowser of Perils of Outsourcing Buses in the District*. <https://youtu.be/NybfVVtwaA>

<sup>25</sup> (2000) *A very public solution: Transport in the dispersed city*. Melbourne University Press.

main justifications for this proposed change was to improve staff retention, as they believed that experienced operators provide better and more sensitive service:

“The two things that handyDART users care about the most are:

- 1) expanding the availability and flexibility of rides, and
- 2) a safe and professional service with well-trained drivers.

Custom transit employees are the people we interact with every day. Drivers have a job that is very distinct from that of conventional bus drivers, including:

- Experience, training and sensitivity with a range of disabilities, conditions and impairments.
- Provision of a door-to-door service.
- Planning custom routes.
- Safety and securement of passengers.
- One-on-one attention for passengers.

For those of us using handyDART, the employees we most appreciate are those with experience and sensitivity. These are qualities and abilities that drivers develop through serving customers with a variety of needs over time. This is why it is CHU’s position that longevity and training of employees is crucial to a safe, quality service for us – and why we are proposing a permanent subsidiary. The instability of the current contracting process undermines staff longevity.”<sup>26</sup>

Custom transit drivers facing substandard pay and working conditions quit as soon as they find better jobs, and the only way to overcome this is to improve wages, benefits and working conditions. A TRB report asserts that the “difficulty in hiring, training, and retaining qualified paratransit drivers will continue to be a problem in the paratransit industry until the industry finds a way to compensate quality drivers.”<sup>27</sup>

Given the poor track record that for-profit companies have for service quality and cost effectiveness, CHU’s recommendation that HandyDART be operated as a publicly owned subsidiary of TransLink should be seriously considered.

As Washington D.C.-area disability rights advocate Carol Tyson said at a transit forum in 2015, “the system that encourages privatization and discourages ensuring workers are paid living wages and benefits is intertwined with the system that denies the supports and services that people with disabilities need to remain in the community.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ann Vrlak (2005) *Engaging the Future: Making HandyDART a TransLink Subsidiary*. Coalition of handyDART Users. P 13. [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Engaging-Future-2005.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Engaging-Future-2005.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Roy Lave & Rosemary Mathias (2000) *State of the Art of Paratransit*. Transportation Research Board. Pp 3-4

<sup>28</sup> (Oct 14, 2015) DC Fair Transit Forum [https://youtu.be/fVV-rextu\\_0?t=3m36s](https://youtu.be/fVV-rextu_0?t=3m36s)

### Examples of shifts to In-house provision

The intractable problems with contracting out custom transit services, and the recognition of the benefits of living wages and decent working conditions, have resulted in a number of jurisdictions directly providing the service as a public service. Some examples include:

- In 2015, Calgary HandiBus was taken over and amalgamated with Access Calgary. The HandiBus operators become Calgary Transit employees.<sup>29</sup>
- The City of Ottawa took over the operation of Para Transpo in 2007 after numerous problems with the service First Bus Canada was providing.<sup>30</sup>
- After a scathing audit, in 2015 the Alberta municipality of Wood Buffalo (Fort McMurray) announced it would terminate its 15 year contract with Tok Transit after only two years and deliver both conventional and Paratransit in-house.<sup>31 32</sup> According to one media report “many of the complaints the auditors heard centred around specialized transit provided to seniors and people with disabilities.”<sup>33</sup>
- In 2016 the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority took over managing the VTA Paratransit service directly after the FBI raided the offices of the company operating their paratransit service, to investigate allegations of over billing.<sup>34</sup>

These are examples of the “growing international trend” of ‘insourcing’ services that were previously contracted out.<sup>35</sup> A prime example of the trend is the BC government’s recent decision that about 5,000 health care workers should be “once again directly employed by the government and health authorities”.<sup>36</sup> A government media release regarding this insourcing decision states that “Evidence has shown that employees who feel secure and safe in their jobs provide higher-quality care for people, and in turn employers can attract and retain staff at a higher and more consistent level.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>29</sup> City of Calgary (May 6, 2015) *Calgary HandiBus employees joining Calgary Transit family* [newsroom.calgary.ca/calgary-handibus-employees-joining-calgary-transit-family](https://newsroom.calgary.ca/calgary-handibus-employees-joining-calgary-transit-family)

<sup>30</sup> Hugh Adami (Sept 2, 2013) Ottawa Citizen “For disabled mom, Para Transpo’s a tough call” [ottawacitizen.com/news/ottawa%20&%20area/public-citizen-for-disabled-mom-para-transpos-a-tough-call](https://ottawacitizen.com/news/ottawa%20&%20area/public-citizen-for-disabled-mom-para-transpos-a-tough-call)

<sup>31</sup> Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (2015) *FAQ: New Era For Transit in Wood Buffalo*.

<sup>32</sup> Centre for Civic Governance (2016) *Back in House: Why local governments are bringing services home*. [columbiainstitute.eco/research/our-latest-publication-is-out-back-in-house-workbook-why-local-governments-are-bringing-services-home/](https://columbiainstitute.eco/research/our-latest-publication-is-out-back-in-house-workbook-why-local-governments-are-bringing-services-home/)

<sup>33</sup> Rebekah Benoit (2015) “RMWB commits in-house transit services will be better after terminating contract” [fortmacconnect.ca](https://fortmacconnect.ca)

<sup>34</sup> NBC Bay Area (Nov. 3, 2016) *FBI Raids Paratransit Operator Prompting VTA to Scramble to Help Disabled Riders* [nbcbayarea.com/news/local/FBI-Raids-Paratransit-Operator-Prompting-VTA-to-Scramble-For-Alternate-Plans-399884971.html](https://nbcbayarea.com/news/local/FBI-Raids-Paratransit-Operator-Prompting-VTA-to-Scramble-For-Alternate-Plans-399884971.html)

<sup>35</sup> Keith Reynolds, Gaetan Royer and Charley Beresford (21 Sep 2016) *Like London and Paris, Sooke BC Is Voting Privatization Out of Style*. [theyyee.ca/Opinion/2016/09/21/Sooke-Voting-Privatization-Out/](https://theyyee.ca/Opinion/2016/09/21/Sooke-Voting-Privatization-Out/)

<sup>36</sup> [theyyee.ca/News/2022/12/20/Health-Workers-Celebrate-After-Bitter-Battle-Rights/](https://theyyee.ca/News/2022/12/20/Health-Workers-Celebrate-After-Bitter-Battle-Rights/)

<sup>37</sup> Cleaning, dietary workers coming back in-house at B.C. hospitals (Aug 30 2021) [news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0157-001703](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0157-001703)

The Regional District of Nanaimo, City of Nelson (Regional District of Central Kootenay), District of Powell River and the Sunshine Coast Regional District all chose to provide BC Transit HandyDART and conventional transit directly as a public service rather than pay a multinational corporation to do so.<sup>38</sup>

### **Proper public sector comparator needed**

At this point, it is essential that TransLink conduct a proper and unbiased Public Sector Comparator (PSC) to compare the costs and benefits of continued outsourcing to insourcing of HandyDART.

Corporate consulting firms like PwC and KPMG are highly biased to favor privatization. Rachel Tansey of the Corporate Europe Observatory refers to them as “Professional (privatisation of) services firms.”<sup>39</sup>

In 2015 I recommended that HandyDART riders be involved in selecting an outside group to conduct a participatory Multiple Accounts Evaluation PSC. I also suggested that public confidence in the results would be enhanced if the group doing the work was conducted by a smaller firm and led by professionals with a code of conduct requiring clear and accurate communications with the public.

In 2016, then TransLink CEO Kevin Desmond committed to a ‘public sector comparator’ to evaluate the costs and benefits of bringing HandyDART in-house as part of a “Custom Transit Service Delivery Review . . . in response to a number of questions that had been raised at TransLink Board meetings, particularity around responsiveness to customer concerns, and the standards and quality of HandyDART and taxi services, and the HandyDART service model.” The “Stakeholder Advisory Committee [was supposed to help develop] evaluation criteria for service delivery models”<sup>40</sup>

The Custom Transit Service Delivery Review initially included a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) of service delivery models. Multiple Accounts Evaluation allows multiple factors, such as safety and quality of service to be evaluated (TransLink regularly uses MAE evaluations in evaluating projects such as rapid transit lines).

However, at some stage the MAE was terminated, and only a financial analysis was done. TransLink hired PwC to do the financial review. PwC is one of the scandal-prone big international accounting & consulting partnerships “the most secretive of all large global

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<sup>38</sup> [www.bctransit.com/about/funding-and-governance/regional](http://www.bctransit.com/about/funding-and-governance/regional); [mypowellrivernow.com/33024/news/service-provider-change-coming-for-paratransit-and-handydart/](http://mypowellrivernow.com/33024/news/service-provider-change-coming-for-paratransit-and-handydart/)

<sup>39</sup> [corporateeurope.org/en/power-lobbies/2017/06/creeping-privatisation-healthcare](http://corporateeurope.org/en/power-lobbies/2017/06/creeping-privatisation-healthcare)

<sup>40</sup> *Custom Transit Service Delivery Review* [translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx](http://translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx) (accessed Sept. 21, 2017).

institutions.”<sup>41</sup> It is also one of the firms the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives identifies as having “potential conflict of interest, because accurate auditing would sometimes speak against corporate practices that yield general consulting revenues” such as contracting out and ‘private public partnerships.’<sup>42</sup> The names and qualifications of the people who did the financial analysis were not included in the thin and vaguely worded report summary that was released to the public.

PwC was apparently not informed that the MAE had been cancelled and wrote that: “The outputs from the PSC were incorporated into the final Multiple Account Evaluation (“MAE”) used by TransLink and the project Stakeholder Advisory Committee to prepare the final recommendation to the TransLink Board.”[sic]<sup>43</sup>

As should be expected, PwC’s report suggested that contracting out would save money, apparently on the basis that wage rates and benefits would be suppressed compared to in-house provision.

This time a proper, transparent, Public Sector Comparator is needed. HandyDART riders should be involved in selecting the criteria to be considered. And the union representing HandyDART workers should be involved in selecting the company to do the work, and have input into the design of the PSC. The full PSC, not just a summary, should be made public.

#### **4) Electrification of HandyDART requires permanent facilities**

Electric transit vehicles have multiple benefits for riders including quieter smoother operation, and better air quality inside and outside the vehicle. These benefits are more important for HandyDART riders, many of whom have conditions exacerbated by pollution, than for the general public. Transitioning TransLink’s conventional bus fleet to quiet clean electric power while leaving the HandyDART fleet burning fossil fuels would be discriminatory and incompatible with the Transport 2050 commitment to equity.

With provincial, federal and regional funds, BC Transit Victoria has built a new permanent HandyDART centre to “respond to the growing needs for handyDART services in Greater Victoria [with] infrastructure to support a fully electric fleet... installed during

<sup>41</sup> [michaelwest.com.au/pwc-scandal-whos-guarding-the-guards-nobody/](http://michaelwest.com.au/pwc-scandal-whos-guarding-the-guards-nobody/)

<sup>42</sup> Stuart Murray (2006) CCPA. Value for Money? Cautionary lessons about P3s from British Columbia. p 32 [policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC\\_Office\\_Pubs/bc\\_2006/P3\\_value\\_for\\_money.pdf](http://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2006/P3_value_for_money.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> (March 2017) TransLink Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Public Sector Comparator Executive Report for Public Board Meeting. P2 [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TL-HandyDART-Public-Sector-Comparator-March-2017.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TL-HandyDART-Public-Sector-Comparator-March-2017.pdf)

construction”<sup>44</sup> In contrast, TransLink has a detailed Low Carbon Fleet Transition Plan that fails to even mention HandyDART.<sup>45</sup>

Multiple manufacturers are already taking orders for electric vehicles suitable for HandyDART use. Many of the present HandyDART vehicles are based on the Ford Transit chassis, and Ford is already taking orders for the electric Transit chassis. As a major purchaser of paratransit vehicles and small buses TransLink is well positioned to lead in the testing of new types of electric vehicles and charging systems rather than passively waiting as other transit agencies to do so.

However, it is not practical to electrify TransLink’s HandyDART fleet without permanent, publicly owned, operations and maintenance centres. All of TransLink’s HandyDART centres are leased temporary facilities. These, sometimes substandard, temporary facilities are also a factor in high staff turnover – substandard facilities translate into substandard working conditions and erode staff morale. If HandyDART lags far behind the rest of the transit system in electrification, this will also erode morale and make it harder to attract and retain qualified operators.

**Capital expenses (particularly for the electrification of transit) are eligible for federal and provincial funding, so this could be a major financial benefit for TransLink**

It is time for TransLink to do what Victoria has already done and get funding from the provincial and federal governments for permanent operations centres with equipment for charging electric HandyDART vehicles. This would shift a significant proportion of the cost of HandyDART from TransLink’s operating budget (which is largely funded by property taxes and fares) to a capital expense. Capital expenses (particularly for the electrification of transit) are eligible for federal and provincial funding, so this could be a major financial benefit for TransLink.

## 5) Multiple Benefits of Quality HandyDART

There are many benefits to providing good quality transit service that is accessible to all, and poor quality paratransit is never a good choice. Accessible transit, including HandyDART, evolved as our society acknowledged the benefits of allowing people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities to live and participate in society rather than being physically segregated in institutions or isolated at home.

A report by the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) asserts that even a small reduction in the barriers to employment and education for people with disabilities would

<sup>44</sup> [www.bctransit.com/viewroyal/handydart](http://www.bctransit.com/viewroyal/handydart)

<sup>45</sup> [www.translink.ca/news/2020/february/translink%20low%20carbon%20fleet%20strategy](http://www.translink.ca/news/2020/february/translink%20low%20carbon%20fleet%20strategy); [www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/media-releases/2021/january/translink\\_low\\_carbon\\_fleet\\_transition\\_plan\\_update\\_2021\\_01\\_18.pdf](http://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/media-releases/2021/january/translink_low_carbon_fleet_transition_plan_update_2021_01_18.pdf)

have annual economic benefits in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The study also suggests that reductions in health care costs with improvements to accessible transit would be substantial.<sup>46</sup> There are economic benefits of freeing family care-givers to seek employment and costs borne by the public health system to forcing people with disabilities into institutions.

This CUTA report also identifies substantial safety benefits to accessible transit improvements. People 70 and older get into more crashes per kilometre than any other group except young males.<sup>47</sup> Without good options, people will be tempted to keep driving even when their ability to do so safely is impaired.

**Accessible transportation services are a key component in helping seniors to stay active, involved and engaged in their communities**

With an aging population, it will be essential to have high quality programs, and transportation to these programs, so that older people with disabilities can fully participate in their communities. The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO) asserts that "Accessible transportation services are a key component in helping seniors to stay active, involved and engaged in their communities."<sup>48</sup> Custom transit services such as HandyDART are essential for meeting the growing demand not met by regular transit service.

Quantifying the economic and social benefits of improving HandyDART service, along with improvements to the rest of the transit system, are beyond the scope of this study. But, given the costs and negative social consequences of inadequate service, improving HandyDART service is a very good investment.

*Failing to increase the amount of high-quality door-to-door custom transit service would impose substantial costs on the public health system and family care givers, as well as infringing on the rights of the increasing population of people living with disabilities. And given the shortage of qualified workers, it is impractical to provide the volume and quality of service needed without insourcing the (presently outsourced) HandyDART service in Metro Vancouver as discussed in section 2 above.*

<sup>46</sup> CUTA (2013) *Value Case for Accessible Transit in Canada*. [cutaactu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/cutareport\\_valuecaseforaccessibletransitincanada.pdf](http://cutaactu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/cutareport_valuecaseforaccessibletransitincanada.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Statistics Canada (2011) *Profile of seniors' transportation habits*. [statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11619-eng.htm](http://statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11619-eng.htm)

<sup>48</sup> (April 2013) COSCO News. P 10

## 6) Access for Everyone – sidewalks, bus lanes, rolling & more

It is tempting to think that the answer to providing accessible transportation is simply to force some of the people who now use HandyDART onto the regular transit system, which is now equipped with low-floor buses and other features to reduce barriers for people with disabilities. This approach is exactly the opposite of what Transport 2050 promises regarding equity, as it would likely result in many of the most vulnerable HandyDART passengers becoming isolated and unable to access transit.<sup>49</sup>

Transport 2050 includes a “bold vision to build out an extensive network of transit that is both fast (competitive with cars) and reliable, travelling in dedicated lanes, free from congestion” (P 29). If this is done in a way that maximizes the benefits for HandyDART, including equipping HandyDART vehicles to activate transit signal priority, it could significantly improve HandyDART cost effectiveness, speed, and reliability.

Improving the conventional transit system, the sidewalk network, and numerous other features of our communities is essential to creating the “Access for Everyone” that Transport 2050 claims to aim for. Many, but not all, of these measures are mentioned in Transport 2050. And there is considerable potential to moderate the increase in HandyDART service that will be required, with adequate investment and re-allocation of road space. Some of these changes can also increase the efficiency of HandyDART service.

Some of the measures that have the potential to increase accessibility and moderate the need for HandyDART service increases include:

- Increasing regular transit service frequencies, and using larger buses, to reduce overcrowding. Overcrowding makes accessing transit very difficult, and even dangerous, for many people with disabilities.
- Improving transit priority measures, including transit lanes (and busways on bus rapid transit routes) that can be used by HandyDART vehicles and equipping HandyDART vehicles to activate transit signal priority.
- Installing accessible public washrooms at rapid transit stations and major transit transfer points.
- Creating more spaces on buses for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and baby carriages. Most buses have only two spaces, and these are often full on some routes.



**MOBILITY SCOOTER ON  
PROTECTED BIKE & ROLL LANE**

<sup>49</sup> E.g. [www.straight.com/news/jean-swanson-handydart-users-oppose-proposed-application-procedures-sure-to-reduce-ridership](http://www.straight.com/news/jean-swanson-handydart-users-oppose-proposed-application-procedures-sure-to-reduce-ridership)

- Extend the scope of the “walking, cycling, and transit skills training, resources, and support programs” promised in Transport 2050 to include wheelchairs and mobility scooters.<sup>50</sup>
- Creating many more high-quality bike and roll routes, with changes in regulations and signage to clarify that people riding power wheelchairs and mobility scooters are permitted and encouraged to use these facilities.<sup>51</sup>
- Building and improving sidewalks and crosswalks region wide. Transit is not accessible without good quality sidewalks all the way to and from the transit stop. One dangerous street crossing can make a trip dangerous and terrifying for a frail senior with mobility disabilities.
- Improving bus stops, with more transit shelters with spaces to sit and park wheelchairs out of the rain.
- Making bus stops accessible to wheelchairs. Significant progress has been made in making bus stops accessible, but many bus stops are still not accessible.
- Clarifying Transport 2050’s ambition regarding making electric bicycles and micromobility devices affordable for people living on low incomes to explicitly prioritize mobility scooters and wheelchairs.<sup>52</sup>
- Locating the services used by people with disabilities, including medical facilities, on major transit routes. And improving transit service and reliability to existing facilities.
- Locating affordable housing, including for seniors and people with disabilities, in walkable areas with good quality transit.

Many of these improvements would require cooperation between multiple levels of government and funding agencies, and Transport 2050 is a significant step forward in that it proposes coordinated action led by TransLink.

**Bus stops are only accessible if the neighbourhood has good sidewalks and crosswalks**

These changes also involve considerable amounts of money – for example providing increased transit capacity and building sidewalks will likely cost billions in capital costs alone. In the case of transit overcrowding at peak periods, on some routes improved HandyDART service might be more cost effective than increasing regular service enough to allow reasonable and reliable access for vulnerable riders.

Other changes, such as concentrating health care facilities and employment in walkable areas with good quality accessible transit, will realistically happen only over decades and only with much stronger commitment from governments, including municipalities and the

<sup>50</sup> Section 4.2.6. p 183.

<sup>51</sup> For current background on the use of wheelchairs and mobility scooters on bike and roll routes see [www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/city-council-bike-lane-pilot-1.6218673](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/city-council-bike-lane-pilot-1.6218673)

<sup>52</sup> Transport 2050 messaging regarding wheelchairs and mobility scooters is inconsistent. See sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.4

province. So far, the implementation of regional plans has been inconsistent – making it more difficult for people with disabilities to get where they need to go.

## 7) Reallocating investment to meet Transport 2050 goals

People with disabilities tend to have much lower incomes than people who do not. This is largely related to the barriers to employment they face, resulting in both lower income during working years and lower retirement income. According to the Disability Without Poverty Network, about one in five people who reported an activity limitation live in poverty. Individuals relying on the Persons with Disability benefit live well below the poverty line – the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off.<sup>53</sup>

People with disabilities living in poverty need affordable transportation. Even regular transit fares for using HandyDART are a barrier. The half-price taxi saver coupons available from TransLink are far too expensive for many to use regularly, even for short trips; the social expectation to tip taxi drivers poses an additional barrier.

People with disabilities face significant barriers in getting to potential employment locations, given that many cannot drive even if able to purchase and operate a reliable car or accessible van.

### The transportation planning and advocacy gap

One of the acknowledged failures of regional planning in Metro Vancouver has been the failure to coordinate transportation and land use planning to concentrate employment and residential development in transit and pedestrian friendly areas. For example, the provincial government took on \$4.2 billion in debt for the expansion of Highway 1 and the Port Mann Bridge. The project was funded despite being opposed by the Regional District Board on the basis that it conflicted with regional transit-oriented land use objectives and would stimulate automobile dependant residential and commercial land use.

**While employment is an important issue, so is the ability to participate fully in society. People with disabilities have a right to social activity and to access recreation facilities**

Neither TransLink nor the Metro Vancouver Regional District have shown real leadership on transportation planning in the region in recent years, instead allowing the provincial government to proceed with billions of dollars of highway expansion projects (without even opposing federal funding going to these projects instead of transit improvements).

<sup>53</sup> Disability Without Poverty Network (2012) *Overdue: The Case for Increasing the Persons with Disabilities Benefit in BC*. P5.

As a result of this failure of regional planning, much of the recent employment growth has been located in automobile-dominated office parks or other locations with poor transit service and incomplete sidewalk networks. Even young people without disabilities find accessing these new employment locations by transit and walking a severe challenge. Given that many older buildings are not wheelchair accessible, this means that many of the newer accessible worksites are inaccessible without HandyDART – even for the proportion of people with disabilities who can use regular transit.

While employment is an important issue, so is the ability to participate fully in society. Lower income people, including people of all ages with disabilities, have a right to social activity and to access recreation facilities and parks. Restricting HandyDART service, or imposing higher fares, would further isolate those in deep poverty. Social isolation is associated with a wide range of negative physical and mental health impacts, so inadequate HandyDART service translates to increased health care costs and shorter lifespans for some of the most vulnerable.

In an ideal world Metro Vancouver would rapidly be transitioning to an age-friendly region with greatly improved access for people with disabilities. But the fact is that people with disabilities are living and looking for work where many recently developed areas are inaccessible without an automobile or custom transit. Improved HandyDART service is essential for overcoming the barriers exacerbated by recent regional planning and transportation infrastructure decisions.

As discussed above, TransLink is legislatively obligated to consider provincial policy objectives. The provincial government has set a target of reducing light duty vehicle kilometres traveled 25% by 2030, and is making action to meet this target central to the forthcoming BC Clean Transportation Action Plan.<sup>54</sup> And it makes no sense to spend billions widening highways if your objective is to have much less traffic in the future.

The obvious implication is that funding should be shifted away from highway expansion, which makes traffic worse and increases greenhouse gas pollution, to public transit infrastructure including permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

**A similar policy in Metro Vancouver could see billions of dollars shifted to transit**

In 2021 the Capital Regional District (CRD) unanimously approved a groundbreaking new policy on transportation infrastructure prioritization in the region. Greater Victoria's regional district is now prepared to advocate for transportation investments that contribute to meeting regional sustainable transportation, affordability, and greenhouse gas reduction

<sup>54</sup> [www.pibc.bc.ca/sites/default/files/internal\\_pages\\_pdfs/planning-west/PIBC-PW-Winter2022-CleanBC-Roadmap-PG22-24-Web.pdf](http://www.pibc.bc.ca/sites/default/files/internal_pages_pdfs/planning-west/PIBC-PW-Winter2022-CleanBC-Roadmap-PG22-24-Web.pdf); [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/electricity-alternative-energy/transportation-energies/clean-transportation-policies-programs/clean-transportation-action-plan](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/electricity-alternative-energy/transportation-energies/clean-transportation-policies-programs/clean-transportation-action-plan)

targets. As a result, the region could see hundreds of millions of provincial and federal dollars invested in electric rapid bus lines, cycling routes, and sidewalks instead of highway expansion projects.<sup>55</sup>

A similar policy in Metro Vancouver could see billions of dollars shifted to transit capital projects, including new permanent HandyDART facilities, over the next decade. This could go a long way towards meeting the affordability and equity objectives TransLink set out in Transport 2050. TransLink is the obvious choice to lead these advocacy efforts.

## 8) Conclusion

This report:

- Points out that Transport 2050 aims to create a “fairer and more just and inclusive transportation system that truly delivers on the promise of Access for Everyone” and admits that TransLink has “catching up to do.”
- Notes that Transport 2050 mostly ignore the challenge of population aging.
- Shows that rates of disability increase greatly with age, that Metro Vancouver’s population is aging rapidly, and asserts that in the coming decade providing the services and urban environment older seniors need will be a defining social and political challenge.
- Documents that the number of HandyDART trips per person 65 and over declined significantly between 2011 and 2019.
- Shows that 2022 TransLink provided only half the HandyDART service per person 65 and over than in 2008.
- Points out that the percentage of taxi trips also reached 17% in 2022, compared to TransLink’s target of reducing taxi use to 7% by 2021.
- Documents that substituting taxis for dedicated custom transit vehicles results in sub-standard safety and service.
- Notes that 2017 TransLink admitted that it provides only “about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities” and that much more service is needed.
- Quotes the Legislature’s Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services recommendation to increase “accessible transportation options such as HandyDART.”
- Asserts that disabilities caused by COVID-19 will increase the need for HandyDART service, and reduce the availability of workers able to be HandyDART operators.
- Points out that Indigenous people have much higher rates of disability than the general population, and asserts that if Access for Everyone is to include Indigenous

<sup>55</sup> [www.capitaldaily.ca/news/opinion-crd-must-push-province-to-fund-rapid-bus-instead-of-expanding-highways](https://www.capitaldaily.ca/news/opinion-crd-must-push-province-to-fund-rapid-bus-instead-of-expanding-highways)

Peoples, TransLink needs to greatly improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

- Asserts that public HandyDART provision is essential for increasing and improving service because:
  - The rationale for contracting out transit services was based on contractors' ability to get away with lower wages and benefits than the public sector.
  - With an aging population and the effects of the COVID pandemic, transit agencies across North America are having great difficulty attracting and retaining qualified workers.
  - Over the last few years, TransLink's HandyDART operations have been in the hands of four different corporations. Every time a new contractor takes over, years of efficiency gains are lost and employee morale suffers along with efficiency and quality of service.
  - Stability is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified workers.
  - For-profit operators have a history of performance issues that affect riders and consume large amounts of transit agency staff time – including problems related to low wages and resulting staff turnover.
  - Multiple disability rights organizations have supported in-house HandyDART service as a way to improve staff retention, on the basis that experienced operators provide better and more sensitive service.
- Points out that the BC government's recent decision that about 5,000 health care workers should be "once again directly employed by the government and health authorities" was based on evidence that "employees who feel secure and safe in their jobs provide higher-quality care for people, and in turn employers can attract and retain staff at a higher and more consistent level."
- Notes that TransLink committed to do a multiple accounts evaluation Public Sector Comparator (PSC) in 2016, but then reneged on this commitment.
- Asserts that TransLink must conduct a proper and unbiased PSC to compare the costs and benefits of continued outsourcing to insourcing of HandyDART.
- Proposes that HandyDART riders should be involved in selecting the criteria to be considered. And the union representing HandyDART workers should be involved in selecting the company to do the work, and have input into the design.
- Asserts that transitioning TransLink's conventional bus fleet to quiet clean electric power while leaving the HandyDART fleet burning fossil fuels would be incompatible with the Transport 2050 commitment to equity.
- Documents that it is not practical to electrify TransLink's HandyDART fleet without permanent operations and maintenance centres, and asserts that substandard, temporary facilities are a factor in high staff turnover.
- Asserts that TransLink should do what BC Transit Victoria has already done, and get funding from the provincial and federal governments for permanent operations centres.

- Notes that capital expenses are eligible for federal and provincial funding, so permanent HandyDART centres could be a major financial benefit for TransLink.
- Asserts that failing to improve HandyDART service would impose substantial costs on the public health system and family care givers, as well as infringing on the rights of the increasing population of people living with disabilities.
- Proposes improving the conventional transit system, the sidewalk network, and numerous other features of our communities, as well as improving HandyDART service, to create the “Access for Everyone” that Transport 2050 claims to aim for.
- Notes that the provincial government has set a target of reducing light duty vehicle kilometres traveled 25% by 2030, and it makes no sense to spend billions widening highways if your objective is to have much less traffic in the future.
- Proposes that TransLink should advocate for shifting provincial and federal funding away from highway expansion, which makes traffic worse and increases greenhouse gas pollution, to public transit infrastructure including permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

In conclusion, TransLink has some catching up to do, and a balanced examination of insourcing HandyDART should be one of the first steps towards Access for Everyone.

## Appendix - History of the HandyDART crisis

When elected mayors and councillors sat on the TransLink Board from 1999 to 2007, they increased HandyDART service hours by about 5% per year to keep up with demand. But after then Premier Gordon Campbell and Transport Minister Kevin Falcon imposed an appointed board in 2008 everything changed.

Once the appointed board was in place, HandyDART service hours were frozen and HandyDART trip denials soared. The situation for conventional transit was similar. In 2008, the Provincial Liberals unveiled a grandiose pre-election transit plan.<sup>56</sup> After the election they reneged on many of their transit promises and cancelled planned conventional transit bus service increases.

Most transit agencies have long acknowledged that an aging population will require more custom transit service. For example, BC Transit's 2011 long range plan for the Victoria area states: "The aging population will increase the demand for handyDART and other custom transit services in the future. This will require an increase in resources."<sup>57</sup> The same report notes that there is likely a hidden demand for HandyDART service by people who have given up on requesting service due to a lack of capacity.

The City of Vancouver's Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (PWDAC) responded to the service freeze and proposed that HandyDART funding and service be increased to meet the needs of the increasing population of people with disabilities. They also opposed invasive processes to screen HandyDART applicants as a way of reducing costs:

**The Liberal government attempted to cover up the crisis they created**

"Access Transit (TransLink) has been contemplating a new process to deal with increasing demand for HandyDART without increasing funding to meet the need. The process they are contemplating is an invasive, time-consuming, and upsetting process, which would discourage many people, especially persons with language issues, developmental disabilities, persons who are older, frail or confused, from applying for HandyDART. In essence, it solves the problem of not enough HandyDART rides by eliminating the most vulnerable of users."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Kenneth Chan (2015) *The \$14 billion transit plan the B.C. Liberals conveniently forgot* [dailyhive.com/vancouver/the-14-billion-transit-plan-the-b-c-liberals-conveniently-forgot](http://dailyhive.com/vancouver/the-14-billion-transit-plan-the-b-c-liberals-conveniently-forgot)

<sup>57</sup> BC Transit (2011) *Transit Future Plan: Victoria Region*. P30. [www.bctransit.com/victoria/transit-future/victoria-transit-future-plan](http://www.bctransit.com/victoria/transit-future/victoria-transit-future-plan)

<sup>58</sup> (2011) *Issues and Concerns about the Translink Report: "Moving Forward: Improving Metro Vancouver's Transportation Network."* p15

The impact on people who need the service the most should be considered with regard to the type and quality of service offered, not just the formal screening process. If people with severe disabilities find that the service does not meet their needs, they will be screened out and not use the service. The cost of this silent screening process may not show up on TransLink's financial statements, but the individuals, families and the public health care system will pay the price.

The 2013 report *Metro Vancouver's Aging Population and the Need for Improved HandyDART Service* documented that trip denials soared by over 600% between 2008 and 2012.<sup>59</sup> Shortly after the report was published, and the soaring trip denials were widely reported in the media, the contractor and TransLink re-defined trip denials – apparently to disguise the crisis.<sup>60</sup> One headline resulting from TransLink and the contractor's re-definition of denial and misleading communications was "HandyDART trip denials plummet."<sup>61</sup> Instead of increasing HandyDART service, the provincial Liberal government seemingly attempted to cover up the crisis they created.

### **HandyDART Riders' Alliance creates pressure for increased service**

In 2013 the HandyDART Riders Alliance was formed. This group of HandyDART riders and allies greatly increased the media coverage of the freeze in HandyDART service, and the resulting crisis.

After the 2013 election, the provincial Liberal government imposed a referendum requirement on new funding for TransLink, but made the TransLink Mayors' Council responsible for developing the plan to be voted on. The provincial Liberal government also imposed a very rushed timeline, ensuring that through public consultation would be impossible. The HandyDART Riders' Alliance and allies had to scramble to mount a campaign to get the Mayors Council to include funding for increased HandyDART service in their plan. The mayors' plan was released in June 2014 and included a 30% increase in HandyDART bus service hours over 10 years. The HandyDART Riders' Alliance campaigned for the yes side in the referendum on the basis of this commitment. The referendum did not pass, but the Mayors' hastily drafted plan became the de-facto transit plan for the region.

**TransLink  
committed to  
considering  
taking  
HandyDART in-  
house**

The HandyDART Riders' Alliance succeeded in keeping the HandyDART crisis in the public eye throughout 2014 and 2015. And after the HandyDART Riders' Alliance organized a large

<sup>59</sup> [ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf](http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> E.g. CBC (Nov 19, 2013) HandyDART trip denials up 670% since 2008, says group. [cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/handydart-trip-denials-up-670-since-2008-says-group-1.2433056](http://cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/handydart-trip-denials-up-670-since-2008-says-group-1.2433056)

<sup>61</sup> Michael Mui, 24 Hours Vancouver (December 16, 2014)

presence at the December 2015 TransLink board meeting, the TransLink board chair Barry Forbes was interviewed by the Vancouver Sun and said:

All of us were pretty moved by the comments from the folks . . . We are concerned. We had an offer to work with these folks more and we want to do that. We will consider (taking HandyDART) in-house.

The Vancouver Sun also interviewed HandyDART riders:

At the meeting, Pam Winthrop said she drives her 20-year-old son from Ladner to Richmond every day so he can get a HandyDart to his Vancouver school. He never arrives on time. Bet Tuason, who is on kidney dialysis, said he has passed out three times — and has had to be resuscitated — while waiting for HandyDart to show up, while Sandra Bryan has missed her medical appointments and claims she has been abused by the HandyDart call centre after she complained.

Beth McKellar, who suffered a spinal cord injury 16 years ago, urged TransLink to do the right thing, noting that many people are told to take taxis instead of HandyDart, and wind up stranded because there are none available.<sup>62</sup>

## Public sector comparator promised & canceled

At this same TransLink board meeting I recommended that HandyDART riders be involved in selecting an outside group to conduct a participatory Multiple Accounts Evaluation Public Sector Comparator (PSC). I also suggested that public confidence in the results would be enhanced if the group doing the work was conducted by a smaller firm and led by professionals with a code of conduct requiring clear and accurate communications with the public, such as Registered Professional Planners.

In June 2016, TransLink CEO Kevin Desmond committed to involving HandyDART riders in designing a ‘public sector comparator’ to evaluate

the costs and benefits of bringing HandyDART in-house as part of a “Custom Transit Service Delivery Review . . . in response to a number of questions that had been raised at TransLink Board meetings, particularly around responsiveness to customer concerns, and the standards and quality of HandyDART and taxi services, and the



## HANDYDART RIDERS' ALLIANCE PUT QUALITY OF SERVICE ON PUBLIC AGENDA

<sup>62</sup> Kelly Sinoski, Vancouver Sun (Dec 9, 2015) “TransLink to consider taking HandyDart in house” [vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/translink-to-consider-taking-handydart-in-house](http://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/translink-to-consider-taking-handydart-in-house)

HandyDART service model.” The “Stakeholder Advisory Committee [was supposed to help develop] evaluation criteria for service delivery models”<sup>63</sup>

The HandyDART Riders’ Alliance media release in response stated that they were “very pleased with the significant commitments made by TransLink’s CEO Kevin Desmond at today’s board meeting.”

The Custom Transit Service Delivery Review initially included a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) of service delivery models as recommended by Ecopath Planning and requested by the HandyDART Riders’ Alliance. Multiple Accounts Evaluation allows multiple factors, such as safety and quality of service to be evaluated (TransLink regularly uses MAE evaluations in evaluating projects such as rapid transit lines).

However, at some stage the MAE was terminated, and only a financial analysis was done. TransLink hired PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to do the financial review, one of the firms the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives identifies as having “potential conflict of interest, because accurate auditing would sometimes speak against corporate practices that yield general consulting revenues” such as contracting out and ‘private public partnerships.’<sup>64</sup> The names and qualifications of the people who did the financial analysis were not included in the report summary that was released to the public.

PwC was apparently not informed that the MAE had been cancelled and wrote this in their Public Sector Comparator (PSC) report: “The outputs from the PSC were incorporated into the final Multiple Account Evaluation (“MAE”) used by TransLink and the project Stakeholder Advisory Committee to prepare the final recommendation to the TransLink Board.”[sic]<sup>65</sup>

**It is not clear if these decisions were made by TransLink or by the provincial Liberal government**

### **Promised Increase Diverted to Taxis**

In September 2016, the new TransLink CEO announced that \$820,000 was going to increase HandyDART service as an emergency top up to meet demand, and that 90% of this would go to HandyDART buses. In fact, the data provided by TransLink shows that slightly *less* than the ‘budgeted’ number of HandyDART bus trips were delivered (also slightly less than

<sup>63</sup>Custom Transit Service Delivery Review [translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx](http://translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx) (accessed Sept. 21, 2017).

<sup>64</sup> Stuart Murray (2006) CCPA. Value for Money? Cautionary lessons about P3s from British Columbia. p 32 [policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC\\_Office\\_Pubs/bc\\_2006/P3\\_value\\_for\\_money.pdf](http://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2006/P3_value_for_money.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> (March 2017) TransLink Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Public Sector Comparator Executive Report for Public Board Meeting. P2 [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TL-HandyDART-Public-Sector-Comparator-March-2017.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TL-HandyDART-Public-Sector-Comparator-March-2017.pdf)

delivered in 2015), and instead taxi trips were increased by almost 30%.<sup>66</sup> This resulted in a record high of 10.8% taxi trips, up from less than 1% in 2008 and 3.7% in 2013.

In November 2016, the appointed TransLink Board and the Mayors' Council both voted unanimously to approve a 'Phase One Plan' which includes a 15% HandyDART increase over 3 years, starting in January 2017. This was a faster increase than what was originally in the mayors plan, and is a recognition that the need for HandyDART greatly exceeds the supply. TransLink staff and executives assured the HandyDART Riders Alliance that this increase would be in the form of HandyDART bus hours, not trips using taxis.

### **TransLink acknowledges HandyDART crisis**

In March 2017 TransLink published documents revealing that TransLink provides less HandyDART service per capita than comparable transit agencies. One document states:

Demand for HandyDART Currently Outstrips Supply and is Anticipated to Grow: Up until late 2016, there had been no increase in HandyDART service since 2009 . . . we heard from many customers that it can be difficult to get a trip when needed and that many customers have stopped calling out of frustration. In addition, HandyDART is currently providing fewer trips per capita than our peer custom transit agencies, which indicates that there is likely latent demand for the service. Furthermore, recent BC Stats projections indicate the number of people in Metro Vancouver aged 70 or older will increase by 55% over the next ten years, which could translate into a greater need for HandyDART service, as the incidence of disabilities increases at this age.

The same report states that HandyDART service "expansion in the Mayors' Vision is expected to address the increased demand to some degree, but analysis shows that it is likely insufficient to catch up or keep pace with need."<sup>67</sup>

The next month, the Mayors' Council chimed in with this statement:

"The 10-Year Vision will increase this service by 30% [but] will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region. This service shortfall is in large part a reflection of the lack of provincial support for this service which is a backbone of the provincially funded healthcare system. This represents a download of provincial costs onto regional taxpayers.

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<sup>66</sup> Backgrounder - HandyDART Service Provision (Provided to HandyDART Riders' Alliance by TransLink on Jan 25, 2017)

<sup>67</sup> Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Outcomes and Recommendations (March 22, 2017) [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HandyDART-Service-Review-March-2017.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HandyDART-Service-Review-March-2017.pdf)

The Mayors' Council is calling on all B.C. political parties to . . . commit to improving service above and beyond the 30% increase proposed in the 10-Year Vision, so our residents have access services at a level comparable to other major Canadian cities.<sup>68</sup>

### **NDP promises action – Human Rights complaint**

At the Metro Vancouver Alliance (MVA) provincial electoral assembly in April 2017, NDP leader John Horgan committed to providing funding through a special grant to increase HandyDART service hours by 5% per year (above previously planned increases) for four years starting in 2018 for both TransLink and BC Transit HandyDART services.<sup>69</sup>

In June of 2017 the HandyDART Riders' Alliance filed a class-action complaint with the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal alleging discrimination in the form of inadequate HandyDART service. The complaint alleges inferior transit service is provided to people with physical and mental disabilities compared to people who can use conventional public transit.

**NDP leader John Horgan committed to increase HandyDART service hours 20% above previously planned increases**

The complaint states that

“People are being denied access to transit because they are unable to use conventional transit without assistance. Dignity & self-esteem are damaged. Safety is put at risk. . . We are unable to access physiotherapy appointments, specialist's appointments and other medical or recreational events. We are being disconnected from our communities and our families and friends. We are being isolated. This in turn causes depression, anxiety, fear and loneliness.”

Some of the incidents and patterns documented in the complaint include:

- An elderly and disabled client who was picked up at 8 am in Burnaby for an appointment in Surrey and did not get home until 6 pm.
- A client the HandyDART contractor took to dialysis treatment, but then abandoned to make his own way home on the bus at 9 pm in the snow.
- Riders forced to pay twice when the trip involves transferring from HandyDART bus to taxi.

The complaint quotes a number of individual riders, family members and health professionals. Quotes include:

<sup>68</sup> [mayorscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Backgrounder-HandyDART-1.pdf](http://mayorscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Backgrounder-HandyDART-1.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Metro Vancouver Alliance. (no date) *Over 800 delegates heard commitments from provincial party leaders. Our Provincial Election Accountability Assembly was a success!* metvanalliance.org

- “During the summer, the taxi service could not be depended upon to pick up HandyDART clients as they would take passengers from the Cruise ships as priority as that is where the money is. This is a taxi driver’s priority. Our client had to wait until 6pm or later for a taxi to finally show up.”
- “This client is 15 years old with the mental capacity of a 4 year old. They attend dialysis at BC Children’s Hospital three times weekly. They live in Burnaby. Their problem is that HandyDART has been denying them return trips home from BC Children’s as their trip does not fall between the hours scheduled by MVT for Service between Vancouver and outlying communities.”
- “No bus showed up and when I called to ask ‘where’s my ride’, dispatch indicated that a taxi is on its way – for some reason a taxi never showed up till about 10:15 am and I had missed my physio appointment”

The HandyDART Riders’ Alliance complaint was accepted by the Human Rights Tribunal, and a negotiated settlement was announced in 2019.<sup>70</sup>

John Horgan became Premier of BC in July 2017 but did not fulfil his commitments to fund an fund an increase HandyDART service in Metro Vancouver.

### **Move to replace HandyDART service with taxis**

Safe and good quality HandyDART service that meets the needs of the most vulnerable riders should not be negotiable, it should be the baseline. However, once the elected TransLink board was removed in 2008, TransLink and/or provincial government officials seem to have decided that safety and quality of service was not important.

In 2012 Martin Crilly, then TransLink Commissioner, released the *TransLink Efficiency Review* by Shirocca Consulting of North Vancouver.<sup>71</sup> Shirocca Consulting concludes that:

“Increasing the use of non-dedicated vehicles, such as taxis, could be done relatively quickly and would offer cost savings. While it is acknowledged there maybe concerns over service quality, these can be managed.”<sup>72</sup>

As discussed below, safety and service quality problems with taxis in custom transit service are extremely difficult to overcome so this unsupported assurance that these problems “can be managed” should be viewed with scepticism. Unsupported claims of cost savings should be viewed with similar scepticism.

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<sup>70</sup> Media Release: TransLink and HandyDART Riders’ Alliance Announce Settlement Agreement (March 22, 2019) [handydartriders.ca/?p=484](http://handydartriders.ca/?p=484)

<sup>71</sup> Martin Crilly’s term as TransLink Commissioner ended April 30, 2013

<sup>72</sup> p 92

Following the Shirocca report, TransLink announced cuts of 10,000 hours in HandyDART service, about 2% of the service, with the stated intention of re-allocating the money to taxis. In a letter to the Vancouver Sun, TransLink's Chief Operating Officer claimed to "expect an overall addition of 7,000 customer trips" with this funding re-allocation.<sup>73</sup> In response to a freedom of information request, TransLink explained that the claimed 'expectation' of 7,000 additional trips is based on comparing "low-productivity HandyDART runs" – with the fewest trips per hour – to "average taxi trip cost."<sup>74</sup> Comparing the highest cost HandyDART trips to the average taxi trip cost as appears to have been done in this case seems to be poor methodology at best. Accurately estimating the taxi cost for these trips would be fairly complex since factors such as traffic congestion affect taxi fares; it should be expected that some of the low-productivity HandyDART runs operate in heavy traffic.

The assertion that taxis provide much less expensive service is not borne out by the available evidence. Instead, taxis seem to be providing a less demanding type of service to people with less severe disabilities at costs similar to dedicated services such as HandyDART. Anecdotal reports suggest that taxis contracted by HandyDART often provide only curb to curb service rather than the reliable door to door service required by many of the HandyDART users.

Even if taxis were substantially less expensive, unsafe and poor quality service is never a bargain.

### Are Taxis Cheaper & Good Enough?

There is a history of simplistic and misleading claims regarding the cost of HandyDART service compared to taxis in Metro Vancouver. For example, in 1995 a group calling itself Fair Access to Custom Transit (F.A.C.T.) proposed replacing HandyDART service completely with taxis as a cost saving measure. In response, BC Transit staff pointed out significant errors in F.A.C.T.'s analysis and noted that Maple Ridge Cabs had recently lost a HandyDART contract and that Yellow Cabs of Vancouver had recently submitted a proposal with the "highest cost (about 18 percent higher than the successful proposer) and lowest evaluation score of all four proposals"<sup>75</sup>

**BC Transit staff pointed out that the taxi proposal had the highest cost and lowest evaluation score**

submitted a proposal with the "highest cost (about 18 percent higher than the successful proposer) and lowest evaluation score of all four proposals"<sup>75</sup>

The BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD) rejected the F.A.C.T. taxi proposal and any privatization of HandyDART, stating that it would "leave the most vulnerable consumers isolated and disempowered [and] make it very difficult to monitor the system to ensure that standards of safety are being

<sup>73</sup> Doug Kelsey (June 6, 2013) "HandyDart pilot project an attempt to better meet demand" *Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>74</sup> Liina Marshall (Sept. 9, 2013) *FOI Request 2013/172*. TransLink – Access Transit. TransLink withheld all actual cost information on the basis that it could "harm the financial or economic interests of a public body."

<sup>75</sup> Glen Leicester (May 2, 1995) *F.A.C.T. Report on Taxi Service*. BC Transit. P5

met and abuses are not occurring.”<sup>76</sup> <sup>77</sup> The BCCPD raised an important point about the most vulnerable HandyDART riders: lowering standards through increased contracting to taxis may create a system that is not suitable for the people who need it the most. The Amalgamated Transit Union noted in its analysis of the F.A.C.T. proposal that “Poor service from the taxi industry is not the fault of the taxi drivers, but how those drivers are rewarded for their service. They are rewarded for speed over safety.”<sup>78</sup>

Experience in the US also shows that substituting taxis for dedicated vehicles with specially trained drivers results in sub-standard service to passengers with disabilities. For example, a 2008 US Transportation Research Board report notes that using dedicated vehicles rather than taxis results in better trained drivers “providing a better quality of service to paratransit passengers” (p 22). The same report suggests that metered taxis are often available for custom transit only when other taxi business is slow.<sup>79</sup>

The HandyDART Riders’ Alliance claimed that taxis are often completely unavailable at peak demand times, and when anything is going on that increases the demand for taxis (such as a major sporting event or the arrival of a cruise ship). The union representing HandyDART drivers confirmed this information.

TransLink’s 2017 *Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Outcomes and Recommendations* report discusses some of these persistent problems:

Persistent and significant concerns have been raised about the customer service provided by taxis. Training of taxi drivers that provide custom transit trips is currently inconsistent and not on par with the training for HandyDART drivers. As such, we have heard reports from customers that safety protocols and general good customer service practices are not always followed. Furthermore, customers are not informed that their trip will be provided by a taxi and the advance notification call is often not provided or is inaccurate. In addition, taxis often neglect to display appropriate HandyDART signage and it can be difficult for customers to discern, particularly in busy locations, if the arriving taxi is for their trip.

A US Transportation Research Board (TRB) report points out that the skills and personality traits that make for a successful taxi driver are very different from those that make for a good custom transit driver providing safe door-to-door service for people with severe disabilities. “Taxicab drivers tend to be independent contractors. Finding people who have

<sup>76</sup> The BCCPD has since changed its name to Disability Alliance BC

<sup>77</sup> BCCPD (June 1995) *Response to the FACT Brief*. P 3.

<sup>78</sup> Craig Wright (1995) *Cheaper equals better??? A comparison of accessible, door to door transportation services for persons with disabilities in BC*. Canadian Council of the Amalgamated Transit Union. P13

<sup>79</sup> David Chia (2008) *Policies and Practices for Effectively and Efficiently Meeting ADA Paratransit Demand*. Transportation Research Board. P25

the entrepreneurial skills to be independent contractors and who meet all the requirements of a paratransit driver is an even more difficult task.”<sup>80</sup>

A coordinator for a day program for older adults in Metro Vancouver described in a June 2013 letter how substituting taxis for regular HandyDART service puts clients at risk and creates extra work for hospital staff.

“On three separate occasions a specific client was dropped off at the emergency entrance as opposed to the planned drop off area which is the Day Program for Older Adults entrance . . . It was fortunate that staff in emergency approached our client and took him down to the Day Program. This client has dementia . . . and several other complex medical conditions. This client would not have been able to navigate his way through the hospital to get to the Day Program. . . We are very concerned about the use of taxis with our clients who mostly have been diagnosed with some form of dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.”

A more detailed timeline and description of issues with taxis in paratransit service is included in the 2017 Ecopath Planning report *Metro Vancouver’s Aging Population and the need for Quality HandyDART Service*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Roy Lave & Rosemary Mathias (2000) *State of the Art of Paratransit*. Transportation Research Board. Pp 3-4.

<sup>81</sup> [ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf](http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf)

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Sarah Ross, Vice President, Transportation Planning & Policy

DATE: November 25, 2025

SUBJECT: HandyDART Customer-First Plan & Delivery Model Review

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## **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

That the TransLink Board of Directors endorses the HandyDART Customer-First Plan, as attached to this report, and directs staff to proceed with implementation of the Customer-First Plan, including partnering with a specialized service provider under a modernized agreement with strengthened performance and accountability standards, for the delivery of HandyDART service.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents Management's recommendation for the future of HandyDART service delivery, following a comprehensive review initiated in June 2024. HandyDART continues to be one of TransLink's highest-performing services, with strong customer satisfaction and operational reliability.

Management recommends that the Board of Directors endorses the HandyDART Customer-First Plan, which outlines 19 targeted initiatives to improve service quality, flexibility, and customer care. These initiatives respond directly to customer feedback and evolving service expectations. Actions include investments in booking and dispatch software, enhanced operator training, facility planning for fleet modernization and electrification, and coordination with provincial partners.

To enable implementation, Management recommends continuing to partner with a specialized third-party provider under a modernized agreement with strengthened performance and accountability standards for the delivery of HandyDART service.

The recommendation is informed by:

- a detailed HandyDART Delivery Model Review conducted by Mott MacDonald,
- extensive stakeholder engagement including customers, operators, elected officials, labour and other advocacy groups, and
- alignment with provincial priorities outlined in the Minister of Transportation and Transit's mandate letter.

Management concludes that maintaining a partial contracted delivery model offers the best balance of customer experience, financial sustainability, maximizing service availability, and operational feasibility, while avoiding the risks and costs associated with transitioning to an in-house model.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to seek Board approval of Management's recommendation for endorsement of the HandyDART Customer-First Plan and associated enabling actions, including contracting with a specialized delivery partner for the service delivery. In accordance with the Board Governance Manual, it is subject to Board review and approval, as it involves a transit service operating agreement for custom transit services.

## **BACKGROUND**

HandyDART services are vitally important to many community members who rely on it to get around the region. HandyDART remains one of TransLink's top-performing services, with high customer satisfaction (8.8 on a 10-point scale) and operational reliability (99.6% of requested trips delivered with 91% on time performance in 2024). However, there are always opportunities to improve how we deliver our services.

Initiated in March 2024, the HandyDART Delivery Model Review evaluates how HandyDART service is delivered and by whom. The goal is to align service delivery with evolving customer needs, organizational priorities, and industry best practices. Under the current delivery model, TransLink, Coast Mountain Bus Company, and a specialized third-party operator (currently Transdev Canada), each have responsibilities. Service delivery is via dedicated vehicles and taxis to enhance availability and cost-effectiveness.

A Multiple Account Evaluation framework was developed alongside key stakeholders to assess three future delivery models across key criteria: customer experience, financial sustainability, adaptability, organizational feasibility, and implementation feasibility. Engagement with customers, caregivers, frontline staff, and advocacy groups confirmed that trip availability and reliability are top priorities.

At the June 25, 2025, Board meeting<sup>1</sup>, Management committed to expanding the review to develop a comprehensive HandyDART strategy, in recognition that the main drivers of customer experience are separate from the delivery model. This strategy aims to enhance an already strong customer experience by addressing improvement opportunities identified through engagement. It also incorporates consideration of the Minister of Transportation and Transit's mandate letter. To ensure service continuity, the Board authorized Management to negotiate an extension of the current HandyDART operating contract.

## **DISCUSSION**

Key activities completed since the June update include:

### **Development of the HandyDART Customer-First Plan**

Management developed the *HandyDART Customer-First Plan*, which provides a comprehensive overview of the service's evolution and future direction. The Plan outlines guiding principles for HandyDART service anchored in TransLink's Customer Promise. The plan explores customer needs, highlighting the diversity of users and their desire for more spontaneous travel and situates HandyDART within the broader context of accessible transit provided by TransLink.

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<sup>1</sup> Management inadvertently commented that Transdev Canada issues Compass passes to retirees; rather, Transdev Canada has been provided with information by TransLink on how to operationalize this should they chose to do so.

The plan identifies seven transformation areas:

- aligning services with customer needs,
- offering more flexible travel options,
- improving reliability and convenience during rides,
- modernizing the fleet,
- enhancing peace of mind through better communication and safety measures,
- improving the quality of care, and
- strengthening customer connections.

To support implementation, enabling actions include:

- contracting a specialized delivery partner using a modernized contract with strengthened performance standards, particularly for non-dedicated service providers,
- investments in software and data systems,
- forming a multi-disciplinary coordinated internal HandyDART team with dedicated resources to implement the transformation,
- securing long-term facility leases or purchases to support fleet needs and future electrification, and
- coordination with BC Transit and the Ministry of Transportation and Transit on related initiatives.

The plan concludes with a vision for an inclusive, flexible, and financially sustainable future for HandyDART. The full plan is attached to this report in Attachment 1.

### **HandyDART Delivery Model Review**

To support development of Management's recommendation, consulting firm Mott MacDonald prepared a report assessing delivery models. The Board has been engaged throughout the Delivery Review process, including on evaluation criteria and options development. Since June, Mott MacDonald has considered and evaluated the considerations outlined in the Minister of Transportation and Transit's mandate letter, which was released after the review was initiated.

The Delivery Model Review was intended to understand the current model and to evaluate trade-offs between alternatives. This included:

- assessment of existing service and delivery model, including engagement with stakeholders,
- development of potential delivery model options, informed by range of alternatives operated by other agencies,
- review of common delivery model practices by peers,
- establishing a Multiple Account Evaluation, with input from key stakeholders, to support decision-making by comparing options across multiple key criteria, including five accounts and 17 criteria, and
- evaluation of the options against those criteria and objectives to identify trade-offs between options.

The Delivery Model Review identifies trade-offs and was used by Management to develop the recommendations in this report. The full HandyDART Delivery Model Review by Mott MacDonald is attached as Attachment 2 to this report. The findings include:

- All three shortlisted models have benefits; no model outperforms across all objectives.

- A fully in-house model would be most expensive, with no direct benefits to the customer experience. Some amount of contracting is most cost-effective.
- A fully in-house model performs highest in organizational sustainability, related primarily to public trust and future electrification. However, the review noted that these could be improved through contract mechanisms.
- A Split Structure with Modernized Contract delivery model performs highest in ease of implementation and transition.
- The Fully In-house and Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house delivery models perform lowest in terms of implementation and transition. This is due to fact that both would require creating significant new management structures and specialized functions related to on-demand custom transit, for which TransLink does not currently have the capacity.
- The performance of each model does not vary materially across the other objectives of flexibility and customer experience.

### **Engagement**

The HandyDART Customer-First Plan is informed by input from customers, stakeholders, and staff gathered through many channels, including formal engagement on the HandyDART Delivery Model Review completed between July and December 2024. This engagement included:

- Workshops/focus groups with
  - HandyDART User Advisory Committee
  - HandyDART unionized full-time operators and call-centre staff
  - Healthcare organizations
  - Accessibility advocates
  - Senior's advocates
  - Caregivers
  - CMBC Access Transit staff
  - HandyDART management
- Telephone survey with 100 HandyDART users
- Meetings and briefings with:
  - ATU Local 1774 and national leadership
  - Save Our HandyDART Coalition
  - HandyDART unionized casual operators

In 2025 there have been follow up meetings, briefings and/or correspondence with most of the above groups. Meetings have also been held with the Vancouver & District Labour Council, Mayors' Council, Transdev, and the Minister of Transportation and Transit.

This work also draws on customer and stakeholder feedback received through past efforts such as the HandyDART Modernization engagement (2021), as well as ongoing initiatives such as annual customer performance surveys, the HandyDART Application and Registration project, and direct feedback received through the call centre, travel training events, and correspondence to Management and the Board of Directors.

Themes raised in these ongoing engagements reflected what was heard in the formal engagement period, with the addition of concerns raised about the transparency of the process. Key themes of customer and stakeholder feedback that informed the HandyDART Customer-First Plan include:

- desire for increased service, improved reliability and operational efficiency as top customer priorities for service improvements,
- concerns about customer experience and taxi service quality consistency,
- perceptions of workforce capacity, and concerns regarding training and safety,
- dissatisfaction with booking wait times and demand for technology upgrades and integration,
- desire for increased accountability and performance transparency,
- perceptions on operational impacts of the service model and desire for in-house service delivery, primarily from operators and some stakeholder groups, and
- integration and implementation considerations to minimize disruptions.

An engagement summary on the HandyDART Customer-First Plan is available in Attachment 3, detailing who was engaged, feedback mechanisms and themes, and how specific feedback informed the initiatives in the Plan.

**Consistent with Provincial Priorities:**

The HandyDART Delivery Model Review assessment in combination with the HandyDART Customer-First Plan finds that maintaining the current split structure approach with a modernized contract is most consistent with the mandate issued to the Minister for Transportation and Transit that transit services are “delivered in a way that is cost-effective for taxpayers, responsive to the concerns of transit riders, and not duplicative of administration.”

The HandyDART Delivery Model Review finds that maintaining contracted operations is the most cost-effective option for taxpayers, particularly for the on-road specialized delivery of service. The Review found that bringing the service fully in-house would result in higher administrative costs and higher operating cost per trip, thereby requiring a higher tax-payer subsidy per trip. In addition to operating impacts, as TransLink does not currently operate a paratransit service in-house, there would need to be hiring of exempt staff with the expertise to manage an operation directly to provide the service effectively. A period of transition and learning the operations would also drive some costs. Numerous initiatives within the HandyDART Customer-First Plan will further drive cost-effectiveness of the service. These include better managing demand through an enhanced application and eligibility process, and improved operational efficiency through enhanced software, new vehicle types, and improving taxi service delivery. Providing some trips by taxis is important for meeting customer demand and for financial sustainability; without taxis, over 271,000 trips would have been denied last year. The 2024 average cost per trip of service is \$64 on a dedicated HandyDART vehicle and \$27 on a taxi. In 2024, 23% of trips today have been provided by taxis, which is low compared to peer systems which report rates of 30% to more than 50%.

HandyDART’s responsiveness to transit rider concerns is best supported by continuing to improve on the current delivery model. The Delivery Model Review found satisfaction with the current service is high, although there are areas for improvement identified in the Customer-First Plan. Transit rider needs are best met through advancing the initiatives that directly respond to customer input, which are controlled by TransLink. The current partially contracted service model would allow the delivery of this plan by enabling Management to focus on those initiatives supported by the expertise of a specialized provider. An in-house model would slow the implementation of the plan by diverting time and attention to standing up a new operation at TransLink. Maintaining and enhancing taxis as

part of HandyDART service is essential to continue meeting top rider priorities related to trip availability, travel time and on-time performance in line with practice in peer regions.

The in-house delivery model is assessed to have a greater risk of administrative duplication relative to models with contracting. Specialized third-party operators offer training, standard operating procedures, and policies developed from experience across multiple operations, while TransLink and Coast Mountain Bus Company do not have existing experience with point-to-point, on demand service and would be required to develop this expertise under an in-house model. Shifting to an in-house model risks a deterioration of service for some time while the internal expertise is developed. Software-based enhancements to the application, booking and scheduling processes may enable some administrative efficiencies under any delivery model.

### **HandyDART Employee Experience**

Management requested information from Transdev Canada on its initiatives to enhance the employee experience, particularly following the 2024 labour disruption. The company reports a turnover rate in 2024 of 10%, which is lower than Coast Mountain Bus Company's Community Shuttle operators who operate similar vehicles and have similar licensing requirements. Transdev Canada was recently recognized as a Great Place to Work with 85% of staff reporting they feel valued.

HandyDART employees receive 100% employer-paid benefits, sick and vacation time entitlements, access to the Municipal Pension Plan, and no split shifts. A HandyDART operator's hourly wage is \$36.06, which is \$0.83 more than a CMBC Community Shuttle operator. Under BC labour law there are succession protections to ensure bargaining unit employees are not at risk of losing their jobs if their employer changes.

Over the past year, Transdev Canada has advised that they have introduced regular labour-management meetings, interactive town halls, and depot-based "You Ask, We Did" boards to improve transparency and communication. A new internal newsletter and website provide timely updates and recognition. To support development and performance, the employer launched a Learning Management System, a driver incentive program, and regular manager ride-alongs. A tenure recognition program is also in place, with one employee recently celebrating 50 years of service. Operational improvements include the rollout of driver-centric scheduling software and telematics systems to enhance safety and flexibility. Benefit administration is being transitioned to on-site staff to improve support.

### **Financial Considerations**

As noted in the Mott MacDonald HandyDART Delivery Model Review, a fully in-house model is the most expensive model for HandyDART service delivery, based on information gathered from peer agencies and provided by CUTA. In addition to operating impacts, no TransLink entity currently provides paratransit services and as a result, there would need to be hiring of exempt staff with the expertise to manage an operation directly to provide the service effectively. In addition, it can be expected that during transition and a learning curve, there is likely to be additional operating costs for operating the HandyDART service in-house.

It is also typical for unions to bargain for parity for wages, benefits and other working conditions that exist in other collective agreements across an organization. If HandyDART was brought in-house to be provided by an entity in the TransLink Enterprise, and if the bargaining for parity was to occur and

be successful across any or all unions, the additional cost to deliver service across the regional transportation system would be significant.

These factors combined have the potential to increase annual cost to the TransLink Enterprise budget by \$20 million to \$70 million a year. This will grow over time and provides no customer benefit. To address the financial impact of an in-house model, additional funding and/or service reductions would be necessary.

### **Management's Recommendation**

HandyDART service is highly rated by customers (8.8 on a 10-point scale). Management developed a plan to further enhance the service that responds to customer feedback and evolving expectations for this important service. The plan will offer more flexible travel options, improving reliability and convenience, modernizing the fleet, enhancing peace of mind, improving the quality of care, and strengthening customer connections. Implementation of this plan should be our primary focus, and is what meets the needs of our riders.

In considering the review findings and engagement, Management recommends that HandyDART service should remain partially contracted through a specialized service provider (Option 1 in the HandyDART Delivery Model Review). Transitioning to an in-house delivery model would require building an entirely new system, introducing significant financial, operational, and organizational risks, without demonstrable improvements to customer experience. For this reason, most large North American transit agencies rely on specialized third-party providers for paratransit due to their expertise.

The organization's capacity is challenged by delivery of the 2025 Investment Plan including the Rail Expansion Program, bus electrification, modernization of the Compass system, and the largest expansion of bus service in more than a decade. Maintaining a partially contracted model allows TransLink to focus resources on expanding and improving service, including implementing the HandyDART Customer-First Plan, while preserving high customer satisfaction and cost-effectiveness.

### **NEXT STEPS**

If endorsed by the TransLink Board, Management will implement the HandyDART Customer-First Plan and report on progress, and the process to procure a specialized provider would commence in 2026.

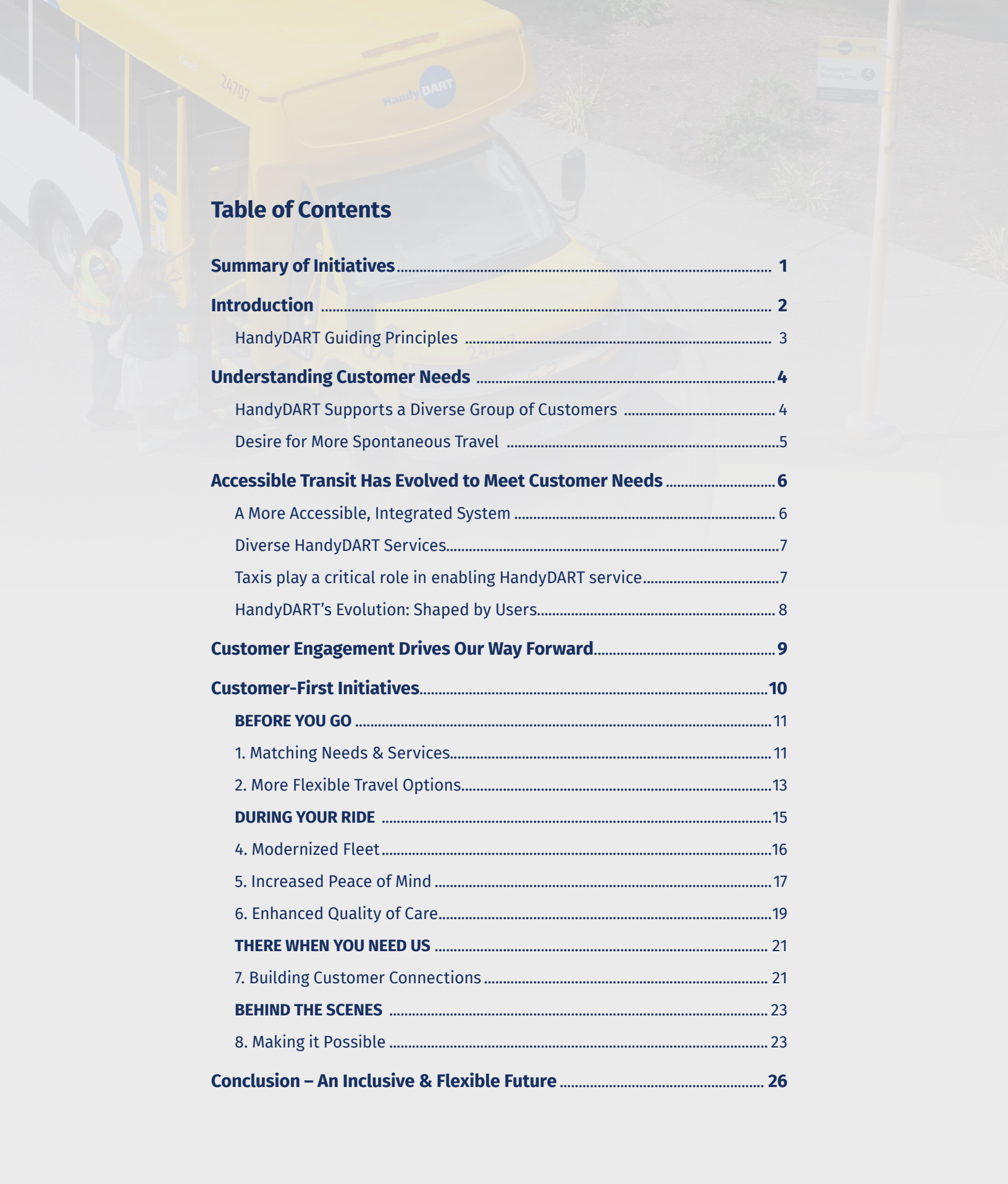
### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. HandyDART Customer-First Plan
2. HandyDART Delivery Model Review prepared by Mott MacDonald
3. Engagement Summary
4. Board correspondence re: HandyDART Delivery Model Review from March 27, 2024 to November 25, 2025



# HandyDART Customer-First Plan

November 2025



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# Summary of Initiatives

SECTION		INITIATIVE	STATUS
Before You Go	Section 1 Matching Needs & Services	1.1 Simplified Application Process	Planning
		1.2 Personalized Eligibility and Review Process	Planning
		1.3 Enhanced, Personalized Travel Training	Planning
	Section 2 More Flexible Travel Options	2.1 Online Trip Booking	In Development
		2.2 Improved Trip Availability	In Development
		2.3 Expanded Hours of Service	Launching Soon
During Your Ride	Section 3 Convenient & More Reliable Travel	3.1 Improved Trip Reliability	In Development
		3.2 Integrated with Compass Modernization	Research
	Section 4 Modernized Fleet	4.1 Smaller Vehicles	Planning
		4.2 Electric Vehicles	Planning
	Section 5 Increased Peace of Mind	5.1 Improved Real-Time Trip Information	In Development
		5.2 Timely and Customized Notifications	In Development
		5.3 Enhanced Visual Identification for Non-Dedicated Service Providers	Planning
	Section 6 Enhanced Quality of Care	6.1 Expanded Training for Non-Dedicated Service Providers	Planning
		6.2 Non-Dedicated Service Provider Certification	Planning
		6.3. Strengthened Accountability	In Development
There When You Need Us	Section 7 Building Customer Connections	7.1 Easier to Connect with Us	Planning
		7.2 Improved Customer Feedback Process	In Development
		7.3 Evolving the HandyDART Brand	Research
Behind the Scenes	Section 8 Making it Possible	8.1 Enhanced Internal Capacity	In Development
		8.2 Specialized Delivery Partners	In Development
		8.3 Facilities	In Development
		8.4 Software & Data	In Development
		8.5 Coordinating with Provincial Partners	In Development
STATUS LEGEND	<b>Research:</b> exploring range of ideas, to determine which might be worth pursuing <b>Planning:</b> scoping promising initiatives, includes defining how it will work, timelines, and budgets <b>In Development:</b> designing and implementing the initiative, including testing		



## Introduction

HandyDART is TransLink's door-to-door custom transit service for customers who are unable to independently use the conventional transit system due to disability. It's a vital service that connects people to healthcare, work, post-secondary education, errands, and opportunities to stay connected with family and friends.

Today, HandyDART is one of TransLink's most valued services with over 32,000 registered customers. The service continues to earn high marks for customer satisfaction and trip delivery. In 2024, 1.2 million trips were delivered, 91 per cent of which were delivered on time, and, with an 8.8/10 customer satisfaction scores were among the highest of all TransLink services in key areas like ease of booking and overall service quality.

**8.8/10**

Second highest customer satisfaction score ever recorded (2024)

**1,200,000+**

Trips delivered (2024)

As the region's population continues to grow and age, demand for HandyDART services is growing with it. Changing demographics are expected to increase demand for HandyDART services by more than 30 per cent by 2030. Rising demand, shifting demographics, and evolving customer expectations mean we must continue to improve services to support the customer experience. We must also do so cost-effectively so that we can ensure that when people need HandyDART we are able to provide them with a high-quality experience.

The HandyDART Customer-First Plan charts a course for HandyDART's future, building on past engagement and updated research that helps us better understand who our customers are, why they use HandyDART, and what improvements we can make to service that will support their journey.

Building on the 2007 Access Transit Strategy, which set a long-term vision for the service, and the 2017 Custom Transit Service Delivery Review, which identified opportunities for service improvement, and the 2023 Accessibility Plan actions, which identified accessibility improvements for all TransLink services, this plan also aligns with Transport 2050, the region's vision for the future of transit and transportation in Metro Vancouver.

The initiatives discussed in this report respond to customer and stakeholder inputs collected during engagement processes in 2021 and 2024, through the ongoing work of the HandyDART User Advisory Committee, and from feedback received from customers through their everyday use of the service. This plan will continue the evolution of HandyDART into a more responsive, cost-effective, and inclusive custom transit service.

## HandyDART Guiding Principles

HandyDART service is anchored by TransLink's Customer Promise: to always put you first – your safety, your time, and your connection to the people and places that matter most.

This plan builds upon this promise and is guided by several core principles:

- **Customer Convenience:** Deliver a flexible and adaptive service that effectively responds to the evolving needs of customers and the region.
- **Reliability:** Match customers with the most effective trip for their needs, using data and insights to minimize customer wait times and time spent in the vehicle.
- **Safety and Comfort:** Provide every customer with a safe, consistent, and high-quality travel experience.
- **Affordability:** Deliver a cost-effective service, while balancing trip availability and high-quality customer experience.
- **Sustainability:** Explore opportunities to integrate sustainable practices across operations.

# Understanding Customer Needs

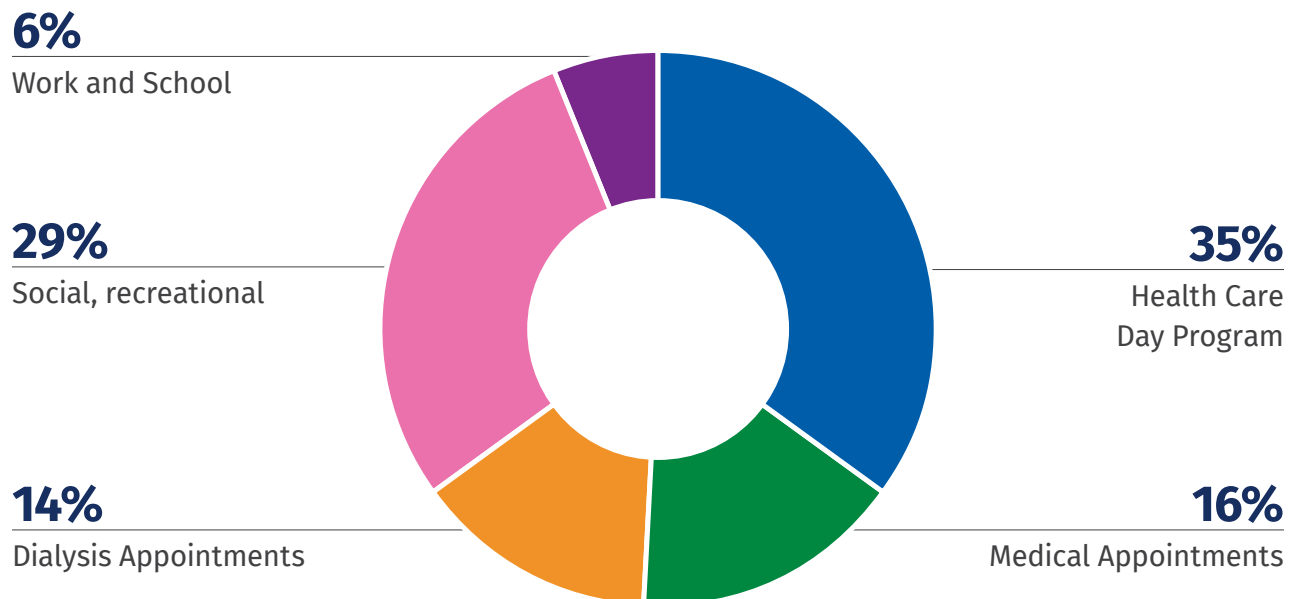
HandyDART customers are a diverse group of individuals with different abilities, from a variety of age groups, genders, and cultural backgrounds. Customers with physical challenges, sensory issues, or cognitive disabilities may need additional assistance to help navigate public transit.

HandyDART bridges these accessibility gaps by accommodating customer needs with a more personalized approach to transit. Trips are supported with individualized trip planning and are delivered using a mix of specialized vehicles, including shuttle buses, vans, and sedans. All HandyDART services are provided by drivers specially trained to support customers with disabilities.

## HandyDART Supports a Diverse Group of Customers

With more than 32,000 registered customers, HandyDART connects people with healthcare, employment, education, errands, and opportunities to stay in touch with friends and family. HandyDART customers have varying needs, which means we must offer a range of service solutions to support them.

Figure 1: 2024 HandyDART travel by trip purpose



Knowing who our customers are and why they use HandyDART service helps us better respond with service options that meet their diverse needs.

**Health Care Day Program** participants make up more than one-third of all HandyDART trips. This group includes two very different age ranges: young adults (ages 20–30) and older adults (ages 80–90). These customers travel an average of three times per week and book the highest number of subscription trips to attend day program locations. Approximately one third of these customers require handoff to a caregiver.

**Social, recreational, and business** activities are the next most common reasons for HandyDART trips. Most of these customers are older adults (ages 80–90), but they also include young seniors in their 60s. About 90 per cent of these trips are on-demand bookings. They average 5.8 km in length, with customers typically travelling three to four times a month to seniors centres, recreational facilities, and shopping districts.

**Medical appointments** are the third most frequent trip purpose. Most customers are seniors, with demand peaking around age 70. On average, they travel twice a month to medical facilities, and almost all trips are booked on demand.

**Dialysis appointments** are the fourth segment of trips, and second largest source of subscription trips. Most customers are in their mid-70s and travel twice a week to dialysis treatment centres. These trips make it possible for patients to receive recurring life-sustaining medical treatment, while continuing to live in the community.

**Work and school** trips make up the final segment. These customers are mostly young adults aged 20–30. They travel one to two times per week, usually over longer distances to post-secondary institutions and employment districts. Bookings are evenly split between subscription and demand trips.

## Desire for More Spontaneous Travel

Over the past five years, customer travel patterns have undergone noticeable shifts. Subscription trips (e.g., pre-booked and recurring) have decreased by 10 per cent in favour of on-demand trips (one-time appointments or events that do not recur regularly). HandyDART customers have also told us that they want the freedom to travel more spontaneously.

The growing demand for flexible travel has implications for scheduling and routing HandyDART vehicles, as it necessitates accommodating more varied schedules and travel patterns.

Supporting this desire for more spontaneous travel means that ensuring the accessibility of all TransLink's services will be key to meeting the shifting needs of customers.



## Accessible Transit Has Evolved to Meet Customer Needs

In 1980, HandyDART was launched with a small fleet of lift-equipped shuttle buses. From the beginning, HandyDART has been operated by specialized providers with demonstrated expertise in delivering paratransit services and customers have played an integral role in the service's evolution.

The introduction of HandyDART went beyond providing specialized services for people in wheelchairs. Over time, all of TransLink's services — bus, SeaBus, SkyTrain, and West Coast Express — were redesigned to be more accessible.

### A More Accessible, Integrated System

By 2008, every vehicle in the fleet could be used by customers using mobility devices such as wheelchairs. Change didn't stop there, our 2023 Accessibility Plan covers key initiatives in four action areas that help further TransLink's commitment to make the entire transit system accessible and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities.

In addition to accessible vehicles and stations, TransLink offers additional support

for independent travel such as sighted guide assistance and tap-free fare gate access at SkyTrain stations. Most recently, braille and tactile signs have been added to all bus stops, and a new public washroom has opened at Metrotown Station. These efforts help make conventional transit an option for more customers.

Many customers need door-to-door service for every trip. Others only need it occasionally, such as for medical treatments or during extreme weather. Once registered, customers keep their HandyDART status regardless of the frequency with which they take either HandyDART or conventional transit, which makes it easy to integrate the use of many different kinds of transit based on customer need.

With accessibility enhancements in place across the rest of the transit system, HandyDART is increasingly a solution to bridge accessibility gaps and connect customers to fast and frequent conventional transit services, while continuing to serve customers who require door-to-door service.

### **Diverse HandyDART Services**

Meeting diverse customer needs is about more than just supporting a connected, integrated transit system. It also means offering a range of service types within

HandyDART to best support customers on their journey.

One of the ways HandyDART meets this need is by using both dedicated shuttles and non-dedicated taxis. HandyDART taxis are a critical aspect of HandyDART service delivery, ensuring customers can get to their destination. Taxis are arranged, at no additional cost to the customer, if a HandyDART shuttle is unavailable due to high periods of demand, traffic delays, or other circumstances such as to accommodate some larger mobility devices that requires a taxi with a wheelchair ramp.

### **Taxis play a critical role in enabling HandyDART service**

In 2024, 1.2 million HandyDART trips were delivered. But, without taxis, more than 271,000 trips would have been denied in 2024 alone.

Leveraging taxis to support paratransit service delivery is common industry practice. Other major transit systems across North America also rely on taxi services to support their custom and paratransit services. For example, Montreal relies on taxis for the vast majority of their paratransit trips, and Calgary uses taxis for about 55 per cent of trips.

All HandyDART taxi drivers are required to maintain the same standard of care as HandyDART shuttle operators. Only approved companies and drivers who complete specialized training for serving customers with disabilities are permitted to provide HandyDART taxi trips.

TransLink recognizes that taxis may not be the right fit for all customers due to medical or mobility requirements; the HandyDART team works with customers and their caregivers to find the vehicle options that best suit their needs.

## HandyDART's Evolution: Shaped by Users

<b>Pre-1980</b>	▶ Transportation services for people with disabilities offered by charitable organizations, such as Easter Seals.
<b>1980</b>	▶ Dedicated paratransit service for people with disabilities began, overseen by Urban Transit Authority (now BC Transit) and operated by third party service providers.
<b>1999</b>	▶ TransLink was established and took over responsibility for all public transit services in Metro Vancouver, including HandyDART.
<b>2005</b>	▶ Customer and community input for TransLink's Access Transit Strategy, including from the Committee to Promote Accessible Conventional Transit (ComPACT).
<b>2007</b>	▶ Access Transit Strategy adopted by TransLink Board, supported by ComPACT. Included direction to streamline HandyDART service delivery from 8 contracts, establish Access Transit Office and Users' Advisory Committee to ensure ongoing user input into decision-making.
<b>2008</b>	▶ Access Transit User Advisory Committee established, building on ComPACT's legacy of user and stakeholder input in creating accessible transit.
<b>2009</b>	▶ HandyDART service delivery streamlined from 8 contracts and service areas to one service provider
<b>2010</b>	▶ First annual HandyDART customer survey and report
<b>2013</b>	▶ Introduction of taxis on HandyDART to meet rising customer demand for the service. Resulted in drastic decrease in trip denials.
<b>2016</b>	▶ Custom Transit Service Delivery Review commenced with dedicated stakeholder advisory committee
<b>2017</b>	▶ Custom Transit Service Delivery Review and 28 recommendations adopted by TransLink Board.
<b>2019</b>	▶ Custom Transit Service Delivery Review recommendations implemented, including dedicated HandyDART User Advisory Committee established, first HandyDART Service Performance Review developed, and Travel Training program introduced.
<b>2021</b>	▶ HandyDART Modernization Program development and customer and stakeholder engagement.
<b>2021</b>	▶ Implemented age-based fare discounts and Compass on HandyDART initiatives from HandyDART Modernization Program.
<b>2022</b>	▶ Adoption of Transport 2050, the region's vision for the future of transit and transportation in Metro Vancouver.
<b>2024</b>	▶ Customer, operator, and stakeholder engagement held as part of HandyDART Service Delivery Model Review
<b>Today-2025</b>	▶ HandyDART Customer First Plan developed to progress customer priorities

# Customer Engagement Drives Our Way Forward

User advisory groups and customer engagement have been essential in shaping many of the policies, standards, and technical decisions behind HandyDART over the past decade, and they continue to be critical moving forward.

## Some of the key milestones that these groups have helped guide include:

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**2017:** We engaged customers and stakeholders to help shape recommendations for the Custom Transit Service Delivery Review, which focused on ways to improve the service, meet growing demand, and secure ongoing funding. TransLink actioned all of the recommendations from the Delivery Review. One particularly noteworthy outcome was the creation of a standalone HandyDART User Advisory Committee in 2019.

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**2021:** TransLink invited customers and stakeholders to share their views on the HandyDART Modernization Program, which focused on improving customer experience.

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**2024:** We engaged customers, HandyDART employees, and key stakeholders to understand what they value in the service as we embarked on the HandyDART Delivery Model Review.

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In addition to these formal project engagements, TransLink has ongoing channels that allow customers and stakeholders to highlight opportunities for improvement including the HandyDART User Advisory Committee, annual HandyDART Customer Service Performance surveys, and the Access Transit Customer Care call centre.

The feedback received through these and other channels along with formal engagement efforts have informed the development of this plan.

Through all our customer and stakeholder engagement, the message has been clear: the service works well, but we can always find ways to improve it. Common themes we have heard from customers and the community include:

- **Increased service availability and flexibility:** Customers have expressed a desire for more trip options and easier bookings.
- **More convenient, reliable service:** Customers have expressed interest in shorter travel durations and less waiting.
- **Taxi quality and care:** Customers have expressed a desire for enhancing taxi service quality and care for those with complex care needs.
- **Customer service:** Customers have expressed a desire to streamline customer service channels and decrease call wait times.

This customer-first approach to HandyDART aims to put this feedback at the forefront and ensure that every service enhancement focuses on improving the customer's experience.



## Customer-First Initiatives

Building on what we've heard from customers, their caregivers, and the community, the initiatives outlined in this report will improve the customer experience while ensuring TransLink continues to run an efficient and effective service so that it is available to the growing number of people who need it.

These initiatives respond to evolving customer needs and expectations through an increasingly integrated system, delivering changes in seven key areas:

- **Matching needs and services**
- **More flexible travel options**
- **Convenient and more reliable travel**
- **Modernized fleet**
- **Increased peace of mind**
- **Enhanced quality of care**
- **Building customer connections**

In the coming years, these changes will make HandyDART service more reliable, available, and resilient. Projects are moving steadily from Research (understanding the issue and exploring feasibility), to Planning (setting out how to best achieve project objectives), and then to Development (securing resources, design, and implementation). Customer and stakeholder engagement will continue as part of the individual initiatives within this plan, to ensure they continue to reflect user needs.



## BEFORE YOU GO

### 1. Matching Needs & Services

TransLink is committed to enhancing customer experience by improving how customers apply, qualify, and travel across the network. The initiatives below are designed to align HandyDART services with evolving customer needs while supporting long-term system efficiency.

These initiatives include:

- **A simpler application** that reduces paperwork.
- **A more personalized eligibility and review system** that focuses on individual ability and ensures every application is handled with care.
- **Expanded travel training** to give customers the knowledge and confidence to use HandyDART and conventional transit together.

These changes put customers first, ensuring the service continues to meet a wide range of needs and increasing demand.

#### 1.1 Simplified Application

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Convenience, Faster Document
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

Applying for HandyDART will be easier than ever with a new digital experience.

Customers will complete a simplified application online. If preferred, hard copy applications will still be available.

The new application process will emphasize skills and ability over medical diagnosis. There will be no cost for this simplified service, and no need to download or print forms. Once approved, customers can start using HandyDART right away.

## 1.2 Personalized Eligibility and Review Process

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Convenience, Fairness, Accountability
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

After submitting their application, customers may receive an invitation to meet with a TransLink occupational therapist for a personal assessment of how TransLink's services can best meet their needs. Customers can also choose to see their own medical doctor for their personal assessment.

Every application will be treated fairly and with care. To reduce barriers for individuals who can't travel independently on the conventional system, certain applications may not require a personal assessment.

New customers who require door-to-door service only in certain situations may qualify for a new type of flexible HandyDART eligibility. This designation will prompt the new booking system to match the customer with the best service option.

All applicants will have the right to appeal eligibility decisions. Appeals will be reviewed by a newly created panel, following a transparent process. Every appeal will be given careful consideration.

## 1.3 Enhanced, More Personalized Travel Training

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Confidence, Flexibility, Faster Travel Time
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

Expanded access to on-system, one-on-one travel training will provide customers with the orientation, information, and confidence necessary to use accessible conventional transit services appropriate to their needs as identified through the application process.

Travel training has proven to be a huge benefit for customers unfamiliar with the transit system. It is currently offered in workshops, virtually, and on the system. Training is also available for staff and volunteers supporting our customer groups. Existing in-person workshops and sessions cover topics such as how to board and exit a bus using a mobility device and how to get assistance on transit. Other tools include our Accessible Transit in Metro Vancouver Guide, available in multiple languages in print or digital, and the Travel Training Videos online.

Customers will have the option to book expanded one-on-one training sessions directly online or over the phone.

## 2. More Flexible Travel Options

We know that HandyDART customers want more flexible service. The introduction of new booking technology, coupled with select operational changes aim to address this desire, delivering greater convenience, flexibility, and access to the system.

The following sections highlight three initiatives that are at varying stages of planning and development:

- **Online Trip Booking** – enabling 24/7 booking and cancellation of trips online, while maintaining phone-based options.
- **Improved Trip Availability** – using advances in scheduling software to provide increased travel options.
- **Expanded Hours of Service** – extending operating hours later into the evening to better meet customer needs.

Together, these initiatives will modernize how HandyDART customers plan and book their trips, delivering greater convenience, flexibility, and access.

### 2.1 Online Trip Booking

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Convenience, Choice, Time Savings
<b>Status:</b>	In Development

New online services and digital tools will make booking trips faster and more convenient. Customers and their care providers will be able to request a single trip (one-way or return) or set up a series of regular trips using the HandyDART booking page on their browser or through a smart phone mobile app. They will also be able to more easily cancel or modify trips. This service will be available 24/7.

For those who prefer, booking agents will still be available by phone. TransLink will also assess opportunities for using new digital tools to make phone-based trip requests available 24/7.

### 2.2 Improved Trip Availability

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Choice, Flexibility, Time Travel Savings
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

The latest generation of scheduling software will deliver better ride matching and, in turn, increase trip availability. This improvement will build on the trip availability gains previously captured by the 2025 cancellation policy update and will result in more trip availability at time of booking.

In addition, the new software will make it possible to generate additional integrated travel options based on time of travel, destination, customer profile, and travel conditions. Customers requesting door-to-door travel may also receive options for integrated trips combining HandyDART and conventional transit that provide them greater flexibility for when they travel.

Together, these initiatives will give customers more choice with trips that match their needs and abilities through operational efficiency.

## 2.3 Expanded Hours of Service

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Convenience, Accessibility
<b>Status:</b>	Launching soon

To provide greater access to late night travel to all customers with disabilities, HandyDART is expanding hours of operation to offer late-night service. This service hour expansion extends operating hours, with last drop off extending from 12 a.m. to 2 a.m., seven days a week. TransLink will monitor demand and make adjustments as needed.

Following implementation of the booking and dispatch software improvements, TransLink will also assess opportunities to expand the HandyDART booking window. This would be a further response to customer demand for more flexible and spontaneous accessible travel.



## DURING YOUR RIDE

### 3. Convenient & More Reliable Travel

Designed to give customers greater peace of mind, make service delivery more transparent, and ensure HandyDART keeps pace with advances in fare systems and complementary programs, these initiatives are focused on strengthening reliability, accountability, and integration.

The following sections highlight two priority initiatives:

- **Improved Trip Reliability** – using advanced scheduling software to reduce cancellations and optimize routes to avoid congestion and delays.
- **Integration with Compass Modernization Program** – reviewing fares to ensure ongoing equality and further simplifying payments for custom transit.

Together, these initiatives will reinforce HandyDART as a reliable, transparent, and fully integrated service within TransLink's broader transit network.

#### 3.1 Improved Trip Reliability

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Reliability, Peace of Mind
<b>Status:</b>	Implementation Phase

The latest generation of scheduling and dispatch software will include real-time route optimization features to help HandyDART vehicles avoid congestion and unexpected road closures, resulting in more on-time arrivals and faster and more predictable travel times.

For customers this will mean less waiting and less time travelling, and more reliably getting where they need to go, when they expect to be there.

### 3.2 Integration with the Compass Modernization Program

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Convenience, Choice, Comfort
<b>Status:</b>	Review Phase

HandyDART customers already benefit from easy payments through the Compass program and age-based discounts, implemented following requests from customers for easier travel on conventional transit in 2021.

As part of the future Compass Modernization Program, TransLink will review custom and conventional transit fares to ensure fairness and simplified payments for the growing number of customers making trips across

the integrated system. This may include removing fare disincentives that exist for some customers who combine HandyDART and conventional transit trips. The Compass Modernization Program also provides an opportunity to review the TaxiSaver program to understand its usage and how it might be adapted and modernized to support the region's vision for custom transit.

In the future, HandyDART customers may also not need to show any form of payment when boarding a HandyDART vehicle. Their fare could be linked directly to their booking, and the payment processed automatically in the background, increasing convenience and comfort for users.

## 4. Modernized Fleet

Changes in customer travel behaviour over the last number of years have resulted in a significant shift towards 'demand' trips, leading to less efficient scheduling and fewer passengers on average on board each custom transit trip.

This has resulted in a current fleet sizing and mix that is not aligned with present demand. Historically, the HandyDART shuttles have been our default choice, but advances in trip-matching, brought about by the new booking software, will make it more feasible to deploy a wider mix of vehicles, including smaller vehicles that can be more closely aligned with customer occupancy patterns, operational needs and electrification plans.

Together, these initiatives will help shape the future HandyDART fleet, balancing accessibility, reliability, and sustainability.

### 4.1 Smaller Vehicles

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Time Travel Savings, Convenience, Flexibility
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

HandyDART service is currently provided by a mix of vehicle types, including two sizes of dedicated shuttles as well as a diverse fleet of taxi operated sedans and wheelchair accessible minivans. This diverse fleet mix helps to meet the diverse needs of HandyDART customers.

TransLink will pilot introducing smaller vehicles (e.g. sedans or vans) into the dedicated HandyDART fleet to increase operating efficiency while also improving convenience and comfort for customers who do not need a lift-equipped shuttle. Operating efficiency gains may also translate into increased service availability for customers.

Customer and operator feedback on these smaller vehicles will help inform TransLink's ongoing fleet renewal decisions

## 4.2 Electric Vehicles

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Sustainability, Comfort
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

Electric vehicles are also anticipated to provide smoother and quieter rides for HandyDART customers.

Customer and operator feedback on the first electric HandyDART vehicles will help inform the overall fleet electrification plan.

## 5. Increased Peace of Mind

Improving communication, transparency, and trust throughout the HandyDART customer journey will reduce customer waiting times and give them greater peace of mind by providing real-time information, strengthening connections with operators, and ensuring vehicles and drivers are clearly identifiable.

The following sections highlight three initiatives in various stages of development:

- **Improved Real-Time Trip Information** – enabling real-time tracking with estimated arrival times vehicle information for all HandyDART trips.
- **Timely and Customized Notifications** – expanding automated messaging so customers know when their vehicle will arrive and whether to expect a HandyDART shuttle or HandyDART taxi.
- **Enhanced Visual Identification for HandyDART Taxis** – renewing efforts to make HandyDART taxis easier to recognize through branded vests, advance alerts, and, in future, the potential for driver profiles with names and photos.

Together, these initiatives will strengthen customer confidence by making every trip more predictable, transparent, and secure.

### 5.1 Improved Real Time Trip Information

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Peace of Mind, Convenience, Security
<b>Status:</b>	In Development

Through the new software, map-based, real-time vehicle tracking, with an estimated arrival time, will allow customers to better time their arrival at the designated pick-up location.

“Where’s My HandyDART” and “What’s My Vehicle” information will help customers and their caregivers know not only where their ride is, but also what kind of vehicle is picking them up.

Mobile tools also create the possibility of taking it one step further in connecting customers with their HandyDART operators. The new software platform may include opportunities to share information between the two parties before and during travel that will further simplify pickups and drop-offs, such as driver profile photos and customer real-time location.

## 5.2 Timely and Customized Notifications

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Peace of Mind, Convenience
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

Software enhancements and improved real time trip information will enable improvements in the reliability and utility of alerts and notices across all means of customer communication. Automated messages could be delivered via phone call, text, email, or mobile app to provide timely and more accurate notifications of vehicle arrival time and type.

This will also include options for clients to customize their alert preferences, so that they receive the trip reminders and notifications in the way that best helps them prepare for their journey and avoid unnecessary waiting.

## 5.3 Enhanced Visual Identification for HandyDART Taxis

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Peace of Mind, Security
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

To help make HandyDART taxis and their drivers more easily identifiable to customers, TransLink is exploring multiple ways to integrate the brand with taxi services. This will include updated vests with HandyDART branding and visual identity as part of the required taxi driver uniform. The HandyDART taxi uniform will also include any additional identification developed through the HandyDART taxi certification program, such as a photo ID badge. TransLink will also explore opportunities for exterior visual identifiers for taxis vehicles providing HandyDART service.

Once the new booking software is implemented, the website and digital tools will offer “What’s My Vehicle” and “Where’s My HandyDART” in real time. This system may include adding driver profile information including a name and photograph.

## 6. Enhanced Quality of Care

With roughly one-quarter of HandyDART trips now completed by taxi, it's imperative that there is a consistent, high-quality customer experience across all service providers.

The following section highlights three initiatives in the planning phase that will progress this goal:

- **Expanded Training for HandyDART Taxi Drivers** – enhancing the existing program with new in-person sessions and a modern learning management system (LMS) that delivers interactive modules, real-life customer scenarios, and knowledge testing.
- **HandyDART Taxi Driver Certification** – introducing a formal certification program to recognize successful completion of expanded training, supported with identification materials, with annual recertification required.
- **Strengthened Accountability for HandyDART Services** – expanding taxi performance monitoring and improving public reporting.

Together, these initiatives will strengthen the role of HandyDART taxi within the network and increase accountability across all HandyDART services, ensuring that customers receive safe, comfortable, and reliable service at all times.

### 6.1 Expanded Training for HandyDART Taxi Drivers

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Safety, Comfort, Customer Experience
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

Both HandyDART shuttle operators and HandyDART taxi drivers receive specialized training in passenger assistance, our door-to-door service standard, and disability awareness.

All HandyDART taxi drivers are required to meet the same standard of care as HandyDART shuttle operators. In the past customers have reported inconsistent experiences with HandyDART taxis, and expanded training aims to address these concerns.

A new digital learning management system (LMS) has been rolled out to dedicated HandyDART operators to supplement in person training. This LMS will be expanded to HandyDART taxi operators to provide a full suite of training modules featuring interactive content, customer scenarios, and more robust knowledge tests. This will expand upon the current mandatory training and annual refresher program for HandyDART taxi operators, to keep their specialized knowledge current.

## 6.2 HandyDART Taxi Driver Certification

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Safety, Comfort, Customer Experience
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

A “Service Provider HandyDART Certificate” program will be introduced to officially recognize successful completion of the expanded HandyDART training and testing for taxi drivers.

Those who qualify and maintain their certification through annual re-testing will be registered as Certified HandyDART drivers and issued branded badges and uniforms for easy identification.

This certification will become a requirement to deliver HandyDART taxi service.

## 6.3. Strengthened Accountability for HandyDART Services

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Customer Experience, Comfort
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

We will be renewing efforts to strengthen accountability for HandyDART taxi operators by improving performance monitoring with better data, conducting more audits to ensure quality standard is being met, and continuing to prioritize strong positive performance and behaviour, while addressing poor performers.

We will be enhancing our annual **HandyDART Service Performance Review** with more detailed data for dedicated and non-dedicated trips enabled by new software, to provide transparency in ridership and performance reporting.

To guide this work, new Custom Transit Service Guidelines will consolidate and refine existing policies and performance measures across operations, service quality, and customer experience, providing greater clarity and consistency in planning and reporting.



## THERE WHEN YOU NEED US

### 7. Building Customer Connections

Simpler access points, better feedback systems, and a refreshed brand identity will help strengthen the customer's relationship with HandyDART. These efforts are designed to make it easier for customers to connect with services, share their experiences, and see their needs reflected in how HandyDART operates.

The following sections highlight three initiatives in various stages of development:

- **Easier to Connect with Us** – creating a single, easy access point for HandyDART information and services, beginning with one phone number and paving the way for integrated system connections.
- **Improved Customer Feedback Process** – enhancing contact channels, surveys, and app features such as Rate My Trip to support faster resolution, recognition of service quality, and better understanding of customer needs.

- **Evolving the HandyDART Brand** – reviewing how the HandyDART identity and service delivery model can evolve to better reflect customer aspirations for independence, flexibility, and full community participation.

Together, these initiatives will ensure HandyDART remains customer-focused, responsive, and aligned with the values of the communities it serves.

## 7.1 Easier to Connect with Us

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Convenience, Time Saving
<b>Status:</b>	Planning Phase

It will be easier for customers to access HandyDART support with a single point of entry to reach information and services. Beginning with reducing the number of contact numbers from five to just one phone number, this approach will make it easier to book trips, get travel support, and provide feedback on HandyDART, while paving the way for future customer service system integrations that deliver a more seamless experience for accessible travel.

Improved customer communications through newsletters and other channels will ensure customers, caregivers, and stakeholders are kept in-the-know about what's happening with HandyDART service – including the implementation of this plan

## 7.2 Improved Customer Feedback Process

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Performance Improvement, Recognition
<b>Status:</b>	Implementation Phase

While HandyDART service receives very high marks from customers, there are always opportunities for improvement. TransLink's annual customer survey will continue to gather data separately for the five identified HandyDART trip categories (day programs, social/recreational, medical, dialysis, and work/school) to better understand differences in sentiment and priorities for each.

New software tools for booking and dispatch will enable additional means for customers to provide direct feedback and data to TransLink, such as a "Rate My Trip" feature. Improvements in real-time data will also give employees quicker access to trip information, speed up complaint resolution, and support better customer service.

Direct customer feedback and input from the HandyDART User Advisory Committee is also vital to shaping and improving HandyDART service quality for all categories of customers. We will continue to engage these groups as well as customers, their caregivers, and other key stakeholders where appropriate in all custom transit improvement initiatives.

## 7.3 Evolving the HandyDART Brand

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Customer Experience, Flexibility
<b>Status:</b>	Review

TransLink's HandyDART custom transit service is going through major change, transforming and modernizing, while also becoming part of a more integrated accessible transit system. Customers have shared that the current service name "HandyDART" is dated and carries with it negative connotations that are inconsistent with TransLink's values and commitments to equity and inclusion.

A review of the HandyDART brand will examine how TransLink can continue to evolve the delivery of accessible services in a way that best serves customers and the community.



## BEHIND THE SCENES

### 8. Making it Possible

To support the successful delivery of the customer initiatives outlined in this report, TransLink must undergo change behind the scenes. While these efforts may not be visible to our customers, they are necessary to enable the suite of customer improvements contained in this plan. All of the internal initiatives within this section are currently in development.

#### 8.1 Enhanced Internal Capacity

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Matching Needs & Services, More Flexible Options, Convenient & Reliable, Modernized Fleet, Increased Peace of Mind, Quality of Care, Customer Connections
<b>Status:</b>	In Development

HandyDART is a critical transit service that is undergoing significant changes in technology and operating practices to better support the customer experience. TransLink will enhance our internal capacity to both manage the day-to-day HandyDART service and oversee its transformation. Key to this will be bringing together staff working on custom transit into a more coordinated HandyDART team, with dedicated resources to guide the transformation program.

## 8.2 Specialized Delivery Partners

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	More Flexible Options, Convenient & Reliable, Modernized Fleet, Increased Peace of Mind, Quality of Care
<b>Status:</b>	In Development

To enable the improvements outlined in this plan, TransLink will continue to work with partners to deliver HandyDART service and adapt operations to align with customer initiatives.

A modernized contract emerged in the HandyDART Delivery Model Review as the most viable option for the organization to deliver the most trips for customers and deliver on their needs. We will continue to engage a specialized service provider through a modernized contract, to leverage expertise in custom transit operations and modernization. This approach will include strengthened performance standards, particularly for non-dedicated service providers, to ensure high service standards are met while remaining cost-effective.

## 8.3 Facilities

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Convenient & Reliable, Modernized Fleet
<b>Status:</b>	In Development

TransLink will make investments in HandyDART facilities to support growth, ongoing operations, and planned improvements. Long-term HandyDART operating facility leases or purchases will be

secured to ensure business continuity and mitigate the risk of future cost increases. Facilities will support existing custom transit fleet needs as well as planned fleet initiatives such as electrification and introduction of a more varied dedicated fleet.

## 8.4 Software & Data Systems

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Matching Needs & Services, More Flexible Options, Convenient & Reliable, Modernized Fleet, Increased Peace of Mind, Quality of Care, Customer Connections
<b>Status:</b>	In Development

TransLink will continue to invest in HandyDART software and data systems to support ongoing service operation and the planned transformation of booking, scheduling and dispatch, and application processes.

We will engage a best-in-class software provider to deliver a proven modern custom transit software solution. TransLink will work with this provider to adapt this system to our unique needs and build the necessary integrations with existing TransLink digital systems (such as Compass fare payment system, and our customer alerts and notification system). Data management and reporting tools will be developed to take full advantage of enhanced business intelligence opportunities.

## 8.5 Coordination with Provincial Partners

<b>Customer Benefits:</b>	Matching Needs & Services, Convenient & Reliable, Increased Peace of Mind, Quality of Care, Customer Connections
<b>Status:</b>	In Development

TransLink will continue to work with provincial partners in areas of shared interest to advance HandyDART initiatives outlined in this plan.

BC Transit's Custom Transit Strategy identifies a number of similar themes, such as taxi performance, reviewing TaxiSaver usage, and considering custom transit branding. TransLink will continue to collaborate with BC's Ministry of Transportation and Transit, particularly as relates to passenger transportation licensing and planned enhancements to training and standards for HandyDART taxis.



## Conclusion – An Inclusive & Flexible Future

The HandyDART Customer-First Plan is a comprehensive guide to transform custom transit in Metro Vancouver.

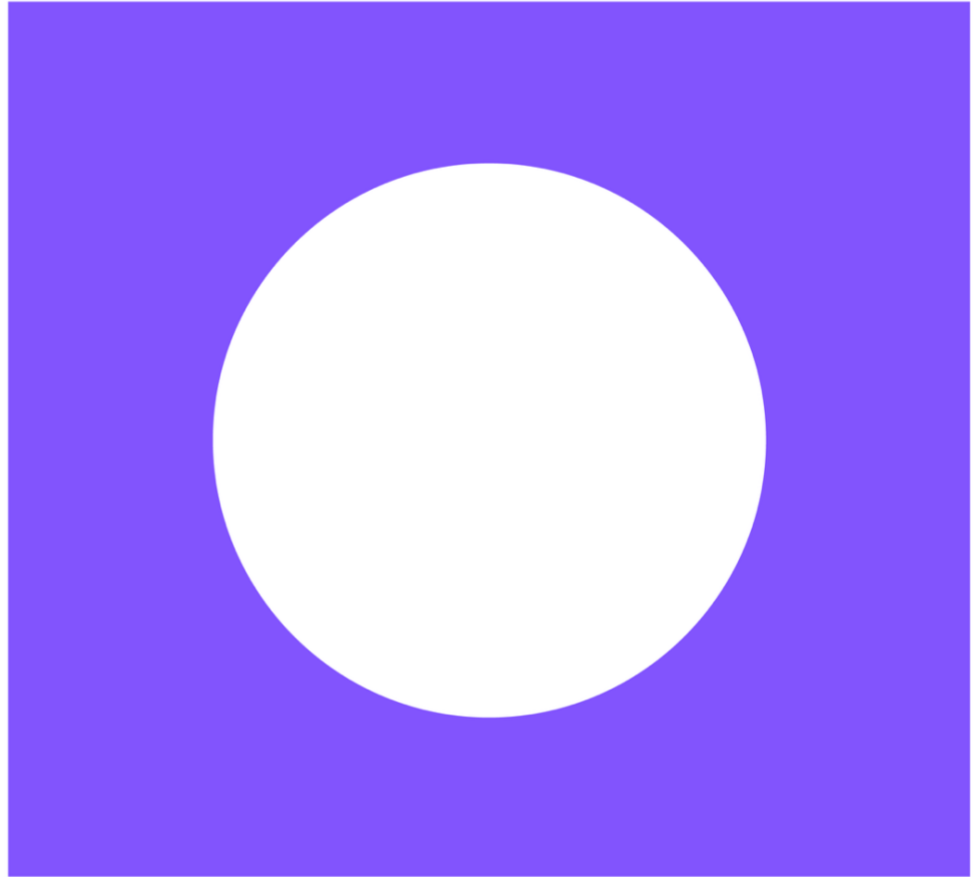
Delivering on customer priorities identified through engagement, and grounded in TransLink's customer promise, identified through engagement, the initiatives outlined span seven key focus areas: application and eligibility, trip booking and scheduling, reliability and integration, fleet renewal, communication and transparency, operator training, and customer engagement. Together they work to deliver a transit service that is more reliable, flexible, and inclusive.

This strategy recognizes that the demand for accessible transit will continue to increase as the region's population ages and mobility needs become more nuanced. By combining advances in technology, service design, and customer engagement, HandyDART will be

better equipped to deliver safe, dependable service today while preparing for the needs of tomorrow.

Achieving a modernized service is not a single project, it's an ongoing process. The initiatives described in this report set a clear direction for a HandyDART system that is seamlessly integrated with the broader transit system, strengthened by customer input, and responsive to the changing needs of the community. With continued investment and collaboration, HandyDART will remain a cornerstone of inclusive transit – ensuring mobility, independence, and connection for thousands of people across the region for decades to come.





# **HandyDART Delivery Model Review**

## **Project Report**

November 2025

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# **HandyDART Delivery Model Review**

Project Report

November 2025

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# Executive Summary

## What is HandyDART?

HandyDART is TransLink's specialized transit service, offering door-to-door trips for individuals who are unable to use conventional public transit without assistance due to physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. The purposes of HandyDART trips are diverse, including work and school commutes, medical appointments and day programs, and social opportunities and errands.

## What is the HandyDART Delivery Model Review?

The HandyDART Delivery Model Review focused on assessing who delivers each function that makes up the HandyDART service. The review was undertaken to ensure that HandyDART service continues to meet user needs while aligning with TransLink's long-term goals. The Delivery Model Review complements the Customer First Plan and other ongoing initiatives that together aim to modernize the HandyDART service.

This review does not consider customer eligibility or information technology required to support the delivery of HandyDART services, as these aspects of the service are being considered separately. This review does not consider when non-dedicated vehicles (i.e. taxis) are used to deliver trips or the type of vehicles that make up HandyDART's dedicated fleet.

## Methodology

The Delivery Model Review was undertaken through five phases of analysis:

- **Phase 1** - understanding the existing HandyDART delivery model, and identified opportunities to enhance customer experience
- **Phase 2** - review of service delivery models used by other specialized transit services in North America, illustrating a range of models that are currently in use.
- **Phase 3** – development of service delivery model options for the HandyDART service were developed. Different combinations of ownership over functions and responsibilities of specialized transit services were considered, using insights from earlier phases, resulting in eight service delivery model options as a 'long-list' of options for evaluation.
- **Phase 4** - a Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework was produced, with evaluation accounts informed by the Phase 1 findings and input from customers and other stakeholders. Criteria and measures were defined, and the eight service delivery model options from Phase 3 were evaluated to shortlist to three options for more detailed evaluation.



**Figure 1 Existing HandyDART Service Delivery Model**

- **Phase 5** was the final phase of the project and involved synthesizing the outputs of the previous phases and feedback collected through internal and external engagement to draw out key differentiators of each model and trade-offs associated with each.

Engagement of customers and operational stakeholders was undertaken at multiple points during the project to solicit input on the current delivery model, the evaluation framework and the evaluation of each alternative delivery model.

## HandyDART Today

HandyDART currently operates under a split-service delivery model, with responsibilities divided between TransLink/Coast Mountain Bus Company (CMBC) and a third-party Service Provider. The functions that make up the HandyDART service are described in Appendix A1. A summary of who delivers each function is shown in Figure 1.

## Possible Alternative Delivery Models

Consultants and TransLink staff worked together to develop alternative service delivery model options for HandyDART. They considered various combinations of function ownership and responsibility.

North American specialized transit operations using delivery models like the models identified were reviewed. The experience of peer agencies was used to thoroughly understand many of the opportunities and challenges associated with those delivery models. This understanding strengthened the evaluation of the models, including their relative suitability for HandyDART.

## Evaluation Process

A robust Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework was developed and included five accounts as shown in Figure 2. Criteria and measures for each account were also defined. The MAE framework was endorsed by the TransLink Board of Directors in September 2024.

The eight service delivery model options from Phase 3 were evaluated using the MAE. After the preliminary evaluation, the eight options were shortlisted to three which were put through a more detailed evaluation (Figure 3).

The shortlist was endorsed by the Board in October 2024 and includes the following three options:

- **Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract**<sup>1</sup> is in line with the existing delivery model, whereby a single Contractor (in Figure 8-1 below) is providing a comprehensive set of HandyDART-related functions, consistent with the functions that the contractor currently delivers.

As TransLink always reviews and adjust contracts during renewal periods, this Option assumes that the contract would be modernized to improve service and contractor performance.



**Figure 2 Evaluation Accounts**

<sup>1</sup> In the engagement materials and previous reporting, Option 1 was labelled as **Option 1: Modernized Contract**. "Split Structure" has been added during the writing of this report to more clearly identify this option, which is most similar to the existing delivery model, is a split-structure.

- **Option 2: Fully In-House**<sup>2</sup> represents a paradigm shift in how HandyDART is delivered. In this option, all functions are brought in-house. The specifics of how and where within the organization these would be delivered was deferred to staff to examine.
- **Option 3: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-House**<sup>3</sup> provides an ‘in-between’ alternative that brings additional (but not all) functions in-house. The functions that would remain with a service provider would be trip delivery and fleet maintenance. Options 3A and 3B from the preliminary evaluation were combined for the purpose of short-listing, as these options were very similar, with the primary difference being whether trip delivery and associated fleet maintenance is managed by one or multiple service providers. In Figure 8-1, the asterisk represents that one than more contractor is possible.

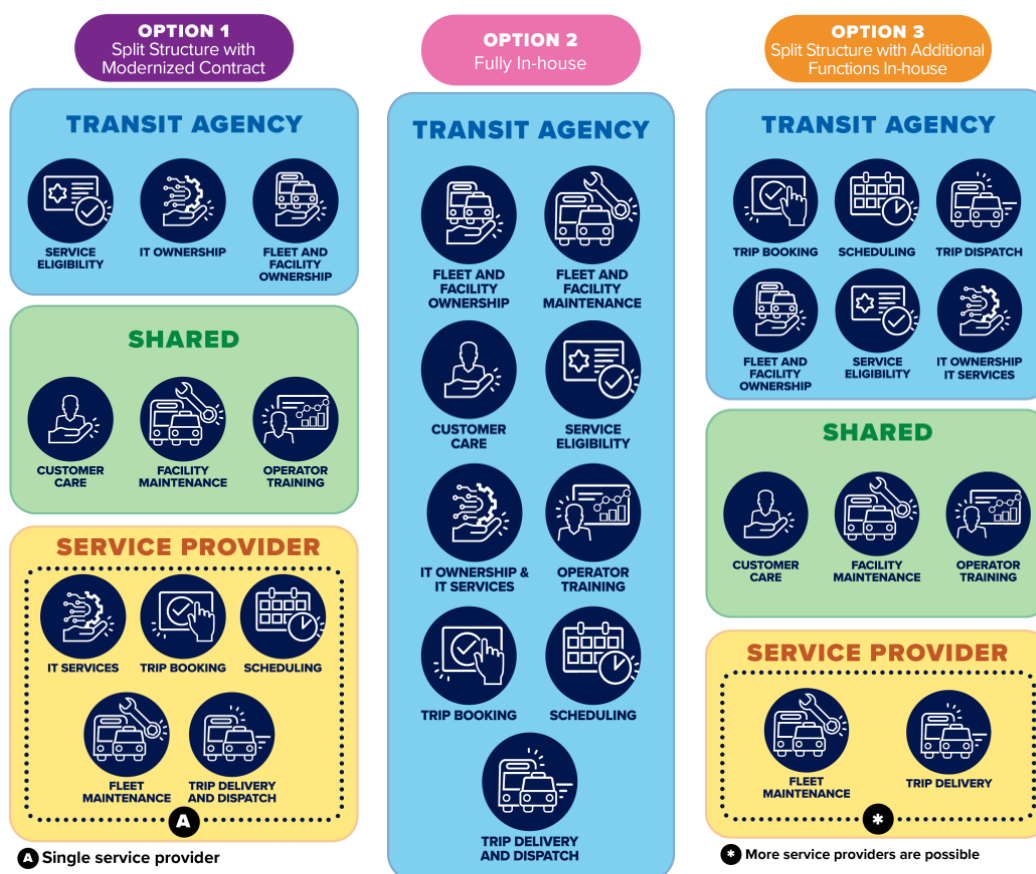


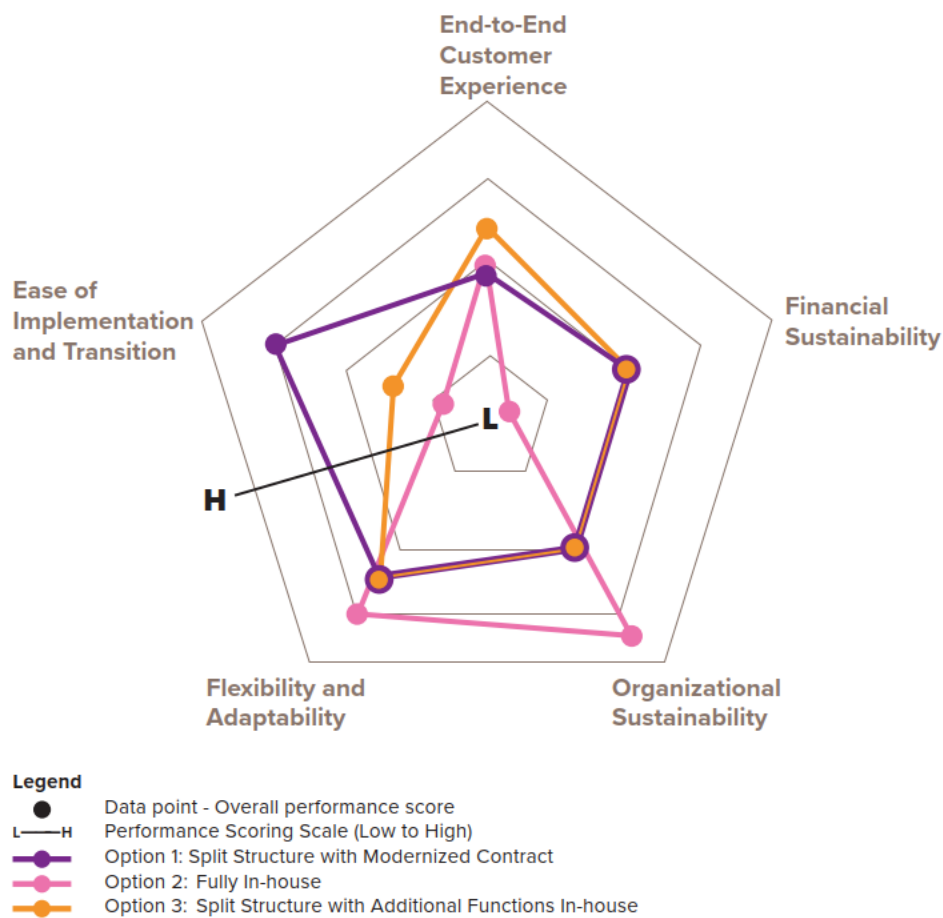
Figure 3 Finalized shortlisted options

## Delivery Model trade-offs/ strengths & weaknesses

<sup>2</sup> In the engagement materials and previous reporting, Option 2 was labelled as **Option 2: In-house**. The name has been updated during the writing of this report to acknowledge that all three Options involve some functions delivered in-house by the TransLink enterprise.

<sup>3</sup> In the engagement materials and previous reporting, Option 3 was labelled as **Option 3: In-House Operations + Limited Delivery Contract(s)**. The name has been updated during the writing of this report to more clearly demonstrate the different categories of delivery models (as introduced in Section 5).

Phase 5 involved synthesizing the outputs of the previous phases and feedback collected through internal and external engagement to complete a trade-offs assessment of the three delivery model options. The radar plot below (Figure 4) demonstrates how each option was evaluated to perform across the evaluation accounts. There is no one option that consistently scores highly across all the accounts. This is not surprising as in different contexts and under different priorities, some model options would score better than others. The peer agency review findings highlight differences between organizations, explaining why certain models are more suitable in specific scenarios. For TransLink and HandyDART, the choice of service delivery model hinges on the priorities set by the TransLink Board.



**Figure 4 Comparison of trade-offs between options**

## Summary

Figure 9-1 shows:

- Option 1 represents the least change, thus it performs well in Ease of Implementation and Transition. It also performs well in Financial Sustainability.

- The trade-off for these benefits is the forgoing of opportunities to improve Public Trust and less Flexibility and Adaptability to respond to future corporate policy direction such as stronger integration to the conventional service.
- Option 2 would provide greater Public Trust, and some improvement in Flexibility and Adaptability to implement future policy directions.
  - The trade-off is that it would require significant change to bring the service fully in-house and will carry the greatest financial cost.
- Option 3 requires some change to bring key elements in-house, but less change than Option 2. It performs well in Financial Sustainability (equivalent to Option 1) and provides some improvement to Customer Experience (namely, improved travel time and on-time performance).
  - The trade-off for this benefit is the forgoing of opportunity to improve Public Trust and improved Flexibility and Adaptability (like Option 1) while also introducing complexity in Implementation and Transition (similar to Option 3).

It is not surprising to note that in different contexts and under different priorities, some model options could perform better than others. The peer agency review findings highlight differences between organizations, explaining why certain models are more suitable in specific scenarios. For TransLink and HandyDART, the choice of service delivery model hinges on the priorities set by the TransLink Board of Directors.

## Conclusion

While this Delivery Model Review provides important insights into who should deliver HandyDART services, it represents just one component of a broader decision-making process. It is important to recognize that the quality and sustainability of HandyDART service will be shaped not only by the chosen delivery model but also by a range of other levers and decisions—many of which are outlined in the HandyDART Customer First Plan.

Program design, implementation strategies, and operational choices will also influence outcomes and are critical to achieving long-term goals. As such, a comprehensive implementation strategy with appropriate resourcing is recommended to support a smooth transition and ensure success for all customers and stakeholders.

# 1 Introduction

HandyDART is TransLink’s specialized transit service<sup>4</sup>, designed for transit riders who are unable to navigate conventional public transit due to disability. HandyDART offers door-to-door trips. Some of these trips are provided by dedicated HandyDART vehicles and drivers, while others are provided by commercial taxis, referred to as “non-dedicated” vehicle trips. A review of HandyDART’s delivery model has been undertaken to account for evolving challenges that include changing travel patterns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, labour shortages, an aging population, and the impending expiration of the current service delivery contract. During the course of the study, the Government of British Columbia identified a priority to ensure that provincial transit services – beginning with HandyDART - are being delivered in a way that is cost effective for taxpayers, responsive to the concerns of transit riders, and not duplicative of administration.

The HandyDART Delivery Model Review focused on assessing who delivers each function that makes up the HandyDART service. The review was undertaken to ensure that HandyDART service continues to meet user needs while aligning with TransLink’s long-term goals. Conducted by a team that included consultants Mott MacDonald and Left Turn Right Turn, the Delivery Model Review complements the Customer First Plan and other ongoing initiatives that together aim to modernize the HandyDART service.

This review does not consider customer eligibility or information technology required to support the delivery of HandyDART services, since both of these aspects of the service are being considered separately. This review does not consider when non-dedicated vehicles are used to deliver trips or the type of vehicles that make up HandyDART’s dedicated vehicle fleet. This report documents the outputs of the project from Phase 1 to 5.

In **Phase 1**, the project focused on understanding the existing HandyDART delivery model. The team captured a rich collection of experiences with HandyDART and identified opportunities to enhance customer experience through assessment of data and engagement with staff, stakeholders and customers. This phase became fundamental to later evaluating and comparing alternative service delivery model options.

In **Phase 2**, a review of service delivery models used by other specialized transit services in North America was conducted. These models were chosen to represent the range of models that are currently in use. Key characteristics relevant to the TransLink organization and its customers were documented to highlight lessons learned and insights from each of the systems. These insights assisted the team in evaluating the range of models for suitability in HandyDART’s own context.

In **Phase 3**, service delivery model options for the HandyDART service were collaboratively developed by consultants and TransLink staff. Different combinations of ownership over functions and responsibilities of specialized transit services were considered, using insights from earlier phases, including a thorough understanding of the current HandyDART model, industry trends, best practices, and peer agency reviews. Eight service delivery model options were established and became the ‘long-list’ of options for evaluation in the subsequent project phase.

In **Phase 4**, a Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework was produced and finalized through collaboration with TransLink Staff. The evaluation accounts were informed by the Phase 1 findings and input from customers and other stakeholders. The accounts are:

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<sup>4</sup> The term specialized transit is the prevalent term employed in Canada, and is the one employed by the Canadian Urban Transit Association. In BC, the term “custom transit” often is used in place, while in some other parts of Canada and in the United States the term “paratransit” is used.

- End-to-End Customer Experience;
- Financial Sustainability;
- Organization Sustainability;
- Flexibility and Adaptability; and
- Ease of Implementation and Transition.

Criteria and measures were defined under the accounts with TransLink staff collaboration. The eight service delivery model options from Phase 3 were evaluated using the MAE. After the preliminary evaluation, the eight options were shortlisted to three options, which were subject to more detailed evaluation.

**Phase 5** was the final phase of the project and involved synthesizing the outputs of the previous phases and feedback collected through internal and external engagement. This synthesis included highlighting the key differentiators of each model and trade-offs associated with each.

While this Delivery Model Review provides important insights into who should deliver HandyDART services, it represents just one component of a broader decision-making process. TransLink governs the HandyDART service, which includes developing policies, service standards, performance metrics and budgets. Regardless of the outcome of the delivery model review and the identified differences of each model, TransLink retains authority over the administration and operation of the HandyDART service. This central role ensures that any future enhancements or adjustments to HandyDART's delivery will align with the organization's broader strategic objectives and commitments. It is also important to recognize that the quality and sustainability of HandyDART service will be shaped not only by the chosen delivery model but also by a range of other levers and decisions—many of which are outlined in the HandyDART Customer First Plan.

## 2 How HandyDART is Delivered Today

Understanding the existing HandyDART delivery model and its evolving context provided the foundation for the Delivery Model Review. This groundwork informed the criteria for preliminary and detailed evaluation, the review of alternative service delivery models, and the trade-offs between service delivery model options. Concurrent with the Delivery Model Review, TransLink is developing a more comprehensive plan to introduce a range of improvements for customers. Drafts of those strategies were also considered in the finalization of the Delivery Model Review.

HandyDART is TransLink's specialized transit service, offering door-to-door trips for individuals who are unable to use conventional public transit without assistance due to physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. The purposes of HandyDART trips are diverse, including work and post-secondary commutes, medical appointments and day programs, and social opportunities and errands.

HandyDART's last review of its policies and service delivery model was completed in 2017. Since then, several factors have prompted a re-evaluation of the service delivery model. These include:

- Changing travel patterns due to the COVID-19 pandemic,
- labour shortages,
- an aging and growing population in the region,
- the opportunity to integrate of conventional and custom transit systems,
- the increasing use of non-dedicated vehicles for HandyDART users, and
- the introduction of Access for Everyone as articulated in *Transport 2050* – TransLink's 30-year Transportation Strategy, which calls for a transportation system that is convenient, reliable, safe, comfortable and carbon-free.

The impending expiration of the contract with the current service delivery contractor has further necessitated this assessment. Conducting a review of the delivery model is one aspect of addressing these evolving challenges and will help TransLink continue to effectively meet the needs of its HandyDART users.

### 2.1 Current Service Delivery Model

TransLink governs the HandyDART service, which includes developing policies, service standards, performance metrics and budgets. Today, HandyDART operations are delivering through a split service delivery model, with certain functions handled by the TransLink Enterprise (including TransLink and Coast Mountain Bus Company (CMBC)), others by a third-party contractor (referred to as "the Service Provider"), and some functions shared between both parties.

- Functions provided by the TransLink enterprise are: service eligibility, IT ownership and fleet and facility ownership.
- Functions provided by the Service Provider are: trip delivery and dispatch, trip booking, scheduling, IT service and fleet maintenance.
- Functions that are a shared responsibility of TransLink and the Service Provider are: customer care, operator training, and facility maintenance.

Definitions of each of these functions are presented in *Appendix A.1 – Glossary of Functions of Specialized Transit Service*. Figure 2-1 illustrates who currently delivers each function. Definitions of each of these functions are presented in *Appendix A.1 – Glossary of Functions of Specialized Transit Service*.



**Figure 2-1 Existing HandyDART Delivery Model**

The Engagement Program for this phase of the project (i.e., Round 1 of engagement) included a telephone survey of 100 HandyDART customers, and two workshops. One workshop was with the HandyDART Users' Advisory Committee and second was with a group of external stakeholders and advocacy organizations. Engagement was conducted to introduce the project's objectives and expected outcomes and understand participants' experiences with the current HandyDART service.

By engaging with all the groups listed above, Phase 1 of this project identified important opportunities to enhance the customer experience, which are listed below. Note that some of these opportunities are not directly affected by the delivery model.



#### **On-time and reliable service**

In 2023, HandyDART met its on-time performance target, with 91% of trips arriving within the 30-minute pick-up window (the target is 90%). However, 20% of customers identified on-time arrival as needing improvement, and it had the lowest satisfaction rating. Workshops and

surveys highlighted on-time performance as top of mind for customers, with 80% of respondents rating it as very important.



### **Taxi service**

TransLink currently utilizes taxis as non-dedicated services to supplement its dedicated service. Customer and stakeholder engagement revealed concerns about taxi services, especially the lack of consistency of service quality including door-to-door service. Customers responding to the customer telephone survey echoed these sentiments with 59% stating they would prefer to wait for a dedicated HandyDART vehicle rather than take a taxi at their preferred time.

Compared to dedicated HandyDART drivers, taxi drivers continue to receive lower ratings for their ability to assist passengers with disabilities. The overall service on taxis scored 7.8 in the 2024 Customer Service Performance Review. While this score is only slightly lower than the 8.8 score given to dedicated service in the same study, there is still some room for improvement. A discussion of TransLink's approach to non-dedicated service usage and a high-level summary of industry practices is provided in *Section 4 – A Discussion on Non-Dedicated Services*.



### **Trip length**

Workshops with HDUAC and stakeholders revealed that trip length is a key concern, with perceptions of longer travel times and ineffective routing software contributing to circuitous routes. Travel time was a top 10 complaint in 2023. Reducing trip lengths and optimizing routing will be an important consideration in improving the service but is not a function of the delivery model.



### **Call wait times**

Reducing call wait times is also important for improving customer experience. Many HDUAC members and stakeholders identified long wait times to speak with booking agents as a major challenge. 60% of telephone survey respondents emphasized the importance of shorter booking wait times, and it was the second most selected improvement opportunity in the 2023 Customer Service Report.

For additional details on the engagement feedback, refer to *Appendix A.2 – What We Heard: Engagement Summary*.

Phase 1 provided a foundational understanding of the existing HandyDART delivery model. The insights gained from Phase 1 also informed the creation of the Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework. The high-level accounts and criteria were informed by the mission and objectives of TransLink, while identifying the relevant KPIs informed the measures within the criteria. See *Section 6 – Defining What is Important* for more details on the MAE.

### 3 Delivery Model Insights from Peer Agencies

Peer agencies in Canada and the U.S. were reviewed to understand the variations in service delivery model functions and identify potential lessons learned and implications for TransLink's HandyDART. Agencies were selected to illustrate the variety of potential delivery models and are not indicative of what is more common or successful. They vary in service delivery functions (e.g., in-house operations versus contracted service delivery), agency size, service area coverage, governance structure, organizational structure, and evidence of piloting various programs and initiatives.

Interviews were conducted with agency staff for six of the systems, followed by the submission of data and document requests to gather further insights. These were selected through discussion with staff, to garner information regarding a wide array of models. The reviewed peer agencies and the key differentiators for each selected service delivery model are outlined below:

- **(Boston) Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) The Ride:** MBTA was selected as one of two US examples because it operates specialized transit service across a large region covering 58 municipalities. MBTA has various in-house central operations functions, including service eligibility, booking, scheduling and dispatching. On-road services are delivered through multiple service providers.
- **Calgary Transit Access:** Calgary Transit was selected due to its similar scale of operations. It operates in-house administration and fleet maintenance, with a substantial number of trips provided by contracted service providers. The organization recently underwent corporate reorganization, pooling operational resources between conventional and specialized transit services.
- **Durham Region Transit (DRT) Specialized Services:** DRT was selected as its model more closely resembles TransLink. Service eligibility is provided in-house. Scheduling and reservations are shared responsibilities alongside a service provider that is operating both their specialized service, as well as their on-demand transit operations.
- **Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) DATS:** ETS was selected due to its similar scale of operations. The organization provides a portion of trips through in-house service delivery, while non-dedicated services are provided by contracted taxi companies.
- **Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Maryland Mobility:** MTA was selected due to its scale and operations across a larger region. The agency has limited in-house functions and uses contracted service providers to support central functions as well as on-road delivery.
- **Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) Wheel-Trans:** TTC was selected due to the scale of its operations. The organization has multiple key functions in-house, while on-road delivery is split between an in-house operations and service delivery partners

Other agency models were discussed through the project and supported by desktop research. Due to project constraints, interviews were not conducted. These included:

- **BC Transit:** BC Transit provides specialized transit in 28 rural and urban communities across the province. BC Transit contracts service operating companies to provide specialized service in each community. These operating companies are responsible for service eligibility, reservations, scheduling, dispatch and on-road service delivery. BC Transit manages the contracts and is responsible for service and asset planning as well as monitoring of key performance indicators.

- **Montreal (STM):** STM has key operating functions in-house, including service eligibility, scheduling and reservations. Previously, they served a small percentage of trips (10-20%) through in-house services, and the remaining through a mix of contracted services. As of Summer 2025, on-road service delivery is being delivered through multiple contracted service delivery providers. There is insufficient information to determine the distribution of trips delivered through dedicated or non-dedicated services.
- **York Region Transit (YRT):** YRT operates with in-house eligibility, reservations, scheduling, dispatch and road supervision. YRT on-road service delivery is provided through a single contract. Of note, YRT is one of the few agencies that does not use non-dedicated services, as their dedicated contractor delivers 100% of trips.

The peer agency review focused on six functional component categories shown in Table 3-1. Each peer agency provided insight about how the functional components are delivered. These components informed the identification of the building blocks that together make up a service delivery models (Section 5).

**Table 3-1 Peer Agency Review Framework**

Functional Components Categories	Delivery Model	Customer	People	Scheduling	Assets	Technology Systems
<b>Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery Model Overview</li> <li>• Contract Management</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction</li> <li>• Areas of Improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer registration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– User Eligibility</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Customer Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Gathering Feedback</li> <li>– Reviewing Feedback</li> <li>– Implementing Feedback</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operator Experience</li> <li>• Operator Retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booking Procedures</li> <li>• Types of Booking</li> <li>• Wait Times</li> <li>• Trip Cancellations</li> <li>• Trip Delivery</li> <li>• Trip Scheduling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility Ownership</li> <li>• Facility Maintenance</li> <li>• Fleet Ownership</li> <li>• Fleet Maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT Hosting</li> </ul>

The below figure depicts the variations in service delivery functions for the interviewed peer agencies (Figure 3-1). Note that information was not provided by all peer agencies about all functional components shown in Table 3-1.

**Table 3-2 How Peer Agencies Deliver Services**

Peer Agency	Transit Agency (In-House)	Service Provider
<b>(Boston) MBTA The Ride</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service eligibility</li> <li>• Trip booking</li> <li>• Scheduling</li> <li>• Operator training</li> <li>• Customer care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip Delivery (multiple contractors)</li> <li>• Asset management and maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Fleet owned by MBTA</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Calgary Transit Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service eligibility</li> <li>• Trip booking</li> <li>• Scheduling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip Delivery (multiple contractors complementing in-house services)</li> </ul>

Peer Agency	Transit Agency (In-House)	Service Provider
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operator training</li> <li>• Customer care</li> <li>• Trip Delivery (in-house supported with multiple contractors)</li> <li>• Asset management and maintenance (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Facility owned and maintained by CT (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset management and maintenance (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Facility owned and maintained by CT (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>
<b>Durham Region Transit Specialized Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service eligibility</li> <li>• Customer care</li> <li>• Scheduling (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Trip booking (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operator training</li> <li>• Asset management and maintenance</li> <li>• Trip delivery</li> <li>• Scheduling (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Trip booking (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>
<b>(Edmonton) ETS DATS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service eligibility</li> <li>• Trip booking</li> <li>• Scheduling</li> <li>• Operator training</li> <li>• Customer care</li> <li>• Trip Delivery (in-house supported with multiple contractors)</li> <li>• Asset management and maintenance (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip Delivery (multiple contractors complementing in-house services)</li> <li>• Asset management and maintenance (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>
<b>(Maryland) MTA Maryland Mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip Delivery (in-house supported with multiple contractors)</li> <li>• Customer Care (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Service Eligibility (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Fleet Ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip Delivery (multiple contractors complementing in-house services)</li> <li>• Service Eligibility</li> <li>• Trip Booking</li> <li>• Scheduling</li> <li>• Asset management and maintenance</li> <li>• Customer Care (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Service Eligibility (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>
<b>(Toronto) TTC Wheel-Trans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service eligibility</li> <li>• Trip booking</li> <li>• Scheduling</li> <li>• Asset management and maintenance</li> <li>• Trip Delivery (in-house supported with multiple contractors)</li> <li>• Customer Care (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Operator Training (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip Delivery (multiple contractors complementing in-house services)</li> <li>• Customer Care (shared responsibility)</li> <li>• Operator Training (shared responsibility)</li> </ul>

The following summarizes relevant common practices in the Canadian transit industry, drawing on the peer review as well as the consultant team experience:

- Specific functional components are frequently delivered in-house by the transit agency. These are: service eligibility, booking, scheduling, dispatch, and customer service. TransLink provides service eligibility in-house, customer care, facility maintenance, and operator training as shared functions, and the remainder are solely through the service provider.
- Like TransLink, most agencies contract out some or all the on-road service delivery functions to dedicated service delivery providers. The most common practice among larger agencies is to rely on service delivery partners as part of a blended model; some portion of on-road service is provided through in-house resources and some portion delivered through strong partnerships with dedicated service providers. There are also some examples of larger agencies relying exclusively on service providers.
- Where agencies leverage service providers for on-road service delivery, this is most commonly done through distinct contracts with one or more providers. The contracts can be procured on a rolling basis, or through a single procurement process to procure all the services contemporaneously. It is uncommon to have a single service provider for all on-road service delivery for large agencies.
- Nearly all agencies use non-dedicated vehicle trips to supplement dedicated vehicle trips. These non-dedicated vehicle trips are provided by taxi companies or other service providers. Non-dedicated trips help agencies to manage resources, maintain on-time performance, and maintain financial efficiency. Furthermore, there is a large variation on the extent to which agencies distribute trips to non-dedicated service delivery partners. This is explored further in *Section 4 – A Discussion on Non-Dedicated Services*.

The peer review was used to inform the identification of the building blocks that together make up a service delivery model and further, the potential delivery models for HandyDART (*Section 5 – Building Blocks of a Service Delivery Model*). Insights from peer agencies were also used to compare and evaluate the potential delivery models, using the MAE framework (see *Section 6 – Defining What is Important*).

## 4 A Discussion on Non-Dedicated Vehicle Trips

The service delivery model options discussed in this report all have an underlying assumption that non-dedicated vehicle trips will continue to supplement trips provided by dedicated vehicles, whether they are provided by a Service Provider or in-house resources. This section provides a high-level discussion on TransLink's current approach to the use of non-dedicated vehicles and how it compares to practices in the industry. Finally, a discussion on emerging trends is also presented for TransLink's consideration.

### 4.1 Current Usage of Non-Dedicated Services and Benchmarks

Transit agencies supplement specialized transit trips in certain instances with additional transportation services, typically delivered by taxi companies or other service providers. These trips are called “non-dedicated” vehicle trips because the fleet used and the operators assigned are *not* dedicated to the agency providing specialized transit services. The operator and vehicle may deliver a transit agency trip and then switch back to its regular for-hire business. Conversely, dedicated vehicle trips refers to the fleet and operators that are solely servicing the specialized transit trips.

In the case of HandyDART, the dedicated vehicle trips are all delivered by the HandyDART Service Provider, and non-dedicated trips are dispatched by the Service Provider to a local taxi company under contract to TransLink. Note that some transit agencies also employ vehicles available to consumers (e.g. sedans or vans) to exclusively provide specialized transit trips. For example, a taxi company may have a contract to dedicate vehicles and drivers to specialized transit who do not engage in their regular for-hire business.

There are various reasons agencies use non-dedicated vehicle trips, and often, it is a mix of these that dictate their usage:

- Capacity management, including when the dedicated fleet of vehicles cannot keep up with demand for trips. Note that in some jurisdictions, including Ontario and Manitoba, accessibility legislation can also limit the number of trip denials<sup>5</sup>, thus requiring non-dedicated services to accommodate trip requests that can't be provided using dedicated vehicles.
- Maintaining continuity of service, especially when dedicated vehicles are limited, such as in times of traffic delay or when there are mechanical issues with vehicles. Non-dedicated vehicles are utilized to ensure customers are provided with on-time service.
- Geographic challenges and spatial constraints, for example servicing locations that are far away from typical trip demand, or locations that dedicated vehicles cannot access due to size and turning capabilities.

**Dedicated Services** – Service delivered by vehicles dedicated exclusively to transportation of specialized transit customers. This can include in-house or contracted service providers operating the vehicles exclusively for the use of the transit agency.

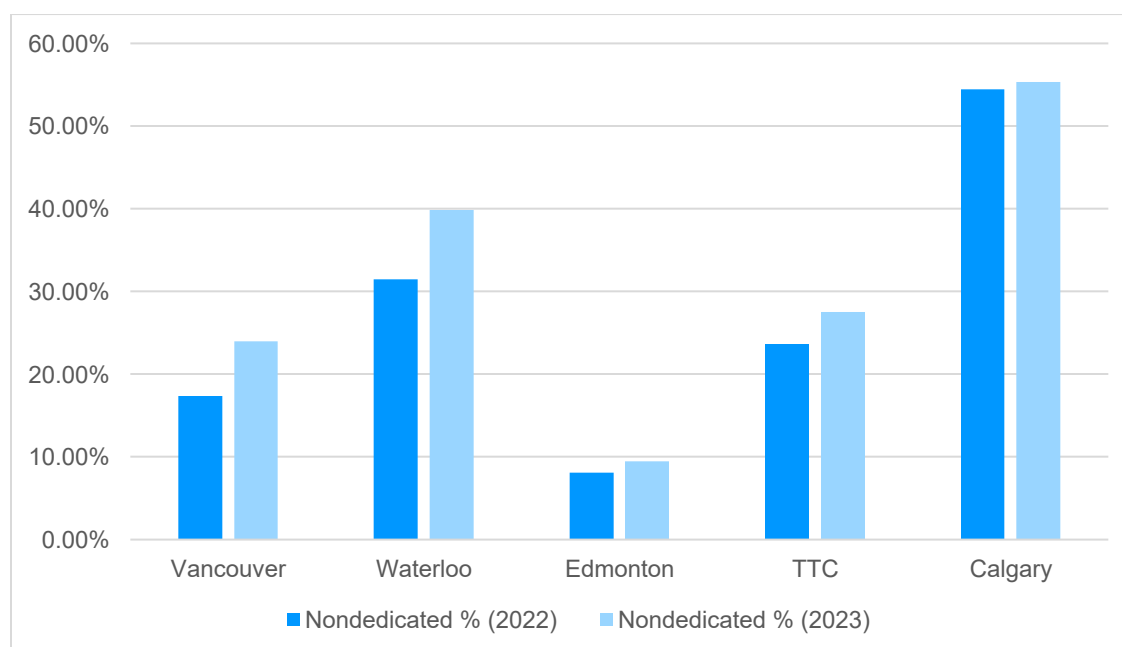
**Non-Dedicated Services** - Service delivered by vehicles *not* exclusively dedicated to the transit agency; at various points in the day the vehicle may be transporting other customers (not on behalf of the specialized transit service). The most common example is a taxi that delivers trips for the specialized transit service at one point in the day, and at other points (before, after, or in-between) it for-hire trips to the public.

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<sup>5</sup> Ontario (AODA IASR 72. (1)) and Manitoba (AMA ATSR 39), the first Canadian provinces with Accessible Transportation Standards, both explicitly state that providers cannot 'limit the availability of specialized transportation services to persons with disabilities' through policy or practice. Other provinces, including BC, have not yet released their transportation standards.

- Cost reduction, since non-dedicated services typically cost an agency less on a cost per trip basis<sup>6</sup>.
- Other factors such as:
  - Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) that limit dedicated trips during certain days or times (e.g., no split shifts, holidays schedules)
  - Accessibility legislation that limits number of trip denials and requires non-dedicated services to accommodate trip requests.
  - Mobility device limitations in dedicated vehicles that taxis can better accommodate.
  - Certain passengers that can only ride in taxis.
- Cross-Boundary Transportation: Non-dedicated vehicles can bridge service gaps when passengers need to travel across different jurisdictions.
- Transfers: Non-dedicated vehicles can sometimes facilitate smoother transitions between different modes of transportation.

The practice of using non-dedicated services is commonplace across all medium and large specialized transit services, including HandyDART. Relative to most peers, HandyDART had a lower percentage of non-dedicated vehicle trips in 2022 and 2023, based on data reported in the CUTA Factbook (see Figure 4-1 below).



**Figure 4-1 Percentage of Overall Eligible Trips provided by Non-dedicated Services (Source: 2023 CUTA Factbook)**

A high-level review revealed that HandyDART applies the following general approach to the use of non-dedicated trips:

<sup>6</sup> As per CUTA reporting, in 2023, HandyDART's dedicated and non-dedicated services were approximately \$30/trip and \$55/trip respectively.

- Contractual service requirements including but not limited to on-time performance, trip accommodation and time on-board, often require the Service Provider to dispatch taxis in place of dedicated vehicles. The decision to dispatch a taxi in place of dedicated HandyDART vehicle lies with the Service Provider.
- Trips are assigned to non-dedicated vehicles when they cannot be fit into the service schedule. This can occur when dedicated HandyDART vehicles are unavailable due to high demand, traffic delays, operator availability or other circumstances.

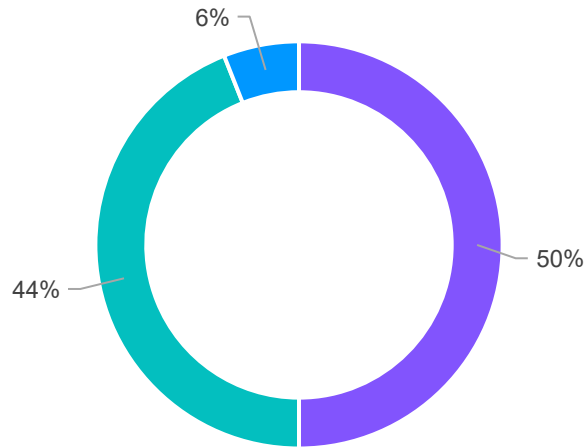
HandyDART has experienced an increase in the use of taxis over the past years. This is largely due to the following reasons:

- Non-dedicated vehicles have been utilized to provide service during non-peak times where dedicated vehicle operators are not available. This is due to collective bargaining agreement limitations that prevent HandyDART operators from doing split shifts or during holidays or vacations where there is limited operator availability.
- An increase in demand trips and decrease in subscription trips have led to more usage of non-dedicated vehicles. Subscription trips are recurring trips where customers pre-book certain trips that occur consistently at the same time to the same destination. Typically, pooling subscription trips in dedicated vehicles is an effective scheduling practice. However, changes in travel during the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a significant decrease in subscription trips. This means that the efficiency of using dedicated vehicles has dropped, and non-dedicated vehicles are being used to provide more efficient services.
- Software system limitations have also made it difficult to optimize the scheduling of dedicated vehicles.

While non-dedicated services are essential and provide substantial benefits, customers do not rate them as highly as dedicated services (as noted in *Section 2.1 – Current Service Delivery Model*). This is not only true for HandyDART but is common in the industry for customer satisfaction to be lower for non-dedicated vehicle trips compared to trips by dedicated vehicles and operators.

It is worth noting that recent 2024 HandyDART Customer Satisfaction Survey results showed that when it comes to choosing between traveling in a taxi or waiting longer for a HandyDART dedicated vehicle in the event of delays, respondents were fairly evenly divided (Figure 4-2). This suggests that while some customers put a high value on a HandyDART dedicated vehicle trip, some customers also value the availability of service over the type of vehicle that provides it. It appears that a balance is needed.

This trend is common across jurisdictions; customers have strong preferences for service delivery types, and there is value in having a mix of dedicated and non-dedicated options both to improve efficiency and to improve service availability. Given its critical role in delivering HandyDART, it is assumed that any future delivery model will continue to include non-dedicated services and should be considered in any future implementation plan.



- Take a HandyDART bus even if you have to wait for one to be available
- Get a taxi at your preferred time
- Don't know

**Figure 4-2 Wait to Take HandyDART When Available vs. Get a Taxi at Preferred Time (Source: HandyDART 2024 Customer Service Performance Report)**

## 4.2 Usage of Non-dedicated Vehicle Trips: Common Industry Practices vs Best Practices

Table 4-1 summarizes practices related to the usage of non-dedicated vehicle trips based on the review of peer agencies (Section 3) and enhanced by the consultant team's industry expertise. The table highlights peer practices and industry trends, showcasing effective processes, systems and contracts.

**Table 4-1 Effectiveness of peer and industry practices**

Peer practices and industry trends		Effective processes, systems and contracts
<b>Overall</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited or no strategy for usage of taxis. Utilizing taxis when dedicated vehicles are at capacity.</li> <li>Utilizing previous year taxi expense as baseline budget, without data analysis completed to inform decisions around budget.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring demand and adjusting the use of taxis to optimize the use of specialized transit fleet.</li> <li>Undertaking periodic reviews of trip data to evaluate effectiveness of taxis.</li> <li>Utilizing trip data to inform if taxi budget needs to be adjusted.</li> </ul>
<b>Time of day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taxi usage tends to be spread across all hours of operation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short peak periods to reduce denials and limit need for fleet expansion.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Peer practices and industry trends		Effective processes, systems and contracts	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Early morning and late evening to reduce or eliminate need for dedicated services during low-demand<sup>7</sup> periods.</li> </ul>	
<b>Types of Trips</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizing taxis in areas where a specialized transit vehicles can't navigate or don't fit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizing taxis in areas where a specialized transit vehicles don't fit.</li> <li>• Focus non-dedicated services to support longer trips that are harder to pool (point to point with low connectivity with other trips), which often would be more in remote areas.</li> </ul>	
<b>Customer Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not allow customers to ask for non-dedicated vehicles.</li> <li>• Typically limited to ambulatory customers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not allow customers to ask for non-dedicated vehicles.</li> <li>• Promote accessible vehicles within non-dedicated service to support ambulatory and non-ambulatory customers.</li> </ul>	
<b>Delivery Partner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any local service provider can "sign up" or become eligible for delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some form of procurement process to encourage a more competitive and formal process.</li> <li>• Contract requirements as well as incentives or subsidies to ensure wheelchair-accessible vehicles are available.</li> <li>• Contract is renewed annually with limited guaranteed minimum number of trips, allowing for adjustments in service volume based on demand. The agency is able to assign trips based on continued strong performance.</li> </ul>	
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requiring specific training in taxi contract.</li> <li>• Conducting customer surveys to understand specific areas of training improvements among taxis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency provided training for taxi drivers.</li> <li>• Assigning more trips to taxi companies that have better training programs and achieve better performance.</li> </ul>	

## 4.3 Emerging Concepts

Beyond the practices outlined in the previous section, the transit industry is seeing substantial change in how specialized transit services are delivered. Some of these changes have direct impact or relate to the provision of non-dedicated vehicle trips. The following are some of these concepts that TransLink may consider in its approach to providing non-dedicated vehicle trips:

- **System-to-system integration** – many agencies are in the process of investing time and budget to integrate their scheduling and dispatch system directly into the dispatch system for their non-dedicated trip providers. TransLink is considering an upgrade to the scheduling software as part of the HandyDART Customer First Plan. Software updates could allow for better monitoring and enforcement of trips provided, leading to increased accountability and an improved customer experience. These integrations can also enable broader service enhancements, such as real-time callouts to customers when their non-dedicated vehicle is approaching. Transit agencies can leverage this by either requiring, or giving preference to, providers that utilize a dispatch system that can be integrated with the agency's system.
- **Family of Services** – many agencies are integrating their specialized transit and conventional systems into a broader "Family" of services. TransLink is also in the process of doing so through the development of new eligibility processes (including eventual introduction of conditional eligibility) and planned procurement of new

<sup>7</sup> Low-demand periods typically lend themselves to poor service efficiency for dedicated services as it becomes difficult to "connect" multiple customer requests into single schedules. During these periods it is increasingly common for customers to get a vehicle to themselves.

scheduling software that will support planning of integrated trips<sup>8</sup>. Agencies that have begun to roll out Family of Services (FOS) have experienced significant challenges where non-dedicated services are involved. Successful FOS rollout requires new procedures (e.g. how to support a customer if a SkyTrain station elevator is not working, safely using bus loops to drop-off and pick-up customers). For dedicated service operators, additional training is typically provided to support the integration; it is more challenging to deliver the training effectively to operators of non-dedicated service who also are less commonly delivering FOS trips. These challenges can be mitigated with limited contracts and strong training and enforcement requirements of non-dedicated service providers.

- Transportation Network Companies (TNC) – a small number of US specialized transit services (e.g., Denver RTD, Washington’s WMATA) have started to utilize TNCs (e.g., ride-hailing services) to provide non-dedicated services. In some cases, these come from built-in integration between their scheduling software and the TNC<sup>9</sup>. These examples are very early days and there is little data and information available to validate if the performance and customer experience compares favourably to traditional partnerships with taxi companies. Specific questions to consider with TNCs would be how to ensure training requirements are met with a fluctuating/gig workforce.

The above comparison (Table 4-1) shows the difference between the use of non-dedicated vehicle trips as a reaction to gaps in services provided by dedicated vehicles, and a more deliberate and proactive use of non-dedicated vehicles to efficiently augment dedicated vehicle trips. This comparison shows that there are opportunities to better utilize non-dedicated vehicles to complement dedicated vehicle trips, regardless of delivery model, to enhance customer satisfaction.

Not all suggestions may be feasible, possible, or appropriate for HandyDART, and alternative solutions may exist which are not listed here. The effectiveness of these best practices will depend on the deliberate identification of challenges best suited to be solved by non-dedicated vehicles and the creation of processes, systems, and contracts tailored specifically to HandyDART. TransLink should therefore consider how to apply these and other industry best practices to improve HandyDART non-dedicated services, irrespective of the delivery model chosen.

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<sup>8</sup> An integrated trip would typically involve a customer using HandyDART to reach a bus stop or SkyTrain station, and then seamlessly transfer to the conventional service for the remainder of the trip. A HandyDART vehicle could be waiting for the customer at the other end of the conventional portion of the trip.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.uber.com/en-CA/newsroom/uber-transit-and-trapeze/>

## 5 The Building Blocks of a Service Delivery Model

Eight service delivery model options for the HandyDART service were developed in Phase 3 through a collaborative effort between the consultant team and TransLink staff. This process was informed by the outcomes of previous project phases such as a comprehensive understanding of the existing HandyDART service delivery model, industry trends, best practices case studies, and a review of contextually relevant peer agencies. Customers, through the HandyDART Users' Advisory Committee, and stakeholders, also had the opportunity to comment on the delivery model options.

The 'building blocks' of a service delivery model are the several functions and responsibilities of a specialized transit service. The functions and responsibilities that are common across organizations and were considered in this project are presented in Figure 5-1. More information about these functions is found in Appendix A1: Glossary of Functions of Specialized Transit Service.

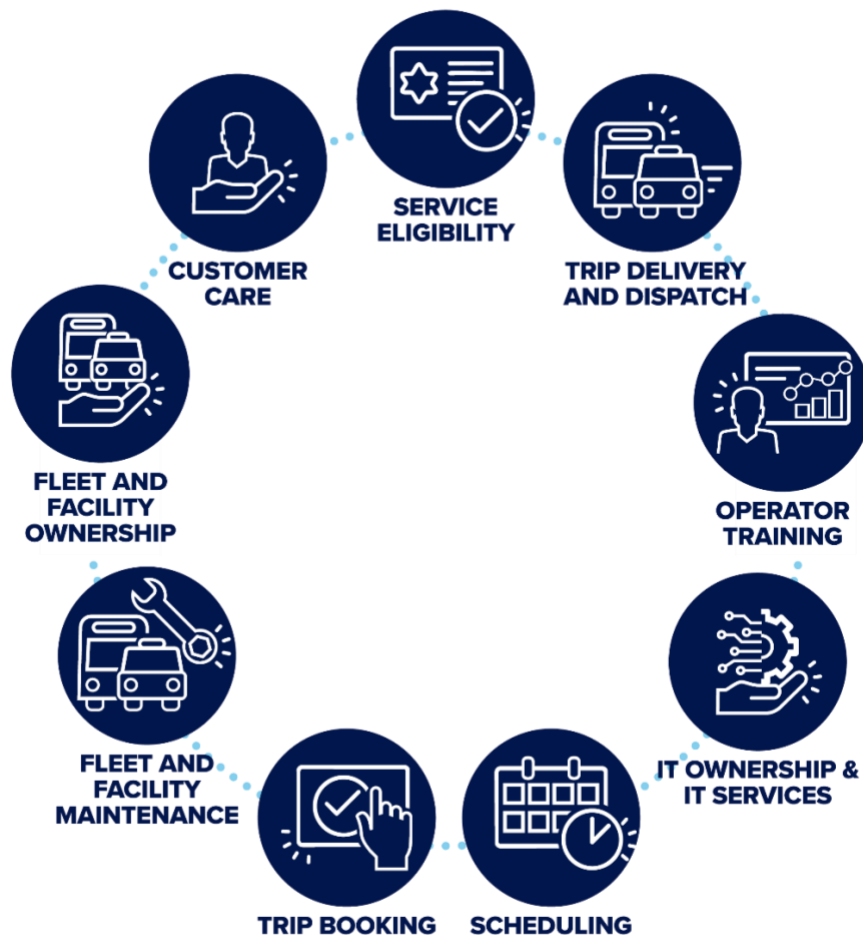


Figure 5-1 Functions and responsibilities of a specialized transit service.

Service delivery models are differentiated from each other by how these functions and responsibilities are divided among parties such as a public agency and service provider(s) or shared between those parties. Broadly, there are three different types of delivery models, which are described below:

- **In-House:** All ownership and functions including operations and maintenance are conducted in-house. For example, Grand River Transit (Waterloo, Ontario) is responsible for all functions of MobilityPlus, the region's specialized transit service. This type of model exists among smaller and medium-sized specialized transit services, and is uncommon among larger services.
- **Turnkey:** All ownership and functions including operations and maintenance are outsourced to one or more Service Providers. This is the delivery model used by some smaller services but is not readily found among larger communities.
- **Split Structure:** Ownership and functions are divided between the agency and one or more Service Providers. Some functions may be shared between both. This is the most common delivery model amongst larger, complex specialized transit services. Within this category, there are many variations including the extent of the in-house functions and how many service providers are engaged. HandyDART is currently operated under a split structure.

To be able to consider a service delivery model for the HandyDART service, several options needed to be developed. First, service delivery model development involved consolidating the outcomes from Phase 1 and 2 of the project:

- The existing HandyDART delivery model (Phase 1). This is important for the delivery model development because the existing HandyDART delivery model can be used as a baseline for comparison, while also ensuring that future models are contextually relevant.
- Findings from the peer agency review (Phase 2) are used to illustrate how different delivery models are implemented by similar organizations. This was helpful for the delivery model development as the review provided valuable insights about the strengths and weaknesses of different delivery models.

Second, the consultant team drew on industry expertise and completed a supplementary industry scan to identify current trends, best practices and innovations in specialized transit service delivery. This involved considering various service models and their effectiveness in different contexts, while also identifying successful strategies and operational efficiencies that could be adapted to enhance the service delivery models for HandyDART.

Building on the three service delivery types and specific functions noted above, a preliminary list of eight service delivery model options were developed for consideration. The distribution of ownership and functions are an important driver behind the development and distinction of various model options. Table 5-1 summarizes the distribution of functions across the model options.

**Table 5-1 Summary of functions across delivery model options**

Options /Functions	Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract	Option 2: Fully In- House	Option 3A: Split Structure – In-House with Additional Functions In- house	Option 3B: Split Structure – In-house Operations with Additional Functions In- house + Multiple Contractor Trip Delivery	Option 4: Split Structure – Introduce Multiple Contractors	Option 5: Split Structure – Multiple Contractors with In- House Booking (Decentralize d services)	Option 6A: Turnkey – Single Contractor + Centralized	Option 6B: Turnkey – Multiple Contractors + Decentralized
Service Eligibility	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	Contracted	Contracted
Customer Care	Shared	In-House	Shared	Shared	Shared	In-House	Contracted	Contracted
Operator Training	Shared	In-House	Shared	Shared	Shared	Shared	Contracted	Contracted
Trip Booking	Contracted	In-House	In-House	In-House	Contracted	In-House	Contracted	Contracted
Scheduling	Contracted	In-House	In-House	In-House	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted
Fleet Ownership	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	Contracted	Contracted
Facility Ownership	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted
IT ownership	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	In-House	Contracted	Contracted
Fleet Maintenance	Contracted	In-House	Contracted	In-House	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted
Facility Maintenance	Shared	In-House	Contracted	In-House	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted
IT Services	Contracted	In-House	Contracted	In-House	Contracted	Shared	Contracted	Contracted
Trip Dispatch	Contracted	In-House	In-House	In-House	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted
Trip Delivery	Contracted	In-House	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted	Contracted

Once the options were developed, the next step was to determine the unique considerations of each to help differentiate them. These options are described in Table 5-2. A graphical representation of the model options can be found in *Appendix A.3 – Long-list Delivery Model Descriptions*.

**Table 5-2 Delivery Model Options**

Model	Unique Considerations
<b>Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract</b>	This option would have a similar structure to how HandyDART is delivered today, which is a mix of in house, contracted and shared functions. The new contract seeks to address issues by modernizing TransLink Enterprise involvement over certain shared functions (customer care and operator training).
<b>Option 2: Fully In-House</b>	All functions are brought under TransLink's ownership and responsibility.
<b>Option 3A: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house</b>	TransLink has ownership and responsibility for a greater number of functions. Relative to the existing model, this entails bringing additional functions in-house, including trip booking, scheduling and dispatching. Trip delivery and facility/fleet maintenance remain contracted to a single contractor.
<b>Option 3B: Split Structure – with Additional Functions In-house + Multiple Contractor Trip Delivery</b>	Similar split of functions to Option 3A, except allowing for multiple contractors to provide trip delivery.
<b>Option 4: Split Structure – Introduce Multiple Contractors</b>	Ownership and responsibility for TransLink is consistent with the current model, however, the contracted functions are split across different contractors. A primary contractor would be responsible for scheduling, dispatching, fleet maintenance and trip delivery. Separate contractors would be responsible for each of the following: trip booking, facility maintenance, IT services.
<b>Option 5: Split Structure – Multiple Contractors with In-House Booking (Decentralized services)</b>	TransLink has ownership and is responsible for eligibility, trip booking, customer care and contract administrations. Multiple service delivery providers are contracted and assigned to different geographic areas to deliver services. The contractors are responsible for scheduling, dispatching and maintaining their own fleets and facilities.
<b>Option 6A: Turnkey – Single Contractor + Centralized</b>	All functions and ownership are contracted out to one contractor, with TransLink overseeing contract administration.
<b>Option 6B: Turnkey – Multiple Contractors + Decentralized</b>	All functions and ownership are contracted out. Out-sourced services are undertaken by multiple contractors, assigned by zone. Eligibility is undertaken by one contractor.

The eight delivery model options formed the long list of options that were evaluated in the next phase of the project.

## 6 Defining What is Important

This section provides an overview of the evaluation approach to evaluate the service delivery models (presented in Section 5). The Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework, including the accounts, criteria and specific measures, was workshopped between the consultants and TransLink staff, and then refined through customer and stakeholder engagement.

### 6.1 Multiple Accounts Evaluation

Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) is a methodology used to support decision makers with complex decisions by organizing and evaluating alternatives. It offers a collaborative framework to understand how well different options meet objectives, providing a roadmap for planning, analysis and consultation. An MAE is intended to support decision-makers by illustrating trade-offs between options so that decision makers have a fulsome understanding of the options. For this project, no weighting was applied because it is not intended to produce a score nor an answer. This method was used to compare the eight delivery model options.

It is our understanding that an MAE approach was a request from stakeholders, which was then reflected in the study design.

### 6.2 Accounts, Criteria and Measures

The following high-level accounts were established for the HandyDART Delivery Model Review. Each account is further defined in terms of criteria and measures.

- End-to-End Customer Experience
- Financial Sustainability<sup>10</sup>
- Organization Sustainability
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Ease of Implementation and Transition

Table 6-1 details the evaluation accounts and criteria established for the MAE. These were developed through extensive consultation with the HandyDART Users' Advisory Committee and external stakeholders. In the summer of 2024, the Delivery Model Review was introduced to these groups and workshops were held to inform the accounts and criteria. The workshops included small group discussions designed to identify what aspects of HandyDART service are important to these audiences and how these aspects could be represented and measured within the MAE.

Subsequently, the MAE accounts were endorsed by the TransLink Board. The criteria were refined into associated measures that would be used to evaluate specialized transit service delivery models. In Fall 2024, the same users and stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on how the measures were being applied to the delivery models being considered.

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<sup>10</sup> The Financial and Organizational Sustainability Account, which was the subject of early consultation and reporting, was split into two accounts at the Detailed Evaluation stage: Financial Sustainability and Organizational Sustainability. This was done to more clearly illustrate the evaluation of the models across these measures. It was determined that financial and organizational measures are sufficiently distinct and should, therefore, not be combined under one account. For simplicity, these accounts are shown separately throughout this report.

**Table 6-1 Multiple Account Evaluation – Accounts, criteria and measures**

Account	Criteria (objective)	Measures (objective)
End-to-End Customer Experience	Travel time (minimize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average time spent on board a vehicle (minimize)</li> <li>• Adherence to trip duration standards (maximize)</li> </ul>
	Customer satisfaction (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of customers satisfied with the service (maximize)</li> </ul>
	On-time performance (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of trips on-time (maximize)</li> </ul>
	Customer safety (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of safety incidents (minimize)</li> </ul>
	Ease of booking (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booking wait time (minimize)</li> <li>• % of bookings through self-service options (maximize)</li> </ul>
Financial Sustainability	TransLink subsidy per trip (minimize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dollar subsidy per trip (minimize)</li> </ul>
	Operating expense (minimize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation expense/ passenger trip (minimize)</li> <li>• Transportation expense/ hour (dedicated) (minimize)</li> <li>• Net operating cost/ trip (minimize)</li> </ul>
Organizational Sustainability	Operator experience/retention (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operator turnover (minimize)</li> </ul>
	Ease of transition to low carbon or carbon free transportation (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time and complexity required to transition to low carbon or carbon free fleet (minimize)</li> </ul>
	Public trust (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of public reports/ dashboards (maximize)</li> </ul>
Flexibility and Adaptability	Flexibility to adapt to changes in policy (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complexity of implementing changes in policy (minimize)</li> </ul>
	Ease of integration with conventional services (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of successfully delivered integrated trips (maximize)</li> </ul>
	Flexibility to adapt to changes in demand (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to scale drivers and administrative staff (maximize)</li> </ul>

Account	Criteria (objective)	Measures (objective)
Ease of Implementation and Transition		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to scale fleet capacity (maximize)</li> </ul>
	Flexibility to respond to disruptions (maximize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time taken to respond to disruptions and continue service (minimize)</li> </ul>
	Required changes to HandyDART facilities (minimize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost required to implement changes (minimize)</li> <li>• Time required to implement changes (minimize)</li> </ul>
	Required changes to TransLink staff resources (minimize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in resource requirements (minimize)</li> </ul>
	Need for new/additional training to transition to new model (minimize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for additional staff training (minimize)</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Investment Sifting and Evaluation Tool (INSET)

The MAE was captured in INSET, Mott MacDonald's Investment Sifting and Evaluation Tool. INSET supports decision-making by making scores and their rationale transparent and automatically normalizing scoring. A total of 23 measures (as set out in Table 6-1) were included in INSET to determine which delivery model options best meet the objectives of the project.

## INSET

INSET is a decision support process that manages information on different options and evaluates them against each other, to determine a preferable solution and support the decision-making process. The tool represents a simple, flexible, replicable, and transparent method for successful evaluation of options. The figure below illustrates the different considerations/functions of INSET.



Each measure was assigned a score on a three-point scale of low, medium, or high to represent how that delivery model would achieve the measure compared to all of the other delivery models. In the case where all delivery models would achieve a measure equally well (in other words, it was determined that the differences in delivery model would not impact the achievement of a particular measure), all delivery models were assigned a score of “medium.”

INSET assigned numerical scores to the three points on the scale and then mathematically combined the scores for each measure that made up an account. This normalization process ensured that the combined score for each account could be directly compared to the combined scores for each of the other accounts no matter how many measures were contained within them.

This process resulting in a transparent and objective measurement of how each model performed relative to the other models, in each of the five accounts. The results clearly articulate the trade-offs between delivery models. For example, one model might score the best for End-to-End Customer Service, but might score the least for Ease of Implementation and Transition. These trade-offs will help decision-makers to select the preferred delivery model.

## 7 Preliminary Evaluation and Shortlisted Options

This section includes an overview of the preliminary evaluation that was undertaken. The purpose of the preliminary evaluation was to undertake an MAE analysis to narrow down the eight delivery model options to determine the top scoring models. These shortlisted model options were then taken forward for further analysis in the more detailed evaluation.

### 7.1 Preliminary Evaluation Methodology

The preliminary evaluation was conducted by the consultant team with input from TransLink staff. Multiple workshops were held with staff with responsibility for planning, operations and financial management to co-evaluate how the model options would evaluate against various measures. This collaborative preliminary evaluation process, considered all prior customer and stakeholder input, peer agency review findings, and TransLink's own experience in delivering HandyDART services. It was important that key personnel specialized in operations, planning and finance were engaged to ensure the right knowledge and expertise was in the room for fruitful and efficient discussion. Table 7-1 summarizes staff engagement according to MAE criteria.

**Table 7-1 TransLink staff engagement**

Account	Criteria (objective)	Operations	Planning	Finance
End-to-End Customer Experience	Travel time (minimize)	✓		
	Customer satisfaction (maximize)		✓	
	On-time performance (maximize)	✓		
	Customer safety (maximize)	✓		
	Ease of booking (maximize)	✓		
Financial Sustainability <sup>11</sup>	TransLink subsidy per trip (minimize)		✓	✓
	Operating expense (minimize)		✓	✓
Organizational Sustainability	Operator experience/retention (maximize)	✓		
	Ease of transition to low carbon or carbon free transportation (maximize)		✓	
	Public trust (maximize)		✓	

<sup>11</sup> The Financial and Organizational Sustainability Account was split into two accounts at the Detailed Evaluation stage: Financial Sustainability and Organizational Sustainability. This was done to more clearly illustrate the evaluation of the models across these measures. It was determined that financial and organizational measures are sufficiently distinct and should, therefore, not be combined under one account. For simplicity, these accounts are shown separately throughout this report.

Account	Criteria (objective)	Operations	Planning	Finance
Flexibility and Adaptability	Flexibility to adapt to changes in policy (maximize)		✓	
	Ease of integration with conventional services (maximize)	✓		
	Flexibility to adapt to changes in demand (maximize)		✓	
	Flexibility to respond to disruptions (maximize)	✓		
Ease of Implementation and Transition	Required changes to HandyDART facilities (minimize)		✓	✓
	Required changes to TransLink staff resources (minimize)	✓		
	Need for new/additional training to transition to new model (minimize)		✓	

## 7.2 Preliminary Evaluation Results

The preliminary evaluation of each of the models shown in Table 5-2 was undertaken using the MAE. Options 1, 2, 3A and 3B were shortlisted for reasons presented in Section 8. A summary of why the other models were discounted from the shortlist is outlined below:

- Option 4: Split Structure – Introduce multiple contractors**– This model scored ‘medium’ relative to other models. The structure of this model has functions distributed to multiple ‘specialized’ contractors, which means it scored well in addressing customer needs. However, there are complexities with having multiple contractors carrying out different functions, including managing the contract, communication between contractors, integrating family of services trips and responding to disruptions. As this model scored ‘medium’ across the accounts compared to other levels, it was concluded that this model would not be taken forward to the shortlist. Option 1 and 2 do not introduce multiple contractors and thus were seen to have less complexities with management.
- Option 5: Split Structure – Multiple contractors with In-House booking (decentralized services)** – This model scored low across all accounts due to having multiple contractors, and the added complexity of managing these across different geographies. This model was removed from further consideration based on these factors. Option 1 and 2 do not introduce multiple contractors and thus were seen to have less complexities with management.
- Option 6a: Turnkey – Single contractor and centralized** - This model has the benefit of all functions being undertaken by one contractor, and therefore considered to score well in terms of flexibility and adaptability and ease of implementation. This model scored low for end-to-end customer experience because of TransLink’s reduced control and visibility over customer service. Additionally, this model scored low for organizational and financial sustainability as some of the capital costs are with the contractor, and the risk will be priced into the contract which will drive up costs. These are not expected to be the case for the shortlisted options. Meanwhile, Option 2 scored highly organizational and financial sustainability given all functions would be brought in-house, giving TransLink great control and oversight.

- **Option 6b: Turnkey – Multiple contractors and decentralized** – Similar to Option 4 and 5a, this model scored low in terms of customer experience and organizational and financial sustainability due to having multiple contractors, and the added complexity of managing these across different geographies. TransLink also has reduced control and visibility over customer service. Conversely, Option 1, 2 and 3s were scored to bring greater customer experience due to more functions being brought in-house with fewer contractors involved (noting there are no contractors for Option 2).

## 7.3 Shortlisted Options

Based on the Preliminary Evaluation, the following delivery model options were evaluated to be the top performing, and this shortlist was prepared for detailed evaluation.

The shortlist includes the following three options:

- **Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract**<sup>12</sup> is in line with the existing delivery model, whereby a single Contractor (in Figure 8-1 below) is providing a comprehensive set of HandyDART-related functions, consistent with the functions that the contractor currently delivers.
  - Functions provided by the TransLink Enterprise are: service eligibility, IT ownership and fleet and facility ownership.
  - Functions provided by the Service Provider are: trip delivery and dispatch, trip booking, scheduling, IT service and fleet maintenance.
  - Functions that are a shared responsibility of TransLink and the Service Provider are: customer care, operator training, and facility maintenance.

As TransLink always reviews and adjust contracts during renewal periods, this Option assumes that the contract would be modernized to improve service and contractor performance.

- **Option 2: Fully In-House**<sup>13</sup> represents a paradigm shift in how HandyDART is delivered. In this option, all functions are brought in-house. The specifics of how and where within the organization these would be delivered was deferred to staff to examine.
- **Option 3: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-House**<sup>14</sup> provides an ‘in-between’ alternative that brings additional (but not all) functions in-house. The functions that would remain with a service provider would be trip delivery and fleet maintenance. Options 3A and 3B from the preliminary evaluation were combined for the purpose of short-listing, as these options were very similar, with the primary difference being whether trip delivery and associated fleet maintenance is managed by one or multiple service providers. In Figure 8-1, the asterisk represents that one than more contractor is possible.

The finalized shortlisted delivery model options are shown in Figure 8-1.

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<sup>12</sup> In the engagement materials and previous reporting, Option 1 was labelled as **Option 1: Modernized Contract**. “Split Structure” has been added during the writing of this report to more clearly identify this option, which is most similar to the existing delivery model, is a split-structure.

<sup>13</sup> In the engagement materials and previous reporting, Option 2 was labelled as **Option 2: In-house**. The name has been updated during the writing of this report to acknowledge that all three Options involve some functions delivered in-house by the TransLink enterprise.

<sup>14</sup> In the engagement materials and previous reporting, Option 3 was labelled as **Option 3: In-House Operations + Limited Delivery Contract(s)**. The name has been updated during the writing of this report to more clearly demonstrate the different categories of delivery models (as introduced in Section 5).

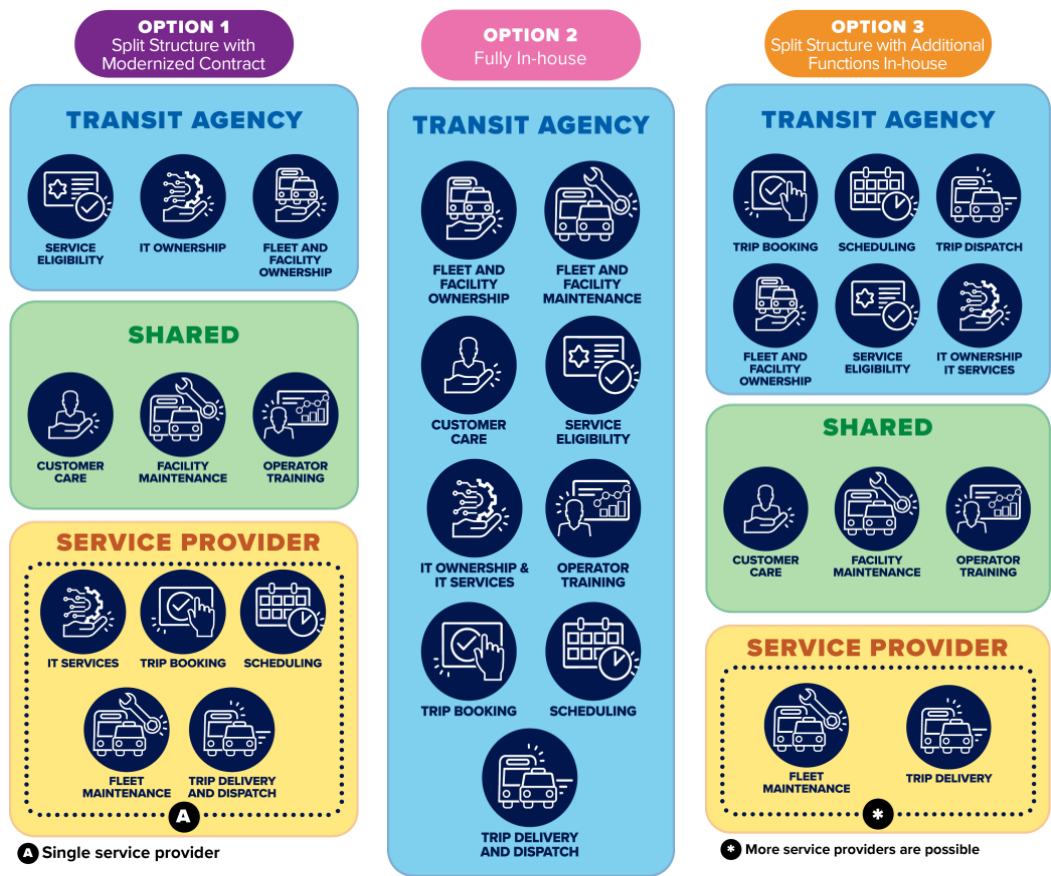


Figure 7-1 Finalized shortlisted options

## 8 Detailed Evaluation of Service Delivery Models

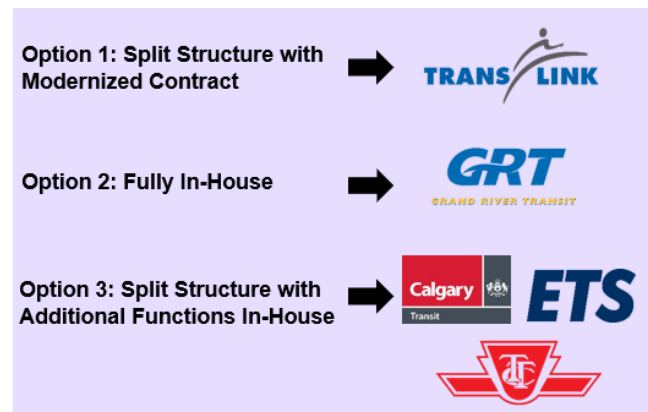
This section summarizes the detailed evaluation, which expanded on the preliminary assessment, providing a more in-depth qualitative assessment of each shortlisted option. The detailed evaluation also involved stakeholder engagement and considered feedback provided by TransLink staff.

### 8.1 Detailed Evaluation Methodology

The detailed evaluation focused on comparing the options according to how they would achieve each measure in the MAE accounts, which are unweighted (that is, all accounts have an equal influence). The evaluation results indicate relative performance of one model compared to the others. It is important to note that this Delivery Model Review is just one part in the decision-making process to decide on an updated HandyDART delivery model. There are other elements such as program design and implementation decisions that will impact the performance of the various options.

The detailed evaluation of each measure was based on the consultant team's professional expertise and the information available from the following sources, where applicable:

- **Peer Agency Review Report:** Findings from the review of peer agency models (Phase 2). Figure 8-1 details which Peer Agencies are considered the shortlisted options. This report was used to reference some of the measures that were discussed during the peer interviews. Note that not all measures were discussed since the MAE measures were not finalized at the time of the peer interviews.
- **Peer Data Request:** List of measures that were not covered in the peer review that were tabulated and emailed to peer agencies as a request to fill out to support this project (e.g. operator turnover, % bookings through self-serve options).
- **Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) statistics:** 2023 CUTA factbooks that summarize operational and financial statistics for custom/specialized transit agencies across Canada (e.g. dollar subsidy per trip, cost per trip)
- **Online Desktop Review of Peers:** Review of peer agency websites and available board/council reports to inform some of the measures that are publicly available (e.g. number of published reports, customer satisfaction)
- **Review of TransLink documents and materials** (E.g. 2017 Custom Transit Service Delivery Review, operating manuals, draft HandyDART Customer First Plan) to ensure alignment.
- **Customer and Stakeholder Engagement:** Solicit customer and stakeholder views on the benefits and challenges associated with the shortlisted options (discussed further in Section 8.2).



**Figure 8-1 Agencies with Similar Models**

In some cases, no further analysis was possible as additional data or peer information to perform a detailed analysis was unavailable. In these cases, the evaluation for these measures referred to the preliminary

qualitative evaluation conducted in the project (e.g. measures such as complexity in implementing policy changes, successful integrated trips), as well as further discussion with a broader set of stakeholders.

Evaluation was also informed through meetings and workshops with TransLink and CMBC staff to provide expertise in planning, operations, financial management, and delivery of transit services. Feedback gathered through these engagements was used to support scoring and performance rationale associated with different measures.

For this round of evaluation, the Financial and Organizational Sustainability account was disaggregated (into Financial Sustainability and Organizational Sustainability Accounts) to more clearly illustrate the evaluation of the models across these measures. It was determined that financial and organizational measures are sufficiently distinct and should, therefore, not be combined under one account.

## 8.2 Customer and Stakeholder Engagement

Following the first round of engagement that included workshops with the HDUAC, stakeholders and advocates plus a customer telephone survey (discussed in Section 2.1), the consultant team conducted a second round of engagement with the HDUAC and external stakeholders in December 2024. The objectives of this December 2024 engagement were to present the shortlisted options and solicit feedback on the benefits and challenges of the shortlisted delivery model options. Feedback was used by the consultants to support and/or revise performance rationale for the measures.

The following sessions formed the December Engagement Program:

- Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU Local 1724) Leadership Meeting – December 6, 2024
- HandyDART Staff Focus Groups (call centre operators, schedulers, and drivers) – December 10, 2024
- Stakeholders and Advocates Workshop – December 10, 2024
- Non-unionized HandyDART Staff Workshop – December 11, 2024
- HandyDART Users' Advisory Committee Meeting – December 11, 2024
- Casual Unionized HandyDART Staff Meeting (call centre operators and drivers) – December 16, 2024.

The results of the engagement sessions were used to inform the detailed evaluation of the shortlisted options. Documentation of the outcomes of this round of stakeholder engagement are presented in *Appendix A.2 – What We Heard: Engagement Summary*.

## 8.3 Detailed Evaluation Results

The results of the detailed evaluation of the shortlisted delivery model options are shown in Figure 8-2. Results shown are unweighted (that is, all Accounts have an equal influence). Ensuring that the accounts, criteria and measures are unweighted enables a balanced outcome of the evaluation. The Evaluated Performance shading indicates how each option compares to the other option, according to each account. The range reflects the overall performance of criteria that have multiple measures. The remainder of this section summarizes the differences and similarities of the delivery models across the five accounts.

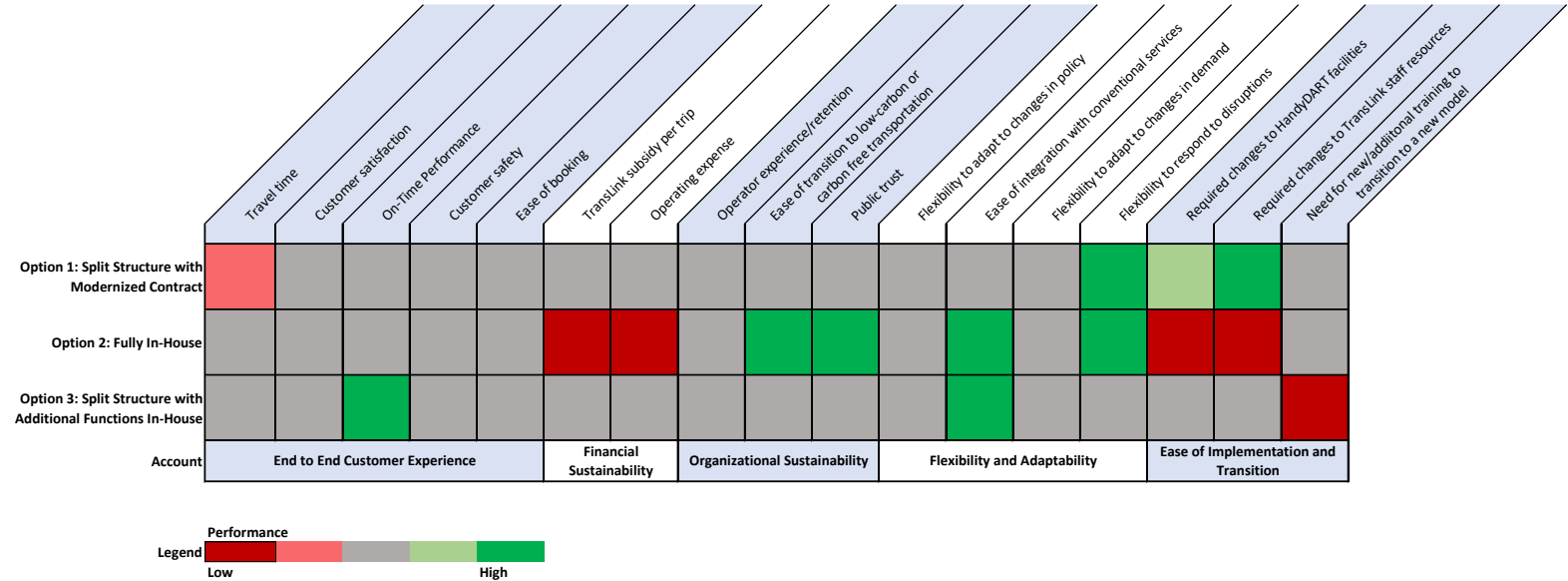


Figure 8-2 Detailed Evaluation – Overall Results

The rationale behind the scoring of the measures within each criteria and the overall MAE results are detailed in the following sections.

### 8.3.1 End-to-end Customer Experience

This account relates to the end-to-end customer experience delivered by HandyDART.

The following table shows how each delivery model option was evaluated against each of the unweighted measures.

**Table 8-1 End-to-end Customer Experience - overall theme/account and measure scores**

	Travel time (minimize)		Customer Satisfaction (maximize)	On-time performance (maximize)	Customer safety (maximize)	Ease of booking (maximize)	
Measures	Average time spent on board a vehicle (minimize)	Adherence to trip duration standards (maximize)	% of customers satisfied with the service (maximize)	% of trips on-time (maximize)	Number of safety incidents (minimize)	Booking wait time (minimize)	% of bookings through self service options (maximize)
Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract							
Option 2: Fully In-House							
Option 3: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house							

#### Evaluated Performance



Low

High

#### Summary of rationale:

The three delivery models were evaluated to score similarly across most of the measures in this account.

The following rationale discusses the measures where all three models are equally moderate in their scoring:

- All models score equally in their ability to adhere to trip duration standards. This is because regardless of the delivery model, the service must meet minimum requirements set by TransLink.
- All models score equally in relation to improving customer satisfaction. This is because customers are generally satisfied with dedicated services, and all models would be expected to continue using non-dedicated vehicle trips in a similar fashion (any change to how non-dedicated vehicle trips are dispatched would be the result of parallel work and is not dependent on delivery model).
- All models score equally in the ability to minimize safety incidents. This is because safety will always be the most important priority for TransLink whether the service is in-house or through setting of strengthened KPIs in future Service Provider contracts.

- All models score equally in the ability to reduce customer's booking wait time. Based on discussions, it was determined that improvements to wait times are based on resource availability and technology capacity and this was deemed consistent across all delivery models.
- All options score equally in the ability to increase the number of bookings through self-service options, such as booking trips online. This is because the set up of self-serve options would be undertaken by TransLink in all delivery models.

The differences in performance across the options are related to average time spent on board and percentage of trips on time. Specifically:

- Average time spent on board: Option 1 scores lowest in this measure compared to other options because it assumes that service providers have commercial incentives to maximize cost savings. This may lead to service providers not prioritizing minimizing the average time spent on board beyond the minimum required KPIs in the contract. It should be noted that in-house operations (Option 2) may not always have the financial or operational ability to prioritize minimizing the time spent on board. Examples include having the need to balance other metrics such as denial rates and on-time performance, which may conflict with the goals of minimizing time spent on board. While there is a lower risk of an agency with in-house operations not prioritizing this metric, there are situations where it may be the case.
- Percentage of trips on time: Option 3 scores highest in this measure than other options because it provides some opportunities to assign more service to better-performing service providers in a scenario where there are multiple service providers.

However, staff noted that these differences can be improved through contract mechanisms. Therefore, all options score similarly across measures with respect to end-to-end customer experience, with minor variations.

### 8.3.2 Financial Sustainability

The financial comparator analysis utilized data available from the CUTA factbook for agencies that correspond to the different models as referenced above (Figure 8-1).

This account measures the financial sustainability of the services delivered by HandyDART. The following table shows how well each delivery model option evaluates against each of the unweighted measures.

**Table 8-2 Financial Sustainability- overall theme/account and measure scores**

Criteria	TransLink subsidy per trip (minimize)	Operating expense (minimize)		
Measures	Dollar subsidy per trip (minimize)	Transportation expense per hour (dedicated) (minimize)	Transportation expense per passenger trip (non-dedicated) (minimize)	Net operating cost per trip (minimize)
Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract				
Option 2: Fully In-House				
Option 3: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house				

## Evaluated Performance



### Summary of rationale:

Option 1: Benchmarking of costs based on available data from peers showed that Option 1 falls in the middle of the operating costs incurred by peers with a similar model. There was limited data available to suggest that capital costs would be different across the three models. Therefore, option 1 scores moderately with respect to financial sustainability.

Option 2 scores the lowest in financial sustainability compared to other options. This model is expected to be more expensive due to the higher anticipated operating costs, primarily administrative costs, associated with bringing the service fully in-house. Benchmarking against peers also confirmed that an in-house option tends to be more costly than other options.

Option 3 scores moderately in terms of financial sustainability. This is because of the assumed competition across multiple delivery partners which could improve cost per hour to deliver dedicated trips compared to other options. Benchmarking against peers also confirmed that this model structure tends to be the less expensive. However, this benchmarking does not account for the potentially higher expenses that could come with bringing parts of the operation in-house. Savings from competitive delivery service providers may not be enough to offset these additional costs. Thus, a moderate score was established.

Overall, Options 1 and 3 are similar in their moderate scoring across the cost measures considered. Option 2 scores the lowest compared to others on financial sustainability.

### 8.3.3 Organizational Sustainability

This account measures the organizational sustainability of the services delivered by HandyDART. The following table shows how well each delivery model option evaluates against each of the unweighted measures.

**Table 8-3 Organizational Sustainability - overall theme/account and measure scores**

Criteria	Operator experience/ retention (maximize)	Ease of transition to low carbon or carbon free transportation (maximize)	Public trust (maximize)
Measures	Operator turnover (minimize)	Time and complexity required to transition to low carbon or carbon free fleet (minimize)	Number of public reports/ dashboards (maximize)
Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract			
Option 2: Fully In-House			
Option 3: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house			

## Evaluated Performance



### Summary of rationale:

Options 1 and Option 3 score moderately across all measures in this account. Due to fleet maintenance being undertaken by the service provider, the transition to electric is expected to be more challenging due to potential additional costs and training requirements. In terms of public trust, as some data will be dependent on the service provider in both models, it may result in challenges in the confidence in the accuracy and easy access of data. However, this may be improved through contract mechanisms.

Option 2 scores highest in terms of organizational sustainability compared to other options. Fleet maintenance being undertaken by TransLink could present fewer barriers to transitioning to an electric fleet compared to other models because expertise from the maintenance of electrical conventional vehicles could be used. This lowers the complexity that Option 2 will face in transitioning to a zero emission fleet compared to other options. However, when it comes to the time it will take to transition, all options score the same. This is because electrification will be a gradual process and electrification of the HandyDART fleet has already been identified in TransLink's Zero emissions planning as among the last elements of the fleet to transition. Any fleet transition will be dependent on a robust fleet mix analysis that would include the service provider as a key stakeholder.

A consistent message from customers and stakeholder was the desire for increased trust in the HandyDART service, but the ability for each delivery model to maximize the public's trust was a challenging metric to measure. While the number of public reports provides an indication of how well an option can support the development of accurate and reliable reports, other key factors such as public confidence in staff, in-house vs contracted structure has nuances that was difficult to assign scoring to. With respect to public reports, an in-house model is assumed to offer TransLink more direct access, visibility and control of all data and an ability to nimbly adjust reporting in reaction to changing public interest. Thus, it is expected that there will be both greater confidence in the information as well as greater flexibility in what and how to present publicly.

Through consultation with customers and stakeholders, the consultant team heard consistently that there was a higher trust in TransLink to deliver an improved service with an in-house model compared to a model that included one or more service providers.

It is noted that Section 35 of the B.C. Labour Relations Code stipulate that if there was a change in service providers, that any collective bargaining agreement in force would continue as if no change had occurred, along with the employees covered under it. This means that regardless of the delivery model option chosen, existing staff must be transferred to the service provider (whether inhouse or contracted). As such, the ability to retain staff was assessed by comparing the resignation rates of existing HandyDART staff to that of other in-house conventional services. This comparison showed that there was little difference in retention rates. As such, retaining staff was not seen to be a key differentiator between models.

Overall, Option 2 scored highest in organizational sustainability compared to options 1 and 3.

### 8.3.4 Flexibility and Adaptability

This account measures the ease of implementation and transition of the recommended model. The following table shows how well each delivery model option evaluates against each of the unweighted measures.

**Table 8-4 Flexibility and Adaptability - overall theme/account and measure scores**

Criteria	Flexibility to adapt to changes in policy (maximize)	Ease of integration with conventional services (maximize)	Flexibility to adapt to changes in demand (maximize)		Flexibility to respond to disruptions (maximize)
Measures	Complexity of implementing changes in policy (minimize)	Number of successfully delivered integrated trips (maximize)	Ability to scale drivers and administrative staff (maximize)	Ability to scale fleet capacity (maximize)	Time taken to respond to disruptions and continue service (minimize)
Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract					
Option 2: Fully In-House					
Option 3: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house					

#### Evaluated Performance



#### Summary of rationale:

The following rationale discusses the measures where the models score equally:

- The complexity of implementing changes in policy was identified to not vary across the models. All options would require union consultations and process changes, which can take time. In Option 1 and Option 3, contract negotiations are required. However, in Option 2, staff consultations are required. As such, all options score moderately in this measure.
- The ability to scale drivers and administrative staff was considered to be similar across the models overall, with slight variations in the application. In Option 1 and Option 3, there is the risk that the service provider might minimize driver resources to save costs. Meanwhile, for Option 2 it can be time consuming to increase resources due to long processes around obtaining funding and hiring. As a result, regardless of which option is implemented, the ability to scale drivers and administrative staff will be difficult.
- No difference was identified in the ability to scale fleet across all models. For all options, fleet ownership would be undertaken by TransLink. It is recognized that this ownership can hinder scaling efforts due to the lengthy processes involved in securing funding. Therefore, all options score moderately in this measure.

The options were found to be different in their ability to maximize the number of successfully delivered integrated trips and minimize the time taken to respond to disruptions and continue service. Specifically:

- Ability to maximize the number of successfully delivered integrated trips: Options 2 and 3 score higher than option 1 due to the expectation that in-house scheduling and dispatch will make it easier to integrate trips with conventional services.

- Time taken to respond to disruptions: Option 3 scores lower than Options 1 and 2 because it was considered more challenging to respond to disruptions due to there potentially being multiple service providers to communicate with and action a response.

On balance, the overall scoring with respect to flexibility and adaptability is similar for all options.

### 8.3.5 Ease of Implementation and Transition

This account measures the ease of implementation and transition of the recommended model. The following table shows how well each delivery model option evaluates against each of the unweighted measures.

**Table 8-5 Ease of Implementation and Transition - overall theme/account and measure scores**

Criteria	Required changes to HandyDART facilities (minimize)		Required changes to TransLink resources (minimize)	Need for new/additional training to transition to new model (minimize)
Measures	Cost required to implement changes (minimize)	Time required to implement changes (minimize)	Changes in TransLink resource requirements (minimize)	The need for new/additional training to transition to new model (minimize)
Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract				
Option 2: Fully In-House				
Option 3: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house				

#### Evaluated Performance



#### Summary of rationale:

Across all three options, the transfer of facilities will require further review. Currently, the existing service provider subleases one of the facilities, and how this would transfer under any new model would need to be examined. Through this analysis, it will be important to examine the opportunities to find cost efficiencies that may arise from using smaller depots.

Option 1 scores highest in the ease of transition and implementation account compared to other options. This option was deemed to have notable ability in minimizing the time required to implement changes to key facilities, fleet and technology. This is because time taken to transfer to a potentially new service provider is expected to be minimal compared to other options. In terms of changes to TransLink resources and need for additional staff training, some slight changes may be expected with increased contract administration, but this option represents the smallest step change from the existing model when compared to the other options. Overall, Option 1 is considered to be most similar to the current HandyDART delivery model structure, and therefore, limited changes are expected to be required.

Option 2 scores lowest in this overall account due to the extensive impact on many measures and change management required. The cost and time to bring all functions in-house is expected to be much higher due

to the complexities of bringing the service into a large public institution, including the need to develop new training programs and materials instead of having access to modules developed by a company with established programs in other jurisdictions.

Option 2 and 3 involve bringing more functions in-house, and, therefore, score lower across this account compared to Option 1. Both Option 2 and Option 3 are expected to require increased TransLink resources, but Option 2 would require drivers and maintenance staff to be brought in-house in addition to administrative staff (hence Option 2 scoring lower than Option 3 in this measure). There is the risk that exempt staff may not transfer to the new model, potentially creating resource gaps that will need to be addressed. It is also anticipated that setting up a management structure in-house will be complex and require significant change management to successfully update workflows, working environments, reporting and compensation. Additional resources and training would be initially needed for setting up and operating in-house functions. This might include expanded sensitivity training for customer service personnel working with individuals with disabilities, as well as training on specialized transit service functions and operations. For example, specialized transit service scheduling is very different than fixed route service scheduling and requires niche training to develop expertise.

Option 3 scores better across the account compared to Option 2 in most measures, while scoring lowest in its ability to minimize the need for new and additional training to transition to a new model. This model may need additional processes, resources and training to manage the complexities of contract management, especially if multiple trip delivery service providers are involved. This may include changes in scheduling and trip brokering (the distribution of trips across multiple service providers), operational processes and ensuring consistency in training. If multiple service providers are involved, allocation of work to these multiple service providers would need to be determined, potentially assigning trips based on efficiency, different geographical areas, time of day and types of trips. Potential challenges also include coordinating training schedules, maintaining uniform training standards, and ensuring all service providers adhere to the same protocols. Finally, the design and allocation of facilities and technology will add further complexity to Option 3 if multiple service providers are involved. Although there are many challenges in option 3, these challenges are more prevalent in the case of multiple service providers. If only a single service provider is involved, implementation will be not as challenging.

Overall, Option 1 scores highest in the ease of implementation account compared to other models. Option 2 scores the lowest and option 3 scores moderately across most measures in this account.

## 8.4 Provincial Government Direction

In early 2025, Premier David Eby provided a mandate letter to Minister for Transportation and Transit Mike Farnworth. The letter includes the expectation that the Minister *ensure that ... provincial transit services are being delivered in a way that is cost-effective for taxpayers, responsive to the concerns of transit riders, and not duplicative of administration, by reviewing the private delivery model for provincial transit systems starting with handyDART.*<sup>15</sup>

This section provides commentary here about how this evaluation aligns with Provincial interests:

1. Is cost-effectiveness for taxpayers
2. Is responsiveness to concerns of transit riders
3. Is not duplicative of administration

While the evaluation of the HandyDART delivery model was underway and the evaluation framework was created prior to this interest being shared with TransLink, it is prudent to provide commentary here about how this evaluation aligns with Provincial interests.

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<sup>15</sup> Minister Farnworth Mandate Letter, January 16, 2025. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/premier-cabinet/mlas/minister-letter/mandate\\_letter\\_mike\\_farnworth.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/premier-cabinet/mlas/minister-letter/mandate_letter_mike_farnworth.pdf)

**Cost-effectiveness for taxpayers** aligns closely with the Financial Sustainability account (Section 8.3.2). This analysis shows that Options 1 and 3 both outperform Option 2. Cost efficiency is often the result of market competition (e.g. multiple providers competing for a service contract) and is backed up by evidence available from other specialized transit services referenced in Section 8.3.2. Furthermore, the cost of bringing the service in house (Option 2), will result in significant administrative costs. The Service Delivery function represents the largest cost of HandyDART, and contracting this function enables TransLink to seek the best value via regular procurement cycles.

**Responsiveness to the concerns of transit riders** was assessed through the End-to-end Customer Experience account (Section 8.3.1). This analysis shows that all three models were evaluated to perform similarly across most measures.

The most significant concerns of transit riders, based on engagement and customer surveys, are on-time and reliable service, consistency in taxi experience, trip length, and call wait times. Delivery model options only partially influence these concerns, and there are not meaningful differences between the options in their ability to increase performance on these issues. Other agency choices, irrespective of delivery model choice, are likely to have much greater influence on range of customer experience outcomes. TransLink's HandyDART Customer First Plan provides opportunity to identify initiatives to more directly respond to the concerns of transit riders, including online trip booking, service hours & trip availability, taxi accountability, and contact centre improvements.

Finally, while **reducing duplication of administration** was not explicitly considered in the evaluation of delivery models as part of this analysis, there are few substantive differences in administration needs between delivery model options, and that amount of duplication primarily depend on how any model was implemented. There is some opportunity to reduce duplication through leveraging the experience of specialized custom transit delivery providers – including adapting training materials for local context, utilizing customized efficiency tools, and experience with transitioning to new fleet types. TransLink's HandyDART Customer First Plan could further identify opportunities to reduce duplication in the overall system, including through updated software & processes, focused internal staff efficiencies, and a review of the customer contact system.

## 9 Conclusion

This section presents an overview of the three service delivery model options, highlighting where they score similarly and differently across the accounts:

- End-to-end customer experience;
- Financial sustainability;
- Organizational sustainability;
- Flexibility and adaptability; and
- Ease of implementation and transition.

Based on the consultant team's analysis, there is not one option that consistently scores highly across all the Accounts. Rather, the results of the analysis do show clear trade-offs between the three model options, which will influence the path forward based on the specific priorities of TransLink. The following sections discuss these trade-offs and provide an overview of considerations for the implementation of the options.

### 9.1 Commonalities and Trade-offs between Service Delivery Model Options

#### Commonalities

Many criteria showed similar outcomes across all three options, since the measures were judged to be equally achievable regardless of who delivers the service.

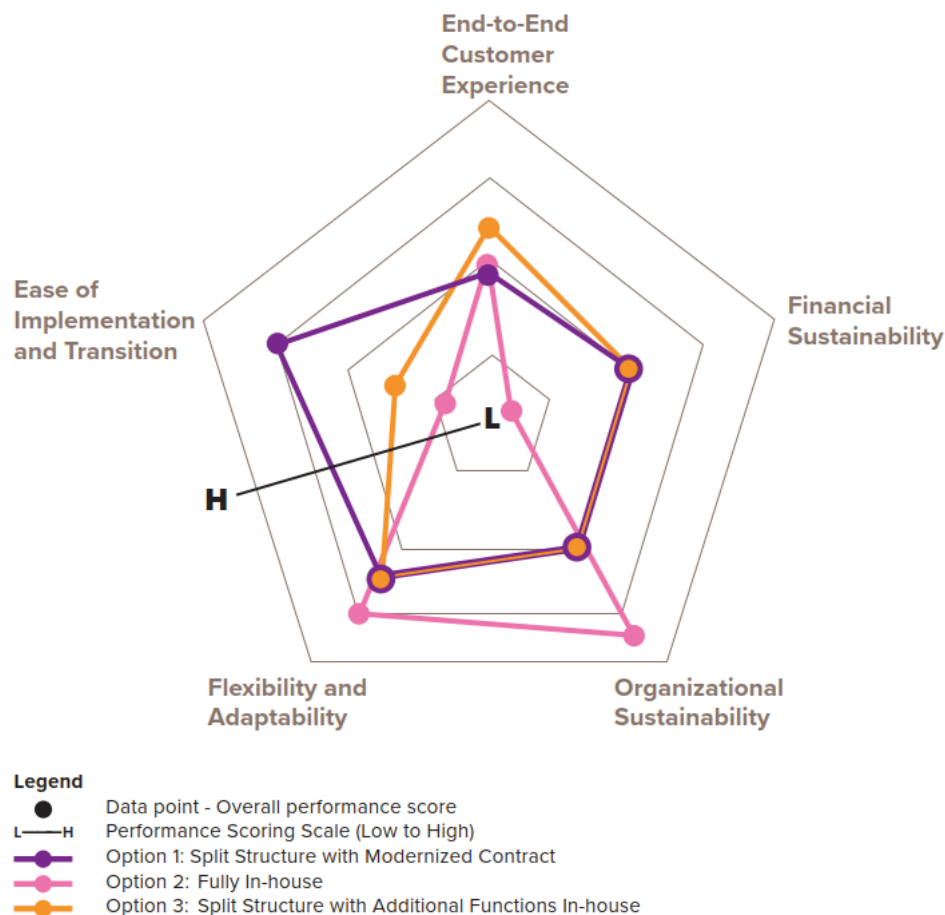
In all options, the TransLink Enterprise will deliver service eligibility, IT ownership and fleet and facility ownership. Likewise, all options include some TransLink involvement in customer care, operator training, and facility maintenance. Other commonalities across all delivery models include:

- Any changes to service eligibility
- Non-dedicated vehicle trips
- Software systems and any software upgrades, including online booking
- Expanded hours of service
- Changes to fleet including vehicle mix and electrification

Many factors that impact customer experience and the other accounts, are not dependent on the delivery model. For example, specific trip performance improvements or new forms of public reporting could be achieved through contract mechanisms or by bringing a specific function in-house under TransLink's direct control. Thus, the trade-offs between delivery models are more focused on specific accounts and a smaller subset of criteria and measures.

#### Trade-offs

Figure 9-1 comparatively shows how the options performed against the other options in each account. This figure demonstrates that there are trade-offs for each service delivery model option and there is no one option that consistently scores highly across all the accounts.



**Figure 9-1 Comparison of commonalities and trade-offs between options**

Figure 9-1 shows:

- Option 1 represents the least change, thus it performs well in Ease of Implementation and Transition. It also performs well in Financial Sustainability.
  - The trade-off for these benefits is the forgoing of opportunities to improve Public Trust and less Flexibility and Adaptability to respond to future corporate policy direction such as stronger integration to the conventional service.
- Option 2 would provide greater Public Trust, and some improvement in Flexibility and Adaptability to implement future policy directions.
  - The trade-off is that it would require significant change to bring the service fully in-house and will carry the greatest financial cost.
- Option 3 requires some change to bring key elements in-house, but less change than Option 2. It performs well in Financial Sustainability (equivalent to Option 1) and provides some improvement to Customer Experience (namely, improved travel time and on-time performance).
  - The trade-off for this benefit is the forgoing of opportunity to improve Public Trust and improved Flexibility and Adaptability (like Option 1) while also introducing complexity in Implementation and Transition (similar to Option 3).

It is not surprising to note that in different contexts and under different priorities, some model options could perform better than others. The peer agency review findings highlight differences between organizations, explaining why certain models are more suitable in specific scenarios. For TransLink and HandyDART, the choice of service delivery model hinges on the priorities set by the TransLink Board of Directors.

## 9.2 Factors that Influence Service Delivery Model Performance

This Delivery Model Review is just one element in updating and modernizing HandyDART service. This review focused on assessing who delivers each function that makes up the HandyDART service, but consideration of other HandyDART service components are also underway through TransLink's HandyDART Customer First Plan and other initiatives.

This review does not consider customer eligibility or information technology required to support the delivery of HandyDART services, since both aspects of the service are being considered separately. This review does not consider when non-dedicated vehicles are used to deliver trips or the type of vehicles that make up HandyDART's dedicated vehicle fleet. Together, these initiatives aim to improve the HandyDART service for customers.

### Implementation

The performance of any service is largely influenced by the program design and implementation decisions. While the analysis in this report focuses on who delivers HandyDART services, how the services are delivered – the subsequent design of the selected model including development of policies and performance standards — is as important for achieving the goals of the organization.

It is recommended that a detailed implementation strategy be developed, with adequate resourcing to oversee the transition to any new model or service provider. While the type and complexity of decisions that will need to be made during implementation will vary depending on the preferred delivery model, careful implementation planning will help to ensure success for all customers and stakeholders and a seamless experience for customers during and post transition.

### Conclusion

While this Delivery Model Review provides important insights into who should deliver HandyDART services, it represents just one component of a broader decision-making process. It is important to recognize that the quality and sustainability of HandyDART service will be shaped not only by the chosen delivery model but also by a range of other levers and decisions—many of which are outlined in the HandyDART Customer First Plan.

Program design, implementation strategies, and operational choices will also significantly influence outcomes and are critical to achieving long-term goals. As such, a comprehensive implementation strategy with appropriate resourcing is recommended to support a smooth transition and ensure success for all customers and stakeholders.

# Appendices

## A.1 Glossary of Functions of Specialized Transit Service

<b>Service Eligibility</b>	Determination of who qualifies for HandyDART services and on-boarding them into the service. This involves eligibility application processing, overview of assessments, appeals and customer registration.
<b>Customer Care</b>	Support services for registered HandyDART customers and investigation of complaints. Customer service responsibilities include answering phone calls, responding to inquiries and investigating complaints.
<b>Operator Training</b>	Instruction and skill development for HandyDART operators. This involves the development of training materials and requirements and oversight to ensure operators are trained appropriately.
<b>Trip Booking</b>	Receipt and confirmation of requests for service for HandyDART customers. This involves the administrative tasks of taking calls from customers and booking into the system.
<b>Scheduling</b>	The organization of trip requests into operating schedules. This involves scheduling booked trips and assigning it to operators and vehicles.
<b>Fleet Ownership</b>	Funding and procurement of dedicated fleet for HandyDART operations.
<b>Facility Ownership</b>	Funding and procurement (or lease) of facilities used for HandyDART operations. ownership or leasing of facilities.
<b>Fleet Maintenance</b>	Performing maintenance activities on dedicated fleet, including road calls to respond to maintenance issues, cleaning, repairs and preventive maintenance activities.
<b>Facility maintenance</b>	Performing maintenance activities for facilities including cleaning, preventive maintenance activities and required repairs.
<b>IT ownership</b>	Funding, procurement, management and operation various software and systems required for the administration and delivery of HandyDART. This includes booking, scheduling and dispatch software, telephone system, finance system, asset management software, HR/employee software, etc.
<b>IT Services</b>	Support with the use of various systems and software, including set up and administration, troubleshooting and vendor management and managing system life cycles.
<b>Trip Dispatch</b>	Operational tasks involved with real-time oversight of service operations and incident response. This includes tracking status of trips and dealing with no-shows and cancellations, handling operator issues, trip disruptions such as delays and breakdowns and adjustments to operator schedules.
<b>Trip Delivery</b>	Delivery of scheduled customer trips. Includes picking up and dropping off customers at scheduled locations. This involves providing door to door support and helping customers to board and deboard vehicles.

## A.2 What We Heard: Engagement Summary

### Who We Engaged and How

#### Round 1 (August 2024) – Introduction and Understanding

The objectives of this engagement were:

- Introduce the project's objectives and expected outcomes
- Understand perspectives on the current HandyDART delivery model
- Solicit feedback on the proposed Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework

The customers and stakeholders who participated in the August Engagement Program were:

- HandyDART Users' Advisory Committee (HDUAC)
- Stakeholders and Advocates (e.g., advocacy groups and organizations providing non-transit services to HandyDART customers selected by TransLink).
- Non-unionized HandyDART staff
- HandyDART customers contacted via telephone survey

#### Round 2 (December 2024) – Gathering Feedback

The objectives of this engagement were:

- Provide an overview of and update on the project
- Present the shortlist of delivery model options
- Solicit feedback (opportunities and challenges) about the shortlisted delivery model options.

The following seven sessions formed the December Engagement Program:

- Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU Local 1724) leadership meeting
- (2) Unionized HandyDART staff focus groups (call centre operators and drivers)
- Stakeholders and advocates workshop
- Non-unionized HandyDART staff workshop
- HDUAC meeting
- Casual Unionized HandyDART staff meeting (call centre operators and drivers)

#### Round 1 – What We Heard

##### **HDUAC, staff, stakeholder and advocate insights on HandyDART today**

The initial phase of engagement gathered valuable insights from HDUAC members, representatives of stakeholders and advocates, and non-unionized HandyDART staff, pinpointing areas for improvement in the existing HandyDART model to enhance the customer experience. These included:

- **On time and reliable service:** Engagement workshops with the HDUAC and Stakeholders and Advocates revealed that on-time performance (i.e., reliability) is most important service delivery metric to them. It was also noted that unplanned delays/late pick-ups are very disruptive.
- **Trip booking:** Participants within the HDUAC and Stakeholders and Advocates workshops reported long wait times for booking agents, affecting trip reservations, changes, and cancellations. One participant

requested more accessible booking methods, such as online options and language translations. On-demand booking and a web/mobile app would greatly enhance the customer experience.

- **Trip length:** Non-unionized staff and HDUAC members noted that trips have become longer, and routes appear to be less direct or efficient over time.
- **Taxi trips:** The predominant concern raised was regarding taxi service. Participants within the HDUAC and Stakeholders and Advocates workshops were concerned about the level of care provided by taxi drivers compared to drivers of dedicated vehicles. Several participants mentioned that, in their experience, taxi drivers do not provide door-to-door service and are not as well trained compared to dedicated HandyDART drivers.

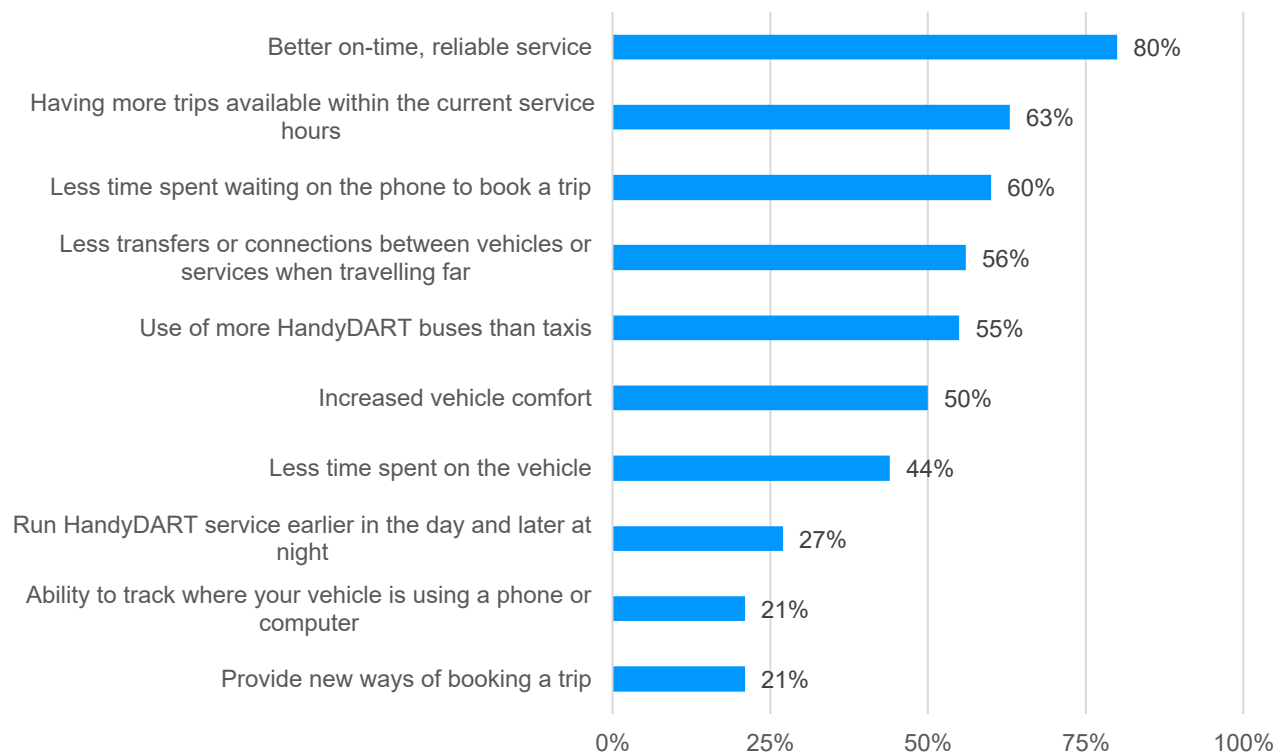
### Customer Telephone Survey

A telephone survey was conducted from September 2 to September 5, 2024, by an independent market research firm. Responses were received from 100 users of HandyDART across Metro Vancouver. It should be noted that this survey took place during job action by the Service Provider's employee union, ATU 1724, which cancelled most HandyDART service. The job action began on September 3, 2024.

Respondents were asked to select service aspects that they consider to "very important" (Figure 1). Better on-time, reliable service was the aspect most selected, selected by 80% of respondents. In addition to better on-time, reliable service, at least 50% of survey respondents selected the following as very important:

- Having more trips available within the current service hours.
- Less time spent waiting on the phone to book a trip.
- Less transfers or connections between vehicles or services when travelling far.
- Use of more HandyDART buses than taxis.
- Increased vehicle comfort.

## "Very Important" Service Aspects



**Figure A2-2 "Very Important" Service Aspects**

### Service Trade-offs

Respondents were also asked to consider trade-offs between different service improvements. Customers expressed preferences for:

- **On time and reliable service:** Better on-time, reliable service over consistent customer assistance by the driver (62% versus 38%).
- **Trip booking:** Having more trips available within the current service hours to running HandyDART service earlier in the day and later at night (76% versus 24%). Improving call wait times to book a trip to providing new ways of booking a trip (e.g., online trip booking) (85% versus 15%).
- **Trip length:** Getting to their destination faster over less transfers or connections between services (e.g., transferring to another HandyDART vehicle or onto the SkyTrain) (57% versus 43%). Waiting for a HandyDART bus over getting a taxi at their preferred time (59% versus 41%).

## Round 2 – Feedback on Future HandyDART Delivery Model Options

The second phase of engagement gathered insights during workshops, focus groups and meetings on the three shortlisted delivery model options shown in Figure A2-3 below. This section summarizes the feedback in relation to the Multiple Account Evaluation Framework (MAE) (specifically accounts and criteria). It should be noted that comments were not received on all criteria, and therefore the summary only provides insights on the criteria participants responded to.

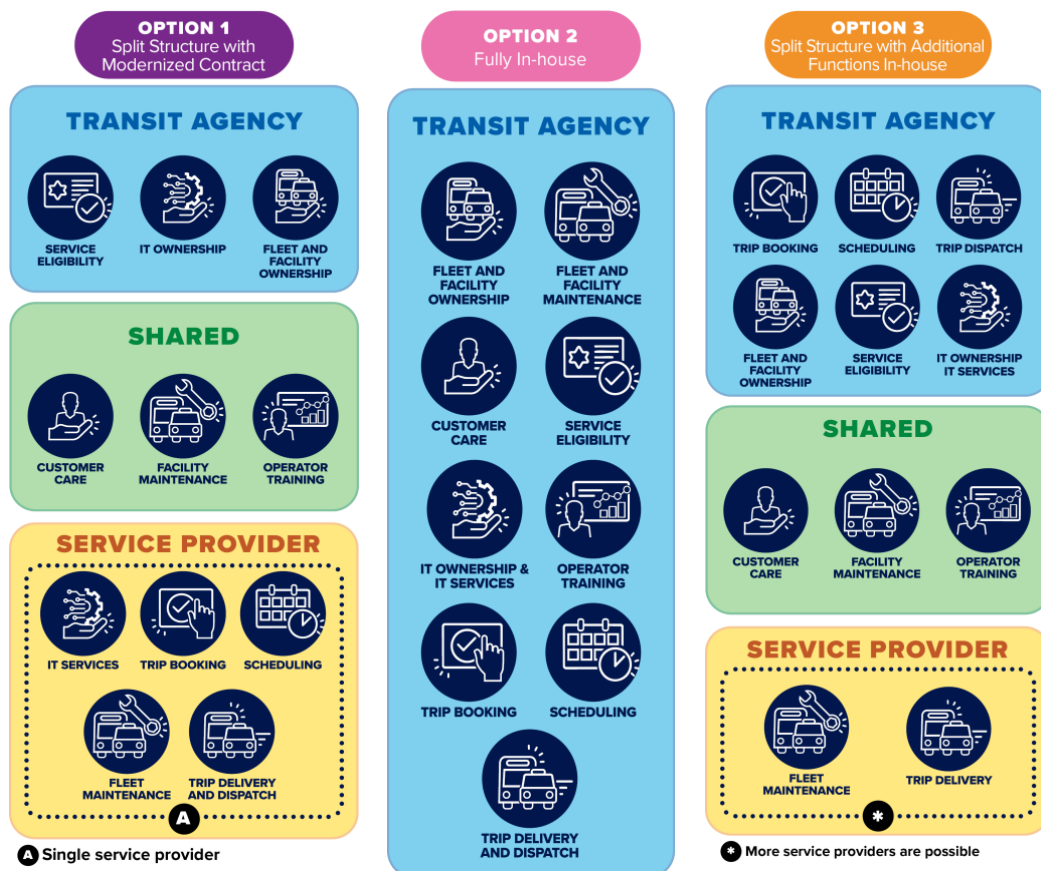


Figure A2-3 Finalized shortlisted options

### Customer end-to-end experience

- **Travel time:** Participants noted that they perceive that current scheduling is inefficient and could be improved with a fully in-house delivery model (Option 2). It was noted that some customers experience long journey times (over an hour) even for short distances. These sentiments were particularly expressed by union leadership members, unionized HandyDART staff and Stakeholders and Advocates representatives.
- **Customer satisfaction:** Participants raised concerns around the current escalation of customer complaints. It was perceived that the current procedure resulted in several unresolved customer issues as the complaints process involved more than one organization. Representatives within the Stakeholders and Advocates workshop also suggested that a fully in-house delivery model (Option 2) could provide a single source of truth and streamline the complaints process. Concerns about the consistency of driver training for multiple contractors under Option 3 were raised in the Stakeholders and Advocates workshop and the HDUAC meeting.
- **On-time performance:** Participants raised concerns about accountability and shared goals with Option 3, where scheduling and delivery are separated. They speculated that this scenario could mean that there is no longer a shared goal of meeting KPIs if different groups are doing different functions. These sentiments were particularly strong in the unionized and non-unionized HandyDART staff sessions and the union leadership meeting.

- **Customer safety:** Unionized HandyDART staff expressed concerns about the safety of assigning certain trips to taxis. They reported instances where customers with complex care needs were given taxi trips, which, while more cost-effective, are less capable of providing the necessary service compared to HandyDART operators. Further, it was felt that Option 2 would better address these customer needs in this respect. Option 3 was seen as potentially creating challenges with safety and training between different contractors.

### Financial Sustainability

- **TransLink subsidy per trip:** Participants suggested that an Option 2 model could consolidate resources, expertise, and services, potentially being more cost-efficient. This sentiment was particularly expressed by unionized HandyDART staff.
- **Operator expense:** Several different participants, such as HDUAC members, unionized HandyDART staff and union leadership members, suggested that redirecting contractor profits to Option 2 services could be beneficial for customers and service delivery. HDUAC members suggested that Options 3A/B could enable contractors being incentivized to provide a better service for customers, but also in terms of TransLink being able to secure better price from contractors.

### Organizational Sustainability

- **Operator experience and turnover:** Participants perceived various existing challenges related to staff recruitment, retention, and turnover. Some participants within the union leadership meeting suggested that Option 2 could possibly improve staff retention as the concept of being brought in-house and employed by TransLink was perceived to boost worker morale, motivation and satisfaction. Additionally, worker utilization was raised as an issue that may be exacerbated by Option 3, as expressed in the non-unionized HandyDART staff session. This is because Option 3 was seen to potentially make work more restrictive by introducing different contractors servicing different service areas.
- **Ease of transition to low carbon or carbon free transportation:** It was noted in the union leadership meeting that multiple contractors under Option 3 could complicate long-term strategic initiatives, such as the electrification of vehicles to see a low-carbon transition. Contractors were perceived to be driven by their own goals and metrics, which could make long-term planning with TransLink difficult. It was suggested that Option 2 for facilities and maintenance would ease long-term planning given the lack of conflicting priorities by having a single organization's overarching goals and values.
- **Public trust:** Various participants suggested that Option 2 model could improve consistency, communication and accountability to the Board and the public, in light of current feelings of a lack of transparency in KPI reporting. Some participants also voiced concern that contractors prioritize commercial interests, prompting favoring for Option 2 for its perceived unified management structure and shared vision and goals.

### Flexibility and adaptability

- **Ease of integration with conventional services:** Participants within the unionized staff focus groups noted that better integration with accessible conventional services is crucial and that Option 2 model could facilitate this. It was suggested that TransLink has more resources than any private service provider, which could be used to accommodate trips from HandyDART if required and suitable.
- **Flexibility to adapt to changes in demand:** Participants perceived challenges around recruiting under the current model. Participants noted challenges around getting mobile data terminals installed, which could lead to delays in adding additional fleet. These challenges would be consistent across all models.
- **Flexibility to respond to disruptions:** Union leadership members and non-unionized HandyDART staff noted that multiple contractors in Option 3 could complicate communication from top to bottom during disruptions. Additionally, representatives from the non-unionized HandyDART staff noted that there may

be challenges in operators moving between regions if these regions were under different contracts. It may be more restrictive to work in different regions if a certain contractor is responsible for one region.

### Ease of Implementation and Transition

- **Required changes to HandyDART facilities:** It was emphasized in the unionized HandyDART staff focus groups that the transition to an Option 2 model would require minimal changes as the existing model already uses buses and facilities owned by TransLink. Additionally, the transition to Option 2 model could be simple if existing drivers were hired.
- **Required changes to HandyDART facilities:** Participants felt Option 2 model could be more cost efficient with a streamlined structure, due to less management.
- **Need for new/additional training to transition to new model:** Participants felt Option 2 model could result in more planned training for staff.

### Other Considerations

Other comments were raised during engagement sessions that do not relate directly to the service delivery model but are still worth noting for customer experience improvements and HandyDART overall.

Some participants also mentioned interest in:

- **Technological enhancements:** Participants in the HDUAC workshop (Round 1) noted the need for technological enhancements such as a location-sharing mobile application to track vehicles and on-demand taxi booking. Additionally, other participants highlighted improvements required to the software's scheduling capabilities to ensure efficient and timely service
- **Accessibility and support:** Participants in the HDUAC workshop (Round 1) called to enhance accessibility and support by providing more language translation and assistance, as well as offering a greater variety of vehicle types. The registration process was noted as needing to accurately identify who can use conventional or taxi supplement services and who should not.
- **Travel convenience:** Participants in the HDUAC workshop (Round 1) focused on improving travel convenience by enabling easier cross-boundary travel for quicker trips without requiring vehicle transfers. Furthermore, outdated mapping will be updated to provide accurate estimates for pick-up times.
- **Call wait times:** Participants discussed call wait times during all Round 1 sessions, however, since this not something that is typically influenced by the service delivery model, these comments have been counted as "other consideration". Participants indicated that wait times to speak with a booking agent was one of the biggest challenges with the current system. The majority (60%) of telephone survey respondents also said that less time spent waiting on the phone to book a trip was very important to them. Staff indicated that call wait times are affected by staffing and service demand that has outpaced hiring.

## A.3 Long-list Delivery Model Descriptions

### Option 1: Split Structure with Modernized Contract



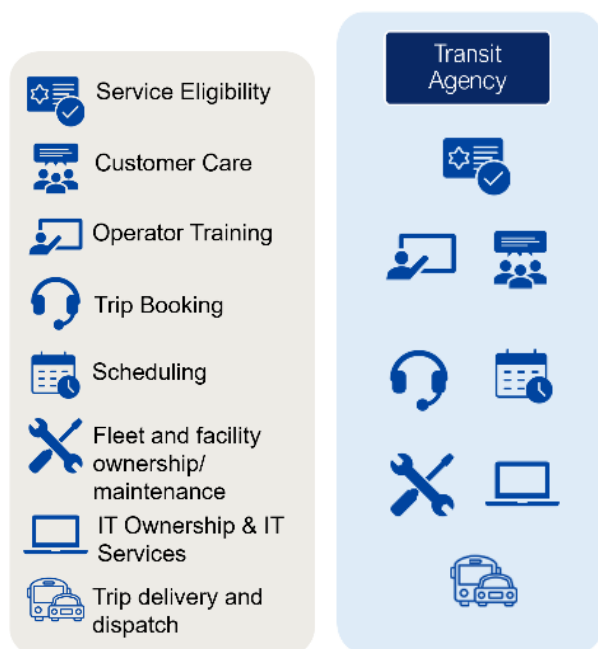
This option seeks to modernize TransLink's involvement over certain shared functions (e.g., customer care and operator training).

This option would have a similar structure to how HandyDART is delivered today.

As part of the renewal process, look for opportunities to modernize tools for oversight and performance management of contractor. For example, review customer escalation processes.

TransLink would also be more involved in developing operator training content and structure, while contractor delivers the training.

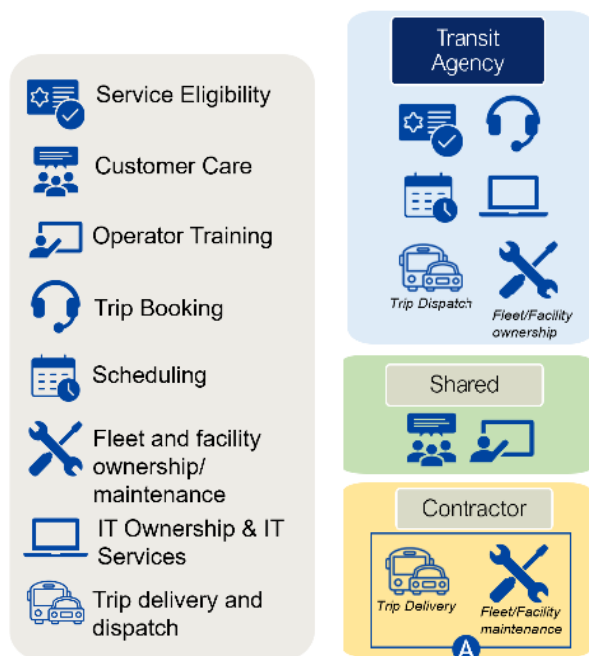
### Option 2: Fully In-House



This option seeks to bring all ownership and operations in-house to TransLink.

TransLink would bring all staff and functions in-house and deliver all aspects of the Custom Transit Service.

### Option 3A: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house



This option explores the potential to bring most of HandyDART in-house, and contracting only trip delivery and facility/fleet maintenance to a single contractor.

In addition to eligibility and asset ownership, most operational functions such as trip booking, scheduling and dispatch are brought in-house. IT services to support various systems and devices are also brought in-house.

A single contractor is brought onto deliver trips and maintain fleet and facilities.

Responsibility for customer care and operator training are shared between TransLink and contractor.

### Option 3B: Split Structure with Additional Functions In-house + Multiple Contractor Delivery



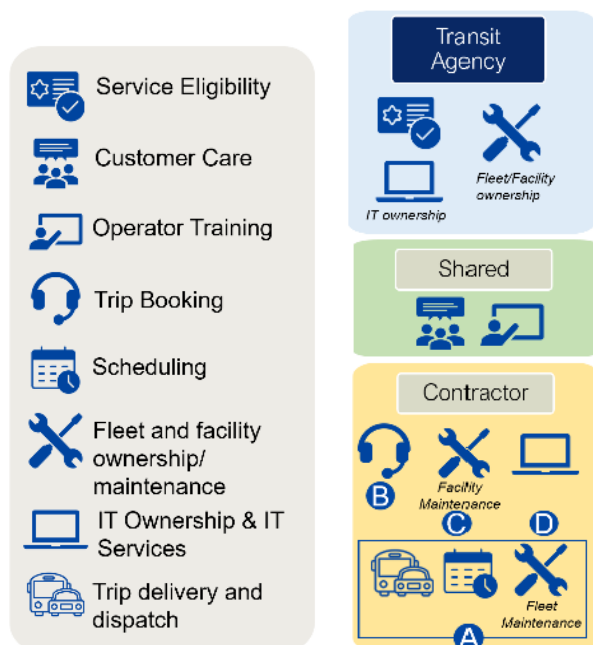
Similar split of functions to the previous option, except allowing for multiple contractors to provide trip delivery.

This option scored well in financial sustainability due to the expected decrease in costs due to the level of competition amongst delivery partners within the same region.

Given the in-house operations, this option makes it easier to change and implement new policies when operations are all in-house.

Responsibility for customer care and operator training are shared between TransLink and contractor.

## Option 4: Introduce Multiple Contractors



This option seeks to emulate the current model but distributes the functions currently owned by one single contractor to multiple 'specialized' contractors.

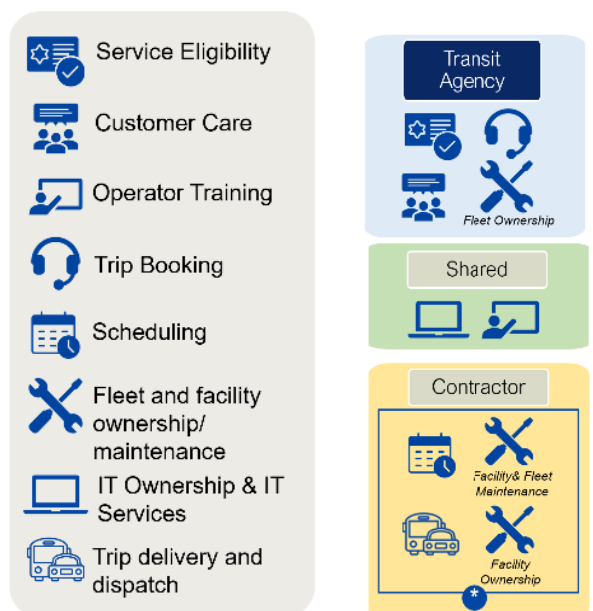
Ownership and responsibility for TransLink is consistent with the current model.

A primary contractor (A) will be responsible for scheduling, dispatching, fleet maintenance and trip delivery.

Separate contractors will be responsible for each of the following: trip booking (B), facility maintenance (C), IT services (D).

Responsibility for customer care will be shared between the contact centre contractor receiving trip bookings (B), the primary contractor who will need to investigate issues (A), and TransLink who will oversee the process.

## Option 5: Multiple Contractors with In-House Booking (Decentralized Services)



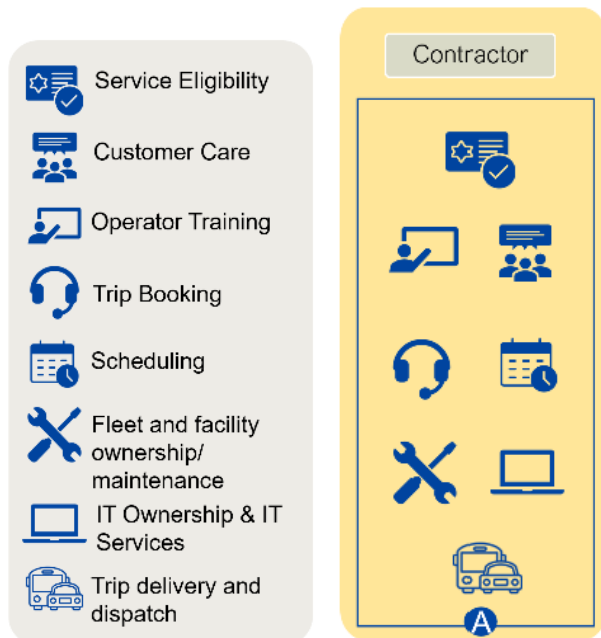
This option involves TransLink taking on key central responsibilities and contracting multiple providers to deliver services to distinct geographic areas.

Trip booking is brought inhouse. Key functions including customer care, fleet ownership and eligibility remain with TransLink, in line with the existing model.

Multiple contractors are brought on to undertake scheduling, dispatching, fleet and facility maintenance and trip delivery. Facility ownership also falls under the responsibility of various contractors. Each contractor will carry out all out-sourced functions. Contractors will be distributed geographically.

Responsibility for IT services and operator training will be shared between TransLink and respective contractors.

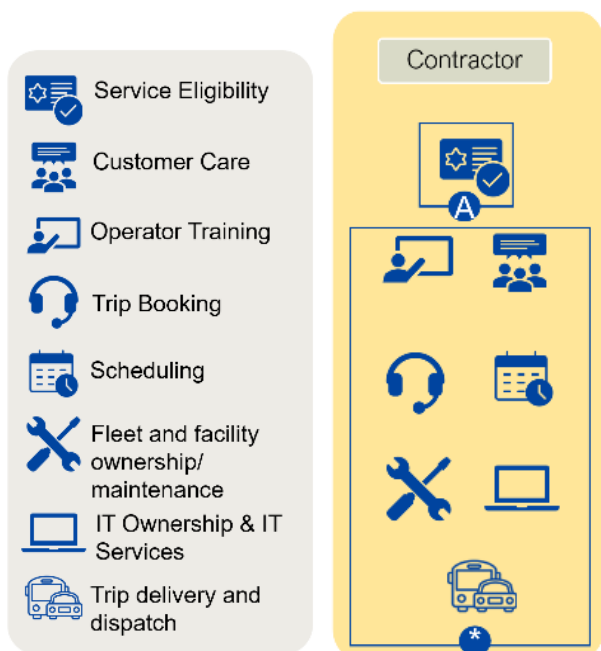
## Option 6A: Turnkey Single Contractor + Centralized



This option explores the out-sourcing of all ownership and responsibilities to a single contractor.

TransLink will be responsible for contract administration.

## Option 6B: Turnkey Multiple Contractors + Decentralized



Similar to 6A, this option explores out-sourcing all ownership and responsibilities, but to multiple contractors.

TransLink will be responsible for contract administration.

Eligibility will be undertaken by a single contractor.

Multiple contractors are brought in to deliver all other functions. Contractors will be distributed geographically.



# **HandyDART Customer-First Plan Engagement Summary**

November 2025

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## Introduction

The HandyDART Customer First Plan is grounded in what we've heard directly from customers and stakeholders. Their ongoing input helps TransLink understand who uses HandyDART, how their needs are evolving, and where improvements can make the greatest impact on accessibility, reliability, and customer experience. This plan has been informed through feedback gathered through structured engagement programs and customer research focused on specific initiatives, as well as through ongoing channels that allow customers and stakeholders to share ideas, raise concerns, and highlight opportunities for improvement. The following sections summarize who was engaged, the mechanisms through which feedback was received, and how these insights contributed to the development of the HandyDART Customer First Plan.

## Who we engaged

TransLink has engaged a broad and diverse group of participants to inform the HandyDART Customer First Plan. Gathering perspectives from across this wide range of participants is essential to developing robust, evidence-based recommendations that reflect both the customer experience and the operational realities of delivering accessible transit service in Metro Vancouver. Many of those engaged have been engaged through multiple channels. Engagement has included the following groups, organizations and their representatives:

- HandyDART Customers
- Caregivers for HandyDART Customers
- HandyDART User Advisory Committee (HDUAC)
- Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724 Leadership
- Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724 Members
- Vancouver & District Labour Council / Save Our HandyDART Coalition
- HandyDART Riders' Alliance
- Alzheimer Society of BC
- ASK Friendship Society
- BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
- Beulah Adult Day Program
- Black Top Cab
- Blenheim Lodge
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Chilliwack Society for Community Living
- City of Vancouver's Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
- Council of Senior Citizens Organizations (COSCO)
- Delta View Care Centre
- Disability Alliance BC
- Fraser Health
- Harrison at Elim Village
- Kyndred Community Living Society
- L'Chaim Adult Day Centre
- LakeView Care Centre
- Langley Pos-Abilities
- Langley Seniors Resource Society
- Louis Brier Home & Hospital
- Maple Ridge Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness
- New Westminster & District Labour Council
- Physiotherapist Association of BC
- Raven Song Community Health Centre
- Richmond Centre for Disability
- Royal Columbian Hospital Dialysis Unit
- South Vancouver Adult Day Program
- Surdell Taxi
- Surrey Association for Community Living
- Vancouver Coastal Health Renal Unit
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Vancouver Taxi Association
- VRS Communities Society
- West End Adult Day Care Centre Society
- Yellow Cab

## Engagement programs, customer research and feedback channels

TransLink used a broad range of engagement programs, research tools, and feedback channels to guide the development of the HandyDART Customer First Plan. Ongoing collaboration with the HandyDART Users' Advisory Committee, formal stakeholder engagements, and direct input from customers, caregivers, and operators ensures insight into service quality, accessibility, and operations reflects the lived experience of those most impacted by HandyDART service. Together with annual customer satisfaction surveys, regular travel training workshops, and correspondence to the Board, this feedback has shaped the plan's recommended initiatives and ensures that customer experience remains central to decision-making.

### HandyDART User Advisory Committee

The HandyDART Users' Advisory Committee (HDUAC) provides advice and guidance to TransLink, Coast Mountain Bus Company, and service contractors on ways to improve HandyDART service for customers. Members are appointed by the TransLink Board of Directors following an open call for applications, with the review process led by current committee members. Half of the voting members of the committee are HandyDART customers or individuals who support, or are from organizations that support, persons with disabilities. The HDUAC meets quarterly to share feedback, discuss system-wide issues, and advise on plans and initiatives affecting HandyDART customers. Members help set meeting agendas and identify priority topics for discussion. Each year, the HDUAC prepares an annual report outlining its activities and recommendations, which is submitted directly to the TransLink Board.

Regular meetings are held approximately four times each year. Additional ad hoc meetings provide opportunities for staff to conduct workshops on specific initiatives, such as the HandyDART Service Delivery Model Review and proposed updates to the registration and eligibility processes.

Since January 2021, the HDUAC has met 21 times. Agenda topics have included:

- Planned Changes to HandyDART Application
- Online Booking
- Extended Service Hours
- HandyDART Supplemental Taxi Service
- Customer Cancellation policies
- Wait List and Cross-Boundary Policies
- Real-Time Information System Feasibility
- Changing Mobility Aid Dimensions
- HandyDART Service Delivery Model Review
- Transdev Operations Updates
- Inclement Weather Protocol and Communications

HDUAC feedback is reflected in nearly all the recommended initiatives in the HandyDART Customer First Plan.

### **HandyDART Service Delivery Model Review Engagement (2024)**

The review of the HandyDART service delivery model included two phases of engagement with stakeholders.

**Phase 1:** In Spring/Summer of 2024, TransLink sought perspectives on the existing service delivery model; and feedback on draft criteria for a multiple account evaluation (MAE), and the trade-offs between different service improvements.

Engagement included workshops for HDUAC, TransLink, CMBC, and exempt Transdev employees) caregivers, service providers, advocates and labour representatives. A total of 42 participated. A separate briefing was provided to Disability Alliance BC, whose representatives were not able to attend the workshops.

A phone survey with 100 HandyDART customers sought their feedback on trade-offs between different service improvements.

**What we heard:** Phase 1 identified four important considerations to improve customer experience, including improving on-time performance and reliability, improvements to taxi operator training, reducing trip length and optimizing routing, and reducing call wait times. This feedback was incorporated into the development of the MAE.

**Phase 2:** In Fall/Winter 2024, TransLink shared the MAE results, a list of delivery model options, and sought feedback to create a short list.

Engagement included 3 workshops with Phase 1 participants (30) and added 2 focus groups for front-line staff: 9 call centre employees and 9 operators (the employer and ATU each nominated half of the participants). Separate briefings were held for ATU leadership (3), casual unionized staff (2), the HDUAC (13), and the Save Our HandyDART Coalition leaders (2).

**What we heard:** Feedback was primarily used to evaluate service delivery model options, but also identified challenges with scheduling, routing, and the accuracy of performance measures, as well as persistent issues with long booking wait times and customer complaints related to taxi-provided trips. Workforce topics such as training consistency, recruitment, absenteeism, and internal communication were also identified as areas requiring attention to support service quality and staff morale. Participants highlighted the importance of greater accountability, transparent performance reporting, and stronger coordination between HandyDART and other TransLink services. They also noted that future delivery models should enhance flexibility, sustainability, and integration while ensuring smooth implementation and minimal disruption for customers and staff.

Feedback from the HandyDART Delivery Model Review is reflected in the HandyDART Customer First Plan Initiatives 2.1 Online Trip booking, 2.2 Improved Trip Availability, 3.1 Improved Trip Reliability, 3.2 Integrated with Compass Modernization, 5.1 Improved Real-Time Trip Information, 5.2 Timely and Customized Notifications, 6.1 Expanded Training for Non-Dedicated Service Providers, 6.2 Non-Dedicated Service Provider Certification, 6.3

Strengthened Accountability, 8.1 Enhanced Internal Capacity, 8.2 Specialized Delivery Partners, and 8.4 Software & Data.

### **HandyDART Modernization Engagement (2021)**

TransLink sought input on a package of potential updates designed to improve HandyDART customer experience: Compass implementation on HandyDART; updating fares to introduce age-based discounts; updating the registration system; and online booking.

Engagement included a survey (online, by phone or by mail), workshops and a telephone townhall. Participants included HandyDART Users Advisory Committee, customers, care givers, service providers, medical professionals, and advocates for people with disabilities.

A total of 1,645 interactions were tracked during the engagement period, including: over 800 completed surveys; over 100 virtual workshop and telephone townhall participants; over 600 phone calls; and nearly 50 email submissions.

**What we heard:** Key feedback from customers and stakeholders included:

- Concern about proposed mandatory personal consultation component to HandyDART registration.
- Overall support for Compass on HandyDART; identified barriers for some customers.
- Support for extending age-based discounts to HandyDART.

While Compass was integrated with HandyDART in October 2021, feedback from this engagement is further reflected in the HandyDART Customer First Plan Initiatives 1.1 Simplified Application, Initiative 1.2 Personalized Eligibility and Review Process, and 3.2 Integrated with Compass Modernization.

### **HandyDART Customer Service Performance Surveys**

Since 2010, TransLink has been gathering input annually from customers through telephone surveys conducted by Ipsos interviewing, on average, 500 customers. This customer research evaluates the reported quality of service (both dedicated HandyDART vehicles and taxis), determines reasons for any changes in usage, and identifies areas for improvement. The surveys, along with other performance reporting, help identify what is working well and areas to improve HandyDART service. Customers who have used the service at least once in the past month are asked to rate all aspects of service from booking, pick and drop, reliability, drivers, safety, to cleanliness.

Since 2022, HandyDART's overall service score have been increasing. In 2022, HandyDART scored an 8.5 rating and in 2024, the service scored an 8.8, making it the second highest rated service in TransLink's suite of services.

The 2024 survey also identified on-time arrivals, shorter time windows for pickups, and shorter wait time on the phone as customer priorities for service improvement. Nearly one-quarter of respondents could not name an improvement they felt needed to be made to HandyDART Service.

These survey results are available online.

Feedback from these surveys have influenced many of the initiatives in the HandyDART Customer First Plan, but specifically Initiatives 3.1 Improved Trip Reliability, 5.1 Improved Real-Time Trip Information, 5.2 Timely and Customized Notifications, and 7.1 Easier to Connect with Us.

### **CMBC Access Transit Customer Care: Call Centre**

CMBC's Access Transit Customer Care (ATCC) provides HandyDART customers and caregivers with a call centre for complaints and commendations about aspects of HandyDART service. Calls topics are tracked and the Director of ATCC includes a summary of feedback in an annual report that is presented to the HDUAC. In mid-2022, ATCC refined the report to begin including top feedback topics, and separate tracking of feedback about trips taken by taxi.

Since 2022, the top call topics for HandyDART include:

- Call Centre behaviour
- Operator behaviour
- Scheduling and dispatch
- Late or no-show rides
- Long ride times

The top call topics for taxis include:

- Operator behaviour
- Door to door service
- Late, early, or no show rides

Customer feedback from the ATCC is reflected in the HandyDART Customer First Plan Initiatives 2.1 Online Trip Booking, 2.2 Improved Trip Availability, 2.3 Improved Hours of Service, 3.1 Improved Trip Reliability, 5.1 Improved Real-Time Trip Information, 5.2 Timely and Customized Notifications, 5.3 Enhanced Visual Identification for Non-Dedicated Service Providers, 6.1 Expanded Training for Non-Dedicated Service Providers, 6.2 Non-Dedicated Service Provider Certification, 7.1 Easier to Connect with Us, and 7.2 Improved Customer Feedback Process.

### **HandyDART Application and Registration Update (Ongoing)**

Since 2021, TransLink has continued to engage stakeholders on implementing the Board of Directors' direction to modernize and improve the HandyDART application process. This has included process mapping, planning work and service design to develop application processes, a draft appeals process, and revised application form.

Engagement has primarily been through the HDUAC, with additional engagement with medical professionals who are involved in the current HandyDART application process and medical verification.

**HandyDART Application Project Advisory Working Group:** In Fall 2023, TransLink engaged an advisory group composed of people who are an approval authority on the HandyDART application form. This included social workers in hospital and care home settings, licensed nurses, a physician, physiotherapists, and others, who provided input on proposed

application processes, and advised on skills and abilities to assess whether someone can use transit independently.

**HDUAC:** The HDUAC has been engaged regularly since 2021. This has included multiple opportunities for TransLink to share updates on how implementation planning has progressed, and to get lived experience feedback on specific “pain points” in the existing process, a proposed expedited application process, and a potential appeals process.

**Service design exercise:** To identify customer-centric improvements for the new application process and form, TransLink undertook a service design activity in 2023. This consisted of one-on-one interviews about their application experience with 6 new customers and organizations that support applicants, and testing of prototype application material with 18 customers. The resulting customer journey maps and insights have been critical in capturing customer and operational requirements.

#### **What we heard:**

- Continued support for an updated and more modern application process, including options for online application form.
- A desire for each stage of the application process to be clear, easily understood, and accessible for a range of applicants to complete independently.
- Concern that the new process may take longer for applicants who need access to the service urgently to be approved, and the proposed expedited process may mitigate against this risk.

While this engagement is ongoing, initial themes and considerations from this engagement are reflected in the HandyDART Customer First Plan Initiative 1.1 Simplified Application and Initiative 1.2 Personalized Eligibility and Review Process.

#### **Correspondence with TransLink’s Board of Directors**

Members of the public can email TransLink’s Board of Directors at [board@translink.ca](mailto:board@translink.ca) (which is posted on the corporate website). Submissions are tracked and, depending on the topic, the Board may reply or may direct staff to respond.

From 2021 to spring 2025, the Board received 69 emails from individuals and stakeholders on topics related to HandyDART. The general topics of these emails include:

- Support to bring HandyDART In-House
- Concerns about labour relations and HandyDART operator job action (during the 2024 job action)
- Customer service, scheduling and communication with customers
- Improvements to accessibility or service coverage
- Fare, policy and program requests (such as refund options and BC Bus Pass program)

Since Spring 2025, the Board has received 742 duplicate messages asking to bring HandyDART in-house as part of a write-in campaign, led by the Save Our HandyDART Coalition. An additional 809 duplicate messages were sent to the TransLink CEO during the same campaign. These messages were sent via the ActionNetwork.org campaign tool.

The Board has also received correspondence from the Minister of Transportation and Transit, relaying the letters the Minister has received this fall from local governments in Metro Vancouver.

Correspondence with the Board has informed the HandyDART Customer First Plan Initiatives 1.1 Simplified Application, 1.2 Personalized Eligibility and Review Process, 1.3 Enhanced Personalized Travel Training, 2.2 Improved Trip Availability, 3.1 Improved Trip Reliability, 3.2 Integrated with Compass Modernization, 6.1 Expanded Training for Non-Dedicated Service Providers, 6.2 Non-Dedicated Service Provider Certification, 6.3 Strengthened Accountability, 7.2 Improved Customer Feedback Process.

### **Public Delegations at Board of Directors' Meetings**

Members of the public have the opportunity to speak to TransLink's Board of Directors at their quarterly public meetings. By registering with the Corporate Secretary in advance, they can speak on a topic of their choosing for up to five minutes.

Since 2020, 16 individuals, including advocates, customers, and HandyDART employees, – have spoken to the Board on the following:

- Concerns about mandatory interviews in proposed registration and eligibility process
- Desire for employee and retiree benefit parity for HandyDART and CMBC employees
- Desire for investment in HandyDART infrastructure, permanent HandyDART facilities, and low carbon fleet
- Concerns about HandyDART service delivery and objection to use of taxis for trips
- Desire for improvements to timeliness of pick ups, high staff turnover

Speakers' feedback is shared with staff and, depending on the topic, the Board can direct staff to follow up with the speaker.

### **Travel Training**

TransLink introduced the Travel Training program in 2018 to help passengers with diverse abilities to better access the region's multimodal transportation and transit system. In partnership with community groups throughout the region, TransLink provides virtual and in-person informational workshops for seniors, newcomers and people with disabilities to assist with independent travel. The program also has activations at major community events. To date in 2025, the Travel Training program engaged over 8500 participants through over 100 workshops and community events.

Travel Training provides a consistent venue to participants to seek information and provide feedback on TransLink's multimodal transit services, including buses, SkyTrain, SeaBus and HandyDART.

Common themes in feedback received at travel training events include:

- Challenges with scheduling multi-zone trips
- Long booking wait times
- Concerns over rider support related to taxi trips
- Concerns with accountability and response over customer feedback

- Language barriers for customers where English is not their first language
- Concerns over flexibility on changing bookings (on demand service)
- Assumptions that HandyDART provides single-passenger rides
- Assumptions that HandyDART is a service for all seniors 65+

Feedback heard in the travel training program is reflected in the HandyDART Customer First Plan Initiatives 1.3 Enhanced Personalized Travel Training, 2.1 Online Trip Booking, 2.2 Improved Trip Availability, 5.1 Enhanced Visual Identification for Non-Dedicated Service Providers, 6.1 Expanded Training for Non-Dedicated Service Providers, 6.2 Non-Dedicated Service Provider Certification, 6.3 Strengthened Accountability, 7.2 Enhanced Customer Feedback Process, and 7.3 Evolving the HandyDART Brand.

### **HandyDART Van Pilot Project Engagement (2020)**

Customers and drivers participated in a pilot project examining the suitability of operating smaller vehicles for HandyDART. The feedback gathered was used to assess customer and operator experience with two vehicle types used to deliver HandyDART trips.

Engagement included a viewing of the two vehicle models for HDUAC members and HandyDART operators, and phone surveys with 33 customers, who had travelled in the vehicles during the pilot period.

**What we heard:** Evaluation by customers and drivers identified one model as viable, but requiring different configurations as it was challenging for ambulatory clients to enter and exit. Information gathered during this pilot will inform future work as different vehicle typologies have been brought to market since.

This feedback is reflected in the HandyDART Customer First Plan Initiative 4.1 Smaller Vehicles.

## Key insights from engagement

TransLink has heard valuable feedback from a broad range of stakeholders about their experiences using the service. Participants have shared insights into what is working well and where improvements are needed to enhance accessibility, reliability, and customer satisfaction. This input provides a strong foundation for identifying opportunities to improve the HandyDART customer experience.

The key themes of customer and stakeholder feedback that were captured for the HandyDART Customer First Plan are:

- **Service Reliability and Operational Efficiency:** Service reliability remains the top priority for HandyDART Customers and stakeholders. Customers, staff, and stakeholders consistently identified reliability and scheduling efficiency as critical to improving the overall customer experience. Feedback noted that current scheduling challenges are largely the result of software and system limitations, which can lead to inefficient trip routing and delays. Some also expressed concern that related performance metrics may not fully reflect customer experience. Improving scheduling accuracy, route optimization, and transparency in performance reporting were key priorities identified through engagement.
- **Customer Experience and Taxi Service Quality:** Participants raised ongoing concerns about the quality and consistency of taxi-provided trips, including the level of door-to-door assistance and driver conduct. These issues were linked to lower satisfaction ratings for non-dedicated trips. Strengthened training, service standards, and oversight were viewed as important to ensuring safe, reliable, and equitable service for all customers.
- **Workforce Capacity, Training, and Safety:** Engagement highlighted perceived challenges related to recruitment, retention, absenteeism, and communication that we felt to impact service delivery and morale. Participants emphasized the importance of consistent and structured training for operators and call-centre staff to maintain safety and service quality, as well as improving internal communication and workforce utilization.
- **Booking Wait Times and Technology Integration:** Long call wait times continue to be a significant barrier to customer satisfaction. Participants cited the need for technology upgrades, improved integration between booking and operations, and additional staffing supports to manage demand. Streamlined processes and modernized systems through updated software were viewed as key enablers of a better customer experience.
- **Accountability and Performance Transparency:** Participants highlighted the importance of accurate, accessible, and transparent performance reporting. Clear metrics, consistent communication, and shared goals were seen as essential to improving accountability, decision-making, and public trust in HandyDART service delivery.

- **Perceptions of Service Model and Operational Impact:** A recurring theme from operators and some stakeholder groups was the perception that bringing HandyDART service in-house could improve day-to-day operations by enhancing coordination between scheduling, dispatch, and customer service functions. Participants suggested that a fully in-house delivery model could streamline communication and align operational priorities under a single management structure. Others emphasized that service quality and performance outcomes would ultimately depend on effective management, adequate resourcing, and clear accountability measures—regardless of the delivery model chosen.
- **Integration and Implementation Considerations:** Participants emphasized the need for smooth coordination between HandyDART and other TransLink services, along with thoughtful planning for any potential service delivery transition. Feedback underscored the importance of minimizing disruption, maintaining service continuity, and ensuring staff and customers are supported throughout implementation.

## Conclusion

TransLink remains committed to keeping customers and stakeholders at the centre of our engagement. Ongoing engagement is essential to understanding evolving needs, identifying opportunities for improvement, and ensuring that HandyDART continues to deliver safe, reliable, and accessible service. TransLink will continue to prioritize meaningful dialogue through both formal engagement programs—such as workshops, surveys, and advisory committee meetings—and through regular feedback channels that allow customers and partners to share their experiences at any time. This ongoing collaboration ensures that future decisions are informed by the people who know the service best, helping TransLink build a more responsive, inclusive, and customer-focused HandyDART system.

**Letters Received by the TransLink Board of  
Directors for HandyDART Service Delivery Review**

March 27, 2024 - November 25, 2025

MINISTER'S MANDATE LETTER FROM THE PREMIER



January 16, 2025

Honourable Mike Farnworth  
Minister of Transportation and Transit  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Farnworth:

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Transportation and Transit at a critical time for our province. Serving as a member of the executive council is a privilege and responsibility which I am confident you will fulfill with integrity and a commitment to the people of our province.

British Columbians have trusted us with a mandate to deliver for them in ways that make a tangible difference in their daily lives. They expect us to listen and learn from people of different perspectives – and work together to make things better for everyone.

Specifically, we will tackle the challenges people worry about at the kitchen table:

- **Grow the economy by creating good jobs across British Columbia.** We will collaborate with businesses, workers, and communities to attract investments in both new and traditional sectors as well as emerging sectors of the economy. This approach will bring certainty for business, security for workers, and generate the wealth needed to support the essential services British Columbians rely on.
- **Reduce costs for families** including by helping people access homes they can afford through support for first-time homebuyers, increasing the supply of rental housing stock, and stronger measures to crack down on housing speculation.

.../2

- **Strengthen health care** by expanding access to family doctors and recruiting and training more health professionals, ensuring that every British Columbian can access the care they need, no matter where they live. We will also increase access to addictions treatment and provide help for people whose struggles require intensive supports.
- **Make our neighbourhoods and communities safer** by working with law enforcement and social agencies to address street disorder, crack down on organized crime, and do all we can to ensure repeat offenders stay behind bars.

Our commitment to take action on climate change remains foundational and will be key to a healthy and prosperous BC for future generations.

Underlying all this work is our partnership with Indigenous peoples. Advancing reconciliation, implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and working in partnership with First Nations rights-holders to advance shared interests is the responsibility of every Minister.

Over this mandate I expect you to prioritize making progress on the following:

- In order to protect key services that British Columbians rely on, work with the Minister of Finance to review all existing Ministry of Transportation and Transit programs and initiatives to ensure our programs remain relevant, are efficient, are responsive to the needs of commuters, grow the economy, and help keep British Columbians moving. This is important in the context of current Provincial budget constraints and the priorities of communities in the province.
- Support improvements in BC's road infrastructure balanced with integrated transit opportunities to ensure that people can get home and to work faster, and goods can get to market more efficiently in our province.
- Find ways to support low-income people including seniors and young people in accessing affordable transit.
- Drive the development and expansion of transit across the province and work with communities across BC to find ways to strengthen key rural and intercity transportation services. This includes supporting regional transportation plans such as the Central Okanagan Transit Future Plan and working toward regular local transit along the Sea to Sky corridor.
- Ensure that our provincial transit services are being delivered in a way that is cost-effective for taxpayers, responsive to the concerns of transit riders, and not duplicative of administration by reviewing the private delivery model for provincial transit systems starting with handyDART.

- Work with BC ferries to address administrative costs and ensure affordable, reliable, and sustainable ferry services.
- Identify affordable and efficient opportunities for expansion of SkyTrain, RapidBus, and rail service in the province to meet the transportation and goods movement needs of growing populations.
- Lead work to advance progress on the Broadway extension to UBC, including by working with the federal government, UBC, the City of Vancouver, First Nations, and all relevant government agency stakeholders. Work with the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to advance related government objectives on housing density and identify opportunities to achieve reduced carbon pollution and economic development. Delegate key responsibilities as you are able to the Parliamentary Secretary for Transit to support the extensive coordination and relationship building required by this file.
- Find ways to support taxi and ride hail operators and ensure safe and affordable transportation options for British Columbians.
- Support the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General in ensuring safety and efficiency across our public transportation system through partnerships with TransLink, BC Transit, and local governments to permit the use of technology in relation to enforcement of public transportation safety.

To assist you in meeting the commitments we have made to British Columbians, you are assigned a Parliamentary Secretary for Transit whose focus will be to:

- Work with you and the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to identify and champion transit-oriented development sites with local governments, stakeholders, and the private sector in order to maximize success of this initiative.
- Work with you to advance progress on the Broadway extension to UBC, including by building relationships with the relevant contacts in the federal government, UBC, the City of Vancouver, First Nations and all relevant government agency stakeholders. Work with the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to advance related government objectives on housing density and identify opportunities to achieve reduced carbon pollution and economic development.
- Work with you to identify opportunities to improve transit in underserved areas with greatest need, with a goal of connecting communities.

You will work closely together and ensure your Parliamentary Secretary receives appropriate support to deliver on this work.

As you are aware, we have established an accord with the BC Green Caucus that supports our shared commitment to ensuring stable governance focused on delivering progress and tangible outcomes for British Columbians. The commitments in that accord complement the direction in these mandate letters.

As a Cabinet, we will uphold the highest standards of ethics, collaboration, and good conduct in service of the public, and as a Minister of the Crown, you are expected to review, understand, and act according to the *Members' Conflict of Interest Act*. You will establish a collaborative working relationship with your Deputy Minister and the public servants under their direction, who provide the professional, non-partisan advice that is fundamental to delivering on our government's priorities. Your Minister's Office must meet the highest standards for integrity and provide a respectful, rewarding environment for all staff.

The work we have ahead takes place in a profoundly challenging geopolitical environment. Close friends and neighbours to our south are contemplating imposing draconian tariffs on our products that would hurt both Americans and Canadians. Our allies internationally face governmental instability. Hate and racism are on the rise around the world. Artificial intelligence breakthroughs with unclear implications and astonishing potential are announced daily. Global inflation, snarled supply chains, and war are threatening global economic growth and prosperity as well as the transition to a low-carbon economy.

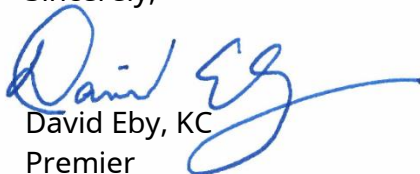
We have an obligation to protect and defend British Columbians, as well as seize opportunities, in these uncertain times.

The good news is that we have everything we need to succeed, and we will succeed. British Columbia's people – our workers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, artists, and innovators – are among the most talented in the world. We are home to world-class educational institutions and public services. Our natural beauty is unmatched, we have internationally envied resources, and we are one of the most diverse places on the planet. Your job is to help us leverage these advantages in perilous times.

Use this mandate letter to guide your work, and do not be afraid to challenge assumptions, or be innovative, bold and aggressive in achieving the goals set out for you and your Ministry by the people of this province.

Thank you for joining me in the work ahead.

Sincerely,

  
David Eby, KC  
Premier

cc: George Anderson, MLA  
Parliamentary Secretary for Transit

## MUNICIPALITIES



October 21, 2025

Lorraine Cunningham, Chair  
TransLink Board of Directors  
Metro Vancouver  
400-287 Nelson's Court  
New Westminster BC V3L 0E7

Reference: 337056

Dear Chair Cunningham:

**Re: Letters of Support for Bringing HandyDart In House**

I am writing to provide the TransLink Board of Directors copies of letters received by my office from Metro Vancouver governments with respect to TransLink's review of HandyDART service delivery in the region.

As the Board will ultimately determine the service delivery model for HandyDART, I wanted to ensure you were in receipt of this correspondence from local governments as part of the review process.

Sincerely,

Mike Farnworth  
Minister

# CITY OF SURREY

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

July 8, 2025

Minister Farnworth  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C.  
V8V 1X4

Transmitted by email: [TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Minister Farnworth:

As Mayor of the City of Surrey, I provide this letter in support of the HandyDART Coalition's mandate to provide in-house transit service to the community members who rely on their service. One of the key goals of Surrey's Age Friendly Action Plan is to foster a supportive, accessible and inclusive environment for all. Seniors and people with a health condition or impairment within our community rely on the compassionate, reliable and safe service that has become synonymous with HandyDART.

HandyDART is recognized as Translink's door-to-door public transit service that uses specially equipped vehicles designed to carry passengers with physical or cognitive disabilities who are unable to use public transit without assistance. In 2021, 156,765 seniors (people aged 55 and older) were living in Surrey, which represents 28% of the total population of 568,320.

Outsourcing the HandyDART operation to a Multinational Company based out of France is a travesty during a time that requires Canadian solidarity. In the last quarter of 2023, 25% of HandyDART service was performed by taxis, which is up from 23% earlier in 2023 and far exceeds TransLink's previous commitment to limit taxi trips to 7% of service.

HandyDART is a crucial infrastructure for some of Surrey's most vulnerable populations and has been unable to provide adequate service levels that meet demand. This failure means that every day, riders are stranded without any safe, reliable means of getting to kidney dialysis appointments, cancer treatments, adult daycare facilities, and other essential services. It also means social isolation for many HandyDART riders.

I appeal to your Ministry to prioritize funding for this crucial public service and support HandyDART being brought in house as a subsidiary of Translink.

Sincerely,



Brenda Locke,  
Mayor, City of Surrey

cc: Joe McCann, President/Business Agent ATU local 1724



BRENDA LOCKE  
MAYOR

MAYOR@SURREY.CA

604.591.4126

October 2, 2025

The Honourable Mike Farnworth  
Minister of Transportation and Transit  
VIA Email: [TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Translink Board of Directors  
VIA Email: [board@translink.ca](mailto:board@translink.ca)

**Re: Call for Advocacy to Bring HandyDART in House**

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At its September 29, 2025 Regular Council meeting, Langley City Council considered correspondence from the President of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 1724 requesting Council's support and advocacy to bring HandyDART in house. Council subsequently passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS HandyDART is a vital door-to-door transit service for seniors and people with disabilities who cannot access conventional public transit without assistance;

AND WHEREAS the current outsourced HandyDART model has resulted in long-standing issues relating to service reliability concerns, safety issues, and increased reliance on subcontracted taxi services;

AND WHEREAS the BC NDP committed to bringing HandyDART in-house during the last provincial election, and multiple municipalities across Metro Vancouver have passed resolutions in support of this transition;

AND WHEREAS in 2023, City Council became a signatory to "Save our HandyDART" Coalition's open letter to the province which included a request that the TransLink Board develop and implement a plan to bring HandyDART in-house as a subsidiary of TransLink;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Langley City Council formally endorse the transition of HandyDART services to a publicly operated, in-house model under TransLink;

AND THAT Council send a letter of support to the TransLink Board of Directors and the Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Transit, urging the Government of BC to act on this commitment and prioritize the transition in THIS upcoming provincial budget;

AND THAT this resolution be shared with the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation and the Save Our HandyDART Coalition

Yours truly,  
**CITY OF LANGLEY**



Paula Kusack  
Deputy Corporate Officer

cc: Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation ([mayorscouncil@translink.ca](mailto:mayorscouncil@translink.ca))  
Save Our HandyDART Coalition ([president@atu1724.com](mailto:president@atu1724.com))



*Office of Mayor Brad West*

**VIA EMAIL**

September 17, 2025

Hon. Mike Farnworth  
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4  
Email: [TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Minister Farnworth,

I am writing to you in support of the HandyDART Coalition's call to bring HandyDART service in-house under TransLink.

HandyDART is a vital service for many of our most vulnerable community members—particularly seniors and residents living with disabilities or health challenges—who depend on accessible, reliable, and compassionate transportation to attend essential medical appointments, adult day programs, and community services. For these riders, HandyDART is not a convenience; it is a lifeline.

Unfortunately, the current contracted model has resulted in increasing reliance on taxis and growing gaps in service reliability. This has left too many people stranded without safe, timely, and dignified transportation. As you know, in the last election the BC NDP committed to bringing HandyDART in-house. Fulfilling this commitment will ensure that service standards are improved, accountability is strengthened, and public dollars are reinvested directly into a public system that puts riders first.

I urge you and your Ministry to prioritize this issue and work with TransLink and local governments to move HandyDART operations in-house. Doing so will demonstrate a clear commitment to equity, accessibility, and inclusion across Metro Vancouver.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BW", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mayor Brad West



EST. 1873

September 10, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Honourable Mike Farnworth  
Minister of Transportation  
PO Box 9055  
Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

**RE: HandyDART**

Dear Minister Farnworth,

On behalf of the Township of Langley, I am writing to express my strong support for the HandyDART Coalition and its call to return this essential service to direct, in-house operation under TransLink. HandyDART is not simply a transportation option—it is a lifeline for many of our residents, particularly seniors and individuals living with health challenges or disabilities.

In the Township of Langley, more than one in five residents are over the age of 55, and many rely on services like HandyDART to remain independent, connected, and able to access medical appointments and community programs.

HandyDART must be strengthened, not weakened. Bringing operations in-house under TransLink would restore accountability and improve service quality, ensuring that vulnerable residents in the Township of Langley—and across the region—can count on safe, reliable, and dignified transportation.

I urge your Ministry to provide the necessary support and funding to protect and improve HandyDART, so that it continues to serve as the vital community service it was intended to be.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Eric Woodward  
Mayor  
Township of Langley  
ewoodward@tol.ca



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**MAYOR KEN SIM**

October 28, 2025

Dear Minister Farnworth,

As Mayor of Vancouver, I am writing to reaffirm our commitment to ensuring accessible and dependable transit for residents with mobility challenges and to request your support for bringing HandyDART service in-house under TransLink. This is essential to ensuring that our transit network meets the needs of all who rely on it.

Vancouver's Age-Friendly Action Plan identifies enhancing mobility and creating barrier-free transportation as essential to supporting older adults, people with impairments, and those who are vulnerable. For many in our city, HandyDART is not simply transit. It is a lifeline that connects people to medical care, community support, social interaction, and daily essentials that keep them healthy, independent, and socially engaged.

A growing proportion of HandyDART trips are now completed by taxis, raising challenges around consistency, accessibility, and the level of support required for passengers who need trained assistance. At the same time, too many riders are being left without reliable transportation to critical appointments and supports. This is not aligned with our shared goal of reducing barriers and preventing social isolation.

Bringing HandyDART in-house as a TransLink-operated service would strengthen oversight, improve accountability to riders, and ensure decisions about service delivery are guided by public interest. It would also advance the priorities of the Age-Friendly Action Plan by reinforcing a transit system that supports dignity, independence, and community participation for seniors and people with disabilities.

I am asking for your leadership in prioritizing the funding and policy direction required to support this transition. Vancouver is ready to work closely with you, TransLink, and regional partners to ensure that HandyDART continues to reflect the values of inclusion, safety, and accessibility that guide our public transit system.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing commitment to equitable mobility across Metro Vancouver.

Sincerely,

A blue ink handwritten signature, likely of Mayor Ken Sim, consisting of stylized loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Mayor Ken Sim  
City of Vancouver



MAYOR KEN SIM

November 17, 2025

The Honourable Mike Farnworth  
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Government of British Columbia

Dear Minister Farnworth,

I am writing to provide clarification regarding my recent letter sent on October 28<sup>th</sup> concerning HandyDART service delivery and specifically the concerns raised by members of Vancouver's taxi industry in response to that correspondence.

After further discussion, I want to clearly acknowledge the essential role that taxis play within the broader HandyDART service model. Taxi partners provide critical scalability and flexibility to the system, ensuring that residents are able to access timely transportation, particularly during peak periods or when dedicated HandyDART vehicles are unavailable. This complementary role significantly strengthens service responsiveness and helps meet the growing mobility needs of seniors and people with disabilities across Metro Vancouver.

I also want to recognize the specialized accreditation, training programs, and professional standards that taxi drivers must meet before being assigned to HandyDART related trips. Many drivers in this program support passengers who require assistance, and they do so with skill, care, and dedication. Their contributions are meaningful, appreciated, and form an important component of the accessible transportation network in our region.

The intent of my earlier letter was not to diminish the professionalism of taxi drivers or the value of their service. Rather, it was to highlight our shared priority: ensuring that older adults and our most vulnerable residents have reliable, accessible, and consistent transit options when they need them. This commitment remains the City of Vancouver's central focus.

As HandyDART demand continues to increase, it is important that the overall system, across all participating service providers, delivers the level of predictability and accessibility required by passengers who depend on it for medical appointments, essential supports, and community participation.

I appreciate the opportunity to clarify this matter and reaffirm the value that taxis bring to the HandyDART program. Our goal remains ensuring that seniors, people with

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disabilities, and vulnerable residents across Vancouver have dependable access to the transportation they rely on.

Thank you for your attention and for your continued leadership on accessible transportation.

Sincerely,



Mayor Ken Sim  
City of Vancouver

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS  
AND ADVOCACY GROUPS



May 13, 2025

**ATTN: Kevin Quinn** ([Kevin.quinn@translink.ca](mailto:Kevin.quinn@translink.ca)) CEO, TransLink

**CC: the Hon. Mike Farnworth** ([TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca))

Minister of Transportation, Government of British Columbia  
and TransLink Board of Directors

I am writing on behalf of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition to add our coalition's collective voice to the growing wave of support for the transition of HandyDART services towards full public control.

HandyDART is recognised by disabled community members as life-saving. Drivers are trained in accessibility needs and offer door-to-door service to riders, which provides crucial mobility and access to community. Tens of thousands of Metro Vancouver residents rely on HandyDART to get to medical appointments, adult daycare centres, and other essential services.

The current privatized, patchwork system places riders and workers in unnecessary precarity. Sub-contracting to under- or untrained taxi services leads to unreliable service provision and an unacceptable level of unpredictability for riders. Shifting HandyDART to an adequately funded public service model would ensure dignity for riders and the team that makes this service possible.

[Local leaders across the Lower Mainland](#) have voiced support for bringing HandyDART in-house for good reason. Under Transdev's operation, HandyDART has become known for myriad safety problems, unreliable service quality, and poor working conditions for drivers. [TransLink's own CEO noted in 2024](#) that the current review process is "a great opportunity to take a deeper look at how we can better deliver for our HandyDART users". Now is the time for that delivery to come through.

Additionally, Minister Farnworth's mandate letter cites HandyDART's current model as a top priority for review. Now is the time to reaffirm the provincial government's commitments to align this crucial piece of our transportation system as a cost-effective, reliable, and functional public good.

I look forward to your continued support of dignified transportation throughout our province. On June 25, I urge you to vote to bring HandyDART under public control.

Kindly,

Sacia Burton  
Digital Media Manager  
BC Poverty Reduction Coalition



## **Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC**

Representing seniors in British Columbia since 1950

[www.coscobc.org](http://www.coscobc.org)

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May 21, 2025

The Hon Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Transit,  
TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Mr. Kevin Quinn, CEO, Translink, [kevin.quinn@translink.ca](mailto:kevin.quinn@translink.ca)

Dear Minister Farnworth and Mr Quinn

### **Re: Bringing HandyDART inhouse to Translink**

I am writing on behalf of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO BC) to add the voice of our 80,000 members from more than 60 affiliated groups located in all parts of BC to support the transition of HandyDART services to full public control.

HandyDART is recognized by seniors living in our communities as an essential component of ageing in place. Drivers are trained in accessibility needs and offer door-to-door service to riders, which provides crucial mobility and access to our community. Tens of thousands of Metro Vancouver residents as well as those in other parts of the province rely on HandyDART to get to medical appointments, adult day programs, and other essential services. Keeping older adults connected to their communities reduces social isolation, improves overall health and thereby reduces demands on our health care system.

The current privatized patchwork system puts riders and workers at risk. Sub-contracting to under- or untrained taxi services leads to unreliable service provision and an unacceptable level of unpredictability for riders. Shifting HandyDART to an adequately funded public service model would ensure dignity for riders and provide more attractive working conditions to recruit and retain the trained drivers who make this service possible.

Local leaders across the Lower Mainland have voiced support for bringing HandyDART in-house for good reason. Under Transdev's operation, HandyDART has become known for myriad safety problems, unreliable service quality, and poor working conditions for drivers. TransLink's own CEO noted in 2024 that the current review process is "a great opportunity to take a deeper look at how we can better deliver for our HandyDART users". Now is the time for that delivery to come through.

President • Leslie Gaudette • 604-630-4201 • [pres@coscobc.org](mailto:pres@coscobc.org)

PO Box 26036, RPO Langley-M230, Langley, BC, V3A 8J2

Additionally, Minister Farnworth's mandate letter cites HandyDART's current model as a top priority for review. Now is the time to reaffirm the provincial government's commitments to align this crucial piece of our transportation system as a cost-effective, reliable, and functional public good.

COSCO BC members look forward to your continued support of reliable, accessible, and dignified transportation for older adults and persons with disabilities in all parts of this province who are unable to use regular transit.

On June 25, I urge you, as Translink Directors, to vote to bring HandyDART under public control.

Yours very sincerely

*Leslie Gaudette*

President, Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC

cc.

TransLink Director Lorraine Cunningham, [lcunningham@ppa.gc.ca](mailto:lcunningham@ppa.gc.ca)  
TransLink Director Jennifer Chan, [Jen.Chan@providencehealth.bc.ca](mailto:Jen.Chan@providencehealth.bc.ca)  
TransLink Director Darlene Hyde, [REDACTED]  
TransLink Director Gordon Harris, [harris@harrisconsults.ca](mailto:harris@harrisconsults.ca)  
TransLink Director Stephen Howard, [board@translink.ca](mailto:board@translink.ca)  
TransLink Director Tracy Redies, [tredies@scienceworld.ca](mailto:tredies@scienceworld.ca)  
Translink Director Andrea Reimer, [andrea.reimer@citizenandrea.ca](mailto:andrea.reimer@citizenandrea.ca)  
TransLink Director Harpinder Sandhu, [board@translink.ca](mailto:board@translink.ca)  
TransLink Director Allan Seckel, [REDACTED]  
TransLink Director Mayor Brad West, [westb@portcoquitlam.ca](mailto:westb@portcoquitlam.ca)  
TransLink Director Mayor Malcolm Brodie, [mayorandcouncillors@richmond.ca](mailto:mayorandcouncillors@richmond.ca)



**June 4th, 2025**

**The Honourable Mike Farnworth, M.L.A.,**  
Minister of Transportation and Transit  
Province of British Columbia  
**Via Email:** [TRAN.Webmaster@gov.bc.ca](mailto:TRAN.Webmaster@gov.bc.ca)

**Mr. Kevin Quinn, CEO**  
TransLink  
**Via email:** [info@translink.ca](mailto:info@translink.ca)

**TransLink Board of Directors**  
TransLink Head Office  
400–287 Nelson's Court  
New Westminster, BC V3L 0E7  
**Via Email:** [board@translink.ca](mailto:board@translink.ca)

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**Dear Minister Farnworth, Mr. Quinn, and Members of the TransLink Board,**

The Centre for Family Equity is writing to express our strong support for transitioning HandyDART to a fully public, in-house delivery model at an upcoming vote on the matter. We urge you to seize this critical opportunity to address long-standing issues under the current privatized model and to ensure that HandyDART delivers safe, reliable, and dignified transportation for riders—while also providing stable, family-supporting jobs for workers.

The Centre for Family Equity addresses family poverty in British Columbia through an intersectional lens, with a focus on gender equality, racial equity, and disability justice. Our work is grounded in community-led research, legal reform, and public policy development, and shaped by parent and caregiver members with lived experience of poverty throughout BC including many who are impacted by living with disabilities. As part of our advocacy for equitable and inclusive public systems in BC, we support affordable, accessible, and family-friendly transit systems—especially for children, youth and families disproportionately impacted by systemic barriers including solutions such as Get on Board and Transit for Teens.

Our members who rely on HandyDART services have consistently shared troubling experiences with the current service. Chronic staffing shortages, inconsistent service quality, safety concerns, and labour disputes are not isolated issues—they are symptoms of a contracting model that lacks accountability and prioritizes cost-cutting over care and safety.

Ensuring access to safe, quality, dependable mobility is crucial for those who face transportation barriers to access health care, education, employment, and community life. During this time of

economic uncertainty, bringing HandyDART in-house is a necessary and strategic step that will improve service quality and invest in BC-based, public-sector jobs.

We urge the Province's continued leadership in exploring the insourcing of other outsourced transit services in BC. Privatization of public transit not only harms service users and workers—it drains public resources and undermines our local economy. Publicly funded and operated transit ensures that our transit systems remain a public good, with community accountability, responsiveness, and economic benefits that remain in BC communities.

We urge you to vote in favour of bringing HandyDART in-house and taking this important step toward stabilizing and expanding a service so vital to the health, well-being and thriving of all who use it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Viveca".

Viveca Ellis  
Executive Director,  
Centre for Family Equity

Cell: 604-366-1008  
Email: [viveca@centreforequity.ca](mailto:viveca@centreforequity.ca)



✉ info@best.bc.ca  
🌐 www.best.bc.ca  
📷 @bestmobility  
📍 #312 Main St, Vancouver, BC V6A 2T2

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Jun 11, 2025

**To:**

TransLink Board of Directors  
400 - 287 Nelson's Court  
New Westminster, BC V3L 0E7  
board@translink.ca  
[TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Re: Bring HandyDART in-house under TransLink

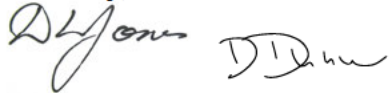
**Dear TransLink Board and Minister Farnworth,**

We are writing as Co-Chairs of the Seniors Transportation Advocacy Committee (STAC). STAC is hosted by Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST) and United Way BC Healthy Aging as part of their joint *Seniors on the Move* systems-change project. STAC's focus is on raising awareness about the unique barriers seniors face in accessing transportation. Recognizing that such barriers are also experienced by others in the community, STAC collaborates with various groups to identify and support the implementation of effective solutions. Through our collective efforts, STAC aims to empower seniors and individuals with disabilities to ensure their voices are heard, ultimately fostering a more inclusive transportation system that enhances quality of life for all British Columbians.

We are encouraged by the ongoing discussion about the future of HandyDART. This service is vital for improving mobility for individuals with transportation difficulties—including many seniors, whose numbers continue to grow. Importantly, people with disabilities also rely heavily on HandyDART, and many have been deeply affected by ongoing issues with the service. Inconsistencies, abrupt changes without notice, and differences in how HandyDART operates from city to city have created confusion and made trip planning needlessly difficult. These disruptions negatively impact the independence, well-being, and ability of users to participate fully in their communities.

On June 25th, we urge you to safeguard the future of this essential service by voting for a fully public delivery model. We strongly encourage you—especially at this pivotal moment in Canadian history—to do the right thing and bring HandyDART back in-house, to Canadian hands, preferably under the control of TransLink.

Sincerely,



Douglas Jones & David Dunne

Co-Chairs - Seniors Transportation Advocacy Committee (STAC)

Cc: BeverleyP@uwbc.ca (United Way Healthy Aging)

Renate.Sitch@translink.ca (Prov WG member)

Chris.Chan@translink.ca (Prov WG member)

Dan.Levitt@gov.bc.ca (Seniors Advocate)

George.Anderson.MLA@leg.bc.ca (Parliamentary Secretary for Transit)

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**About BEST (Better Environmentally Sound Transportation)**

BEST is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable, accessible, and active transportation options across British Columbia. Through our programs, we empower communities to choose healthier, greener ways to move.





**Attn: Translink Board of Directors**

CC: Kevin Quinn, TransLink CEO, Sarah Ross, Director System Planning, Translink and Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation.

Dear Translink Board Members,

RE: HandyDART Service Delivery Model

We are writing today to call on the TransLink Board of Directors to ensure HandyDART riders, workers, and all stakeholders are appropriately consulted prior to the consideration of recommended service delivery models.

Regrettably, we can only be deeply concerned about the lack of transparency seen throughout the current process. To date, no official timeline for the current review process has been made available to the public by TransLink. No mechanism for meaningful public or stakeholder input has been provided. No information about the recommendations that will come forward, or the rationale behind them, has been shared.

Significant concerns about the current contracted-out delivery model have been raised by HandyDART riders. The workers who deliver these services every day have long called for the service to be brought in-house and we know there is strong public support for this call. Seniors' groups, disability rights organisations, the labour movement, mayors, city councils, and community groups have all echoed the call for contracting in.

Contracting out is a failed experiment which has led to over-reliance on taxi trips, increased trip cancellations and refusals, employee dissatisfaction, and challenges in recruitment and retention. Given the current global climate and economic uncertainty, bringing this service in house would support buy Canadian efforts and bring stability to a critical public service.

We note that there remains only one public meeting of the TransLink Board in this calendar year. It is not known whether a decision should be expected at that time. However, it is widely anticipated that it will be forthcoming soon. Yet, to-date, the views and experiences of riders, workers, and stakeholders have not been heard.

**We are therefore calling on the TransLink Board to host an open public hearing on the HandyDART service delivery model prior to any decision being made.**

Failing to hear and consider all sides of the issue, and all relevant experiences, would be an abdication of due diligence on behalf of the Board. It would lend credence to criticism of the lack

of transparency and accountability inherent in TransLink's structure. The TransLink Board's decision on this matter can demonstrate care and respect for the voices of the communities TransLink serves, or it can reinforce the perception that the current structures are in urgent and dire need of reform, replacement, or abolition.

To be sure, we will call upon the provincial government to keep their election promises and intervene in the event of a harmful decision that disserves and disenfranchises our community being taken without consultation and behind closed doors and will hold them publicly accountable if they fail to do so.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Save Our HandyDART Campaign

WRITE-IN CAMPAIGN EMAILS  
RECEIVED THROUGH  
ACTIONNETWORK.ORG

**THIS IS A SAMPLE**

- 749 individual letters received by TransLink Board members between May 12, 2025 and November 25, 2025.
- 816 individual letters received by TransLink CEO, Kevin Quinn between May 12, 2025 and November 25, 2025.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Lorraine Cunningham](mailto:Lorraine.Cunningham); [Jen.Chan@providencehealth.bc.ca](mailto:Jen.Chan@providencehealth.bc.ca); [dhyde@bcrea.bc.ca](mailto:dhyde@bcrea.bc.ca); [harris@harrisconsults.ca](mailto:harris@harrisconsults.ca); [INFO@URBAN-LAND.CA](mailto:INFO@URBAN-LAND.CA); [tredies@scienceworld.ca](mailto:tredies@scienceworld.ca); [andrea.reimer@citizenandrea.ca](mailto:andrea.reimer@citizenandrea.ca); [REDACTED]; [allan.seckel@worksafebc.com](mailto:allan.seckel@worksafebc.com); [allan.seckel@icbc.com](mailto:allan.seckel@icbc.com); [aseckel@bchousing.org](mailto:aseckel@bchousing.org); [allanseckel@bchousing.org](mailto:allanseckel@bchousing.org)  
**Subject:** Bring HandyDART In House!  
**Date:** September 6, 2025 12:58:48 PM

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TransLink Board of Directors,

Dear TransLink Board, CEO Quinn, and Minister Farnworth:

I am writing as a concerned member of the Metro Vancouver HandyDART community to urge you to do the right thing by HandyDART riders and workers, and support bringing the service under fully public control. We know that the TransLink Board will be voting on this matter, and that the BC NDP made a campaign promise to insource this service. Now is the time for both TransLink and the Province to finally do something about the crises at Metro Vancouver HandyDART by bringing it home under TransLink.

Our community of riders and workers have been pushing to insource HandyDART for more than a decade because we are sick of the safety issues, staffing shortages, chaotic mismanagement, labour unrest, and lack of accountability that have plagued its contracted delivery model.

Last year, the BC NDP pledged to support insourcing HandyDART during their campaign, and indeed, this commitment was repeated in Minister Farnworth's mandate letter. We urge you, Minister, to follow through on this commitment. TransLink should not be pouring our taxpayer dollars into foreign companies' profits.

To CEO Quinn and the TransLink Board, we urge you to safeguard the future of this vital service, and vote for a fully public delivery model. We will not abide yet another decade of labour unrest, deteriorating service quality, and safety issues.

Please do the right thing, and support bringing Metro Vancouver HandyDART in-house under Translink.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

TAXI COMPANIES



**Yellow Cab Company Ltd.**

1441 Clark Drive, Vancouver, B.C. V5L 3K9  
Admin. Office: 604-258-4700 Fax: 604-258-4717 Taxi Line: 604-681-1111

November 12, 2025

To  
Translink Board  
Translink Mayors Council  
Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
Mayor Brad West  
Mayor Linda Buchanan  
Mayor Eric Woodward  
Mayor Nicole MacDonald

**Re: Protecting Accessible Transportation and the Survival of BC's Taxi Industry**

Dear Mayors Council and TransLink Board Members,

We write on behalf of Yellow Cab Company Ltd., representing hundreds of drivers who deliver door-door accessible transportation every day to seniors and people living with disabilities across Metro Vancouver.

For decades, both BC Transit and TransLink have relied on contracted operators to deliver HandyDART service, a model that works precisely because it combines public oversight with specialized expertise and private investment. What the public may not realize is that licensed taxis are an essential part of this system, providing flexible, on-demand capacity that prevents trip denials, supports emergencies, and ensures no client is left waiting when they need a ride most. TransLink itself has clearly explained how taxis are integrated into the system.

Despite this, the Amalgamated Transit Union is lobbying to bring HandyDART operations fully "in-house," claiming contracted and taxi-delivered trips compromise safety and service quality. These claims are not supported by current evidence or operational experience.

**The Facts Tell a Different Story**

- Independent User Survey (2024): TransLink commissioned an independent survey of 500 HandyDART users, 77 per cent of whom had taken trips by taxi. Overall satisfaction with HandyDART was equivalent to publicly delivered SeaBus service, while taxi-specific trips scored on par with conventional transit, with year-over-year improvements in on-time performance and driver assistance.

- **Professional Training and Oversight:** All taxi drivers performing HandyDART trips receive standardized accessibility and passenger-assistance training developed with the Justice Institute of BC and the Vancouver Taxi Association. The training includes disability support, mobility-device handling, and securement. Non-compliance results in immediate removal from HandyDART dispatch lists. Services are monitored through formal contracts, reporting, and audits.

- **Accessibility Investment:** The provincial levy on ride-hailing trips funds expansion of wheelchair-accessible taxis through the Passenger Transportation Accessibility Program (PTAP). Taxi companies have invested heavily in vehicles with ramps, securement systems, and low floors. Those assets must be used — not idled — to serve the very passengers they were designed to help.

- **Efficiency and Value:** The current mixed-fleet model is customer-focused, efficient, and accountable, allowing every dollar to go toward more trips and better service rather than bureaucracy or overhead.

In 2025, HandyDART has fulfilled 99.8% of all ride requests, an achievement made possible through its strategic partnership with taxi providers, which expands service capacity for the most vulnerable, in particular, at peak travel times (when the dedicated HandyDART service is at full capacity). Without this partnership, hundreds of thousands of customer trip requests for essential transportation would go un-answered each year.

Currently, 24% of HandyDART trips are provided by taxis, significantly lower than in comparable systems such as Calgary (55%) and Toronto (28%).

### **What's at Stake if HandyDART Is Brought In-House**

- Reduce total trip capacity and increase wait times for vulnerable clients.
- Erode service coverage in outlying communities and outside peak hours.
- Waste public investment in accessible vehicles and training programs.
- Raise costs for taxpayers without improving performance.
- Endanger the survival of local taxi companies, many family-owned and deeply rooted in our communities.

### **Our Request**

1. Affirm support for the current HandyDART mixed-fleet model,

2. Reaffirm the Province's commitment to PTAP and to using the accessible fleet capacity taxi operators have built.

3. Convene a joint industry roundtable with TransLink, BC Transit, taxi companies, HandyDART and accessibility advocates to ensure the system remains flexible, safe, and customer-centred.

We are proud of the role our drivers play in keeping British Columbians moving safely and with dignity. We ask for your leadership in protecting this model and the communities it serves from unnecessary disruption.

Thank you for your attention and your continued support of inclusive transportation in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Bauer  
General Manager, Yellow Cab Company Ltd.



CC:

Premier David Eby

Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Brenda Bailey, Minister of Finance

# BLACK TOP & CHECKER CABS



101 – 1355 Vernon Drive Vancouver, BC V6A 3V4

Tel: (604) 681-3201#3 | [www.btccabs.ca](http://www.btccabs.ca)

November 13, 2025

To

TransLink Board  
TransLink Mayors' Council  
Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
Mayor Brad West  
Mayor Linda Buchanan  
Mayor Eric Woodward  
Mayor Nicole MacDonald

## **Re: Protecting Accessible Transportation and the Survival of BC's Taxi Industry**

Dear Mayors' Council and TransLink Board Members,

I write on behalf of Black Top & Checker Cabs, representing hundreds of professional drivers who deliver door-to-door accessible transportation every day to seniors and people living with disabilities across Metro Vancouver.

For decades, both BC Transit and TransLink have relied on contracted operators to deliver HandyDART service — a model that works precisely because it combines public oversight with specialized expertise and private investment. What the public may not realize is that licensed taxis are an essential part of this system, providing flexible, on-demand capacity that prevents trip denials, supports urgent travel needs, and ensures no client is left waiting when they need transportation most. Please also TransLink itself has repeatedly confirmed how taxis are integrated into and essential to the HandyDART system.

Despite this, recent lobbying efforts by the Amalgamated Transit Union call for HandyDART operations to be brought fully "in-house," based on claims that contracted and taxi-delivered trips compromise safety and service quality. These claims are not supported by evidence or real operational outcomes.

## The Facts Tell a Very Different Story

- **Independent User Survey (2024):** An independent TransLink-commissioned survey of 500 HandyDART users revealed that 77% had taken taxi-delivered HandyDART trips. Overall satisfaction matched public SeaBus ratings, and taxi-specific trips performed on par with conventional transit — with year-over-year improvements in reliability, assistance, and customer service.
- **Professional Training & Oversight:** All taxi drivers delivering HandyDART trips must complete standardized accessibility and passenger-assistance training developed with the Justice Institute of BC and the Vancouver Taxi Association. Non-compliance results in immediate removal from HandyDART dispatch.
- **Accessibility Investment:** Through the Passenger Transportation Accessibility Program (PTAP), taxi operators have invested heavily in accessible vehicles equipped with ramps, securement systems, and low-floor designs.
- **Efficiency and Value:** The current mixed-fleet model is cost-effective and customer-focused — ensuring public funds go toward more trips and better service rather than increased administration and overhead.

In 2025, HandyDART fulfilled 99.8% of all ride requests, a performance made possible only because of taxi providers who expand system capacity — especially during peak periods when dedicated HandyDART resources are fully utilized.

Currently, taxis provide 24% of HandyDART trips, significantly lower than other Canadian regions such as Calgary (55%) and Toronto (28%).

### What's at Stake if HandyDART Is Brought Fully In-House

- Reduced capacity and increased wait times for vulnerable clients.
- Loss of flexible service in outlying communities and off-peak hours.
- Wasting millions in accessible vehicle investments made by the taxi sector.
- Higher costs to taxpayers without measurable performance improvement.
- Serious and possibly irreversible harm to local taxi companies — many of which are family-owned, longstanding, and essential to community mobility.

**It is important to clarify that accessible service for HandyDART clients is not provided solely by wheelchair-accessible vehicles. A significant portion of HandyDART trips are fulfilled using conventional taxis, which safely and reliably serve clients with diverse mobility needs who do not require a ramp-equipped vehicle.**

## Our Request

1. Affirm your support for the current HandyDART mixed-fleet model.
2. Reaffirm the Province's commitment to PTAP and ensure accessible taxi fleets are fully utilized.
3. Establish a joint industry roundtable with TransLink, BC Transit, taxi companies, HandyDART contractors, and accessibility advocates.

We are proud of the essential role our drivers play in supporting seniors, people with disabilities, and all who depend on accessible transportation.

Thank you for your attention and ongoing commitment to inclusive transportation across British Columbia.

Sincerely,

*Jasbir Singh Nijjar*

Jasbir Singh Nijjar  
President  
Black Top & Checker Cabs

CC:

Premier David Eby

Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Brenda Bailey, Minister of Finance

### **Metro Vancouver BC NDP MLAs**

Anne Kang (Burnaby Centre); [anne.kang.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:anne.kang.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Rohini Arora (Burnaby East) [rohini.arora.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:rohini.arora.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Raj Chouhan (Burnaby–New Westminster); [raj.chouhan.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:raj.chouhan.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Janet Routledge (Burnaby North); [janet.routledge.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:janet.routledge.mla@leg.bc.ca)

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Jodie Wickens (Coquitlam–Burke Mountain); [Jodie.Wickens.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Jodie.Wickens.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Jennifer Blatherwick (Coquitlam–Maillardville); [Jennifer.Blatherwick.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Jennifer.Blatherwick.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Rick Glumac (Port Moody–Burquitlam); [Rick.Glumac.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Rick.Glumac.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Jennifer Whiteside (New Westminster–Coquitlam); [Jennifer.Whiteside@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Jennifer.Whiteside@leg.bc.ca)

Bowinn Ma (North Vancouver–Lonsdale); [Bowinn.Ma@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Bowinn.Ma@leg.bc.ca)

Susie Chant (North Vancouver–Seymour); [Susie.Chant.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Susie.Chant.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Ravi Kahlon (Delta North); [Ravi.Kahlon.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Ravi.Kahlon.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Kelly Greene (Richmond–Steveston); [Kelly.Greene.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Kelly.Greene.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Lisa Beare (Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows); [Lisa.Beare.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Lisa.Beare.mla@leg.bc.ca)

George Chow (Vancouver–Fraserview); [George.Chow.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:George.Chow.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Niki Sharma (Vancouver–Hastings); [Niki.Sharma.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Niki.Sharma.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Mable Elmore (Vancouver–Kensington); [Mable.Elmore.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Mable.Elmore.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Sunita Dhir (Vancouver–Langara); [Sunita.Dhir.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Sunita.Dhir.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Christine Boyle (Vancouver–Little Mountain); [Christine.Boyle.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Christine.Boyle.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Adrian Dix (Vancouver–Renfrew); [Adrian.Dix.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Adrian.Dix.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Brenda Bailey (Vancouver–South Granville); [Brenda.Bailey.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Brenda.Bailey.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Joan Phillip (Vancouver–Strathcona); [Joan.Phillip.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Joan.Phillip.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Spencer Chandra Herbert (Vancouver–West End); [s.chandraherbert.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:s.chandraherbert.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Terry Yung (Vancouver–Yaletown); [Terry.Yung.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Terry.Yung.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Amna Shah (Surrey City Centre); [Amna.Shah.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Amna.Shah.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Jagrup Brar (Surrey–Fleetwood); [Jagrup.Brar.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Jagrup.Brar.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Garry Begg (Surrey–Guildford); [Garry.Begg.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Garry.Begg.mla@leg.bc.ca)

Jessie Sunner (Surrey–Netwon); [Jessie.Sunner.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Jessie.Sunner.mla@leg.bc.ca)



## SURREY METRO TAXI

a division of Guildford Cab (1993) Ltd.

Suite 101-8299-129 Street, Surrey, B.C Canada V3W 0A6  
Office: 604-585-8888 | Fax: 604-585-8870

**Date: November 21, 2025**

**To:**

TransLink Board  
TransLink Mayors' Council  
Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
Mayor Brad West  
Mayor Linda Buchanan  
Mayor Eric Woodward  
Mayor Nicole MacDonald

**Re: Protecting Accessible Transportation & Safeguarding the Future of BC's Taxi Industry**

Dear Mayors' Council and TransLink Board Members,

On behalf of Surrey Metro Taxi – A Division of Guildford Cab (1993) Ltd., we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposal to bring HandyDART operations fully in-house and to request that you reconsider and revoke support for this transition.

Surrey Metro Taxi represents hundreds of drivers and operators who provide thousands of essential rides each month across Metro Vancouver, including a significant volume of door-to-door accessible transportation for seniors, people with disabilities, and vulnerable residents.

For decades, the Handy DART system has succeeded because it is built on a mixed-fleet model partnership between contracted operators and licensed taxi companies. This model ensures:

- Flexibility in peak times
- Timely service in emergencies
- Full coverage in underserved areas
- Cost efficiency
- Quick scaling during unexpected demand

Eliminating this partnership would undermine a model that has served British Columbians well for more than 30 years.

Facts Supporting the Current Mixed-Fleet Model

1. Customer Satisfaction & Safety : TransLink's 2024 Independent User Survey of 500 HandyDART riders shows:

- 77% of users have taken taxi-provided HandyDART trips
- Service satisfaction equals SeaBus, one of the highest in the transit system

Taxi-provided trips scored on par with conventional transit. This data does not support claims that taxi trips reduce service quality or safety.



## SURREY METRO TAXI

a division of Guildford Cab (1993) Ltd.

Suite 101-8299-129 Street, Surrey, B.C Canada V3W 0A6  
Office: 604-585-8888 | Fax: 604-585-8870

At Surrey Metro Taxi, all HandyDART-authorized drivers complete:

- Standardized accessibility training (developed with the Justice Institute of BC & Vancouver Taxi Association)
- Securement and mobility-assistance instruction
- Mandatory refresher courses
- On-road audits and continuous performance monitoring

Drivers who do not meet standards are removed from HandyDART dispatch immediately.

### 2. Significant Accessible Investment

Through the Passenger Transportation Accessibility Program (PTAP), Surrey Metro Taxi has invested heavily in:

- Wheelchair-accessible vans
- Ramps and lifts
- Securement systems
- Special safety features
- Mandatory high-visibility equipment
- Driver certification programs

These investments were made because the province committed to a mixed-fleet model.

Taking HandyDART fully in-house would waste taxpayer-funded accessible resources already purchased and operational.

### 3. Capacity the System Cannot Replace

In 2025, HandyDART fulfilled 99.8% of all ride requests.

This outstanding performance is possible only because taxis provide essential overflow capacity.

Currently, taxis deliver 24% of HandyDART trips — a far lower percentage than comparable cities:

- Calgary: 55%
- Toronto: 28%
- Ottawa: 40%

Without taxis, thousands of unserved trips would occur every month.

### Impact of Bringing HandyDART In-House

If this proposal proceeds, it will:

- Reduce service capacity significantly
- Increase wait times for vulnerable passengers
- Increase operational costs without service improvement
- Strain TransLink's already serious financial deficit
- Leave riders stranded during peak demand
- Eliminate hundreds of jobs in the taxi industry
- Waste millions in accessible vehicle investments
- Threaten the survival of community-rooted, family-run companies like Surrey Metro Taxi



## SURREY METRO TAXI

a division of Guildford Cab (1993) Ltd.

Suite 101-8299-129 Street, Surrey, B.C Canada V3W 0A6  
Office: 604-585-8888 | Fax: 604-585-8870

For Surrey Metro Taxi, These are trained, experienced drivers who have already proven they can deliver quality service.

Our Requests

Surrey Metro Taxi respectfully asks you:

1. Reaffirm your support for the mixed-fleet HandyDART model.

It works, it is safe, and it is cost-efficient.

2. Maintain the Province's commitment to PTAP.

This ensures accessible vehicles continue to serve those they were purchased for.

3. Convene an industry roundtable.

Include TransLink, BC Transit, taxi companies, HandyDART operators, and accessibility advocates to ensure balanced, informed decision-making.

Surrey Metro Taxi is proud of the vital role we play in helping British Columbians—especially seniors and people living with disabilities—travel safely and with dignity. We urge you to protect this model rather than disrupt it. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further or provide additional detailed information.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to inclusive, accessible transportation across British Columbia.

Sincerely,

**Amandeep Gill**

**Director**

**Surrey Metro Taxi – A Division of Guildford Cab (1993) Ltd.**

CC:

Premier David Eby

Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Brenda Bailey, Minister of Finance



# NEWTON WHALLEY HI-WAY TAXI LTD.

#107 – 13119 – 84<sup>th</sup> Ave, Surrey, B.C. V3W 1B3

Ph: 604-581-1111 | Fax: 604-597-8002

[www.whalleytaxi.com](http://www.whalleytaxi.com)

Nov 21, 2025

To:

TransLink Board

TransLink Mayors' Council

Mayor Malcolm Brodie

Mayor Brad West

Mayor Linda Buchanan

Mayor Eric Woodward

Mayor Nicole MacDonald

Re: Request to Maintain the Mixed-Fleet HandyDART Model to Protect Accessible Service and Local Industry

Dear Members of the TransLink Board and Mayors' Council,

I am writing on behalf of Newton Whalley Hi Way Taxi Ltd. to respectfully request that you reconsider your support for transitioning HandyDART service fully in-house ahead of the December 3 vote. This decision carries significant implications for service capacity, public finances, and the long-term sustainability of British Columbia's taxi industry.

For decades, taxis have been a critical component of HandyDART operations, currently completing 24–28% of all trips—a substantial increase from previous years. This growth reflects the dependability, professionalism, and specialized training our drivers provide, ensuring seniors and people with disabilities receive timely, dignified, and accessible transportation.

TransLink's 2024 independent survey of HandyDART users confirms that service quality remains high across the system, including taxi-delivered trips. Customer satisfaction, on-time performance, and driver assistance all scored strong results. Taxi drivers performing HandyDART trips undergo standardized accessibility and passenger-assistance training, developed in partnership with the Justice Institute of BC, and are subject to rigorous oversight, performance monitoring, and contractual requirements.

The current mixed-fleet model is not only effective—it is cost-efficient. Taxi-delivered HandyDART trips operate at a significantly lower cost than in-house services, helping TransLink manage budget pressures without compromising service levels. This model is also essential for meeting peak demand and maintaining the system's outstanding 99.8% trip fulfillment rate.

Transitioning HandyDART operations fully in-house would result in:

- Reduced overall trip capacity and longer wait times for vulnerable riders
- Higher operational costs for taxpayers
- Underutilization of provincially funded accessible taxi vehicles
- Severe economic impacts on local taxi companies and the families they support



# NEWTON WHALLEY HI-WAY TAXI LTD.

#107 – 13119 – 84<sup>th</sup> Ave, Surrey, B.C. V3W 1B3

Ph: 604-581-1111 | Fax: 604-597-8002

[www.whalleytaxi.com](http://www.whalleytaxi.com)

In contrast, maintaining the mixed-fleet model preserves service flexibility, protects public investment in accessibility, and sustains a workforce that has served the region reliably for decades.

We respectfully request the following:

1. Maintain the existing mixed-fleet HandyDART model that integrates taxi providers.
2. Reaffirm provincial and regional support for the Passenger Transportation Accessibility Program and the accessible taxi fleet it enables.
3. Establish a collaborative roundtable with TransLink, BC Transit, taxi operators, HandyDART providers, and accessibility advocates to strengthen future planning.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to ensuring accessible, equitable transportation for the people of British Columbia. We would welcome the opportunity to provide further information or to participate in future discussions on this matter.

Sincerely,

*Gurminder Singh*

General Manager

Newton Whalley Hi Way Taxi Ltd.

[manager@whalleytaxi.ca](mailto:manager@whalleytaxi.ca)

236 - 885 - 8555

# **DELTA SUNSHINE TAXI (1972) LTD.**

## **TSAWWASSEN TAXI LTD.**

**13425 71A Avenue, Surrey BC. V3W 2L2**

**Phone: 604 594 1718 Fax: 604 594 1785**

**Email: [manager@deltataxi.com](mailto:manager@deltataxi.com)**

**November 24, 2025**

**To:**

TransLink Board  
TransLink Mayors' Council  
Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
Mayor Brad West  
Mayor Linda Buchanan  
Mayor Eric Woodward  
Mayor Nicole MacDonald

**Re: Protecting Accessible Transportation and the Survival of BC's Taxi Industry**

Dear Mayors' Council and TransLink Board Members,

We write on behalf of Delta Sunshine Taxi (1972) Ltd., representing hundreds of drivers who provide door-to-door accessible transportation every day to seniors and people living with disabilities across Metro Vancouver.

For decades, both BC Transit and TransLink have relied on contracted operators to deliver HandyDART service—a model that works precisely because it combines public oversight with specialized expertise and private investment. What the public may not realize is that licensed taxis are an essential part of this system, providing flexible, on-demand capacity that prevents trip denials, supports emergencies, and ensures no client is left waiting when they need a ride most. TransLink itself has explained how taxis are integrated into the HandyDART system.

Despite this, the Amalgamated Transit Union is lobbying to bring HandyDART operations fully “in-house,” claiming that contracted and taxi-delivered trips compromise safety and service quality. These claims are not supported by current evidence or operational experience.

**The Facts Tell a Different Story**

- **Independent User Survey (2024):** TransLink commissioned an independent survey of 500 HandyDART users, 77% of whom had taken trips by taxi. Overall satisfaction with HandyDART was equivalent to publicly delivered SeaBus service, while taxi-specific trips scored on par with conventional transit, with year-over-year improvements in on-time performance and driver assistance.

# **DELTA SUNSHINE TAXI (1972) LTD.**

## **TSAWWASSEN TAXI LTD.**

**13425 71A Avenue, Surrey BC. V3W 2L2**

**Phone: 604 594 1718 Fax: 604 594 1785**

**Email: [manager@deltataxi.com](mailto:manager@deltataxi.com)**

- **Professional Training and Oversight:** All taxi drivers performing HandyDART trips receive standardized accessibility and passenger-assistance training developed with the Justice Institute of BC and the Vancouver Taxi Association. The training includes disability support, mobility-device handling, and securement. Non-compliance results in immediate removal from HandyDART dispatch lists. Services are monitored through formal contracts, reporting, and audits.
- **Accessibility Investment:** The provincial levy on ride-hailing trips funds expansion of wheelchair-accessible taxis through the Passenger Transportation Accessibility Program (PTAP). Taxi companies have invested heavily in vehicles with ramps, securement systems, and low floors. These assets must be utilized—not idled—to serve the very passengers they were designed to help.
- **Efficiency and Value:** The current mixed-fleet model is customer-focused, efficient, and accountable, allowing every dollar to go toward more trips and better service rather than bureaucracy or overhead.

In 2025, HandyDART has fulfilled 99.8% of all ride requests, an achievement made possible through its strategic partnership with taxi providers, which expands service capacity for the most vulnerable—particularly at peak travel times, when the dedicated HandyDART fleet is at full capacity. Without this partnership, hundreds of thousands of essential trip requests would go unanswered each year. Currently, 24% of HandyDART trips are provided by taxis, significantly lower than in comparable systems such as Calgary (55%) and Toronto (28%).

### **What's at Stake if HandyDART Is Brought In-House**

- Reduced total trip capacity and increased wait times for vulnerable clients
- Erosion of service coverage in outlying communities and outside peak hours
- Wasted public investment in accessible vehicles and training programs
- Increased costs for taxpayers without improved performance
- Threat to the survival of local taxi companies, many family-owned and deeply rooted in our communities

### **Our Request**

1. Affirm support for the current HandyDART mixed-fleet model.
2. Reaffirm the Province's commitment to PTAP and to using the accessible fleet capacity taxi operators have built.

# **DELTA SUNSHINE TAXI (1972) LTD.**

## **TSAWWASSEN TAXI LTD.**

**13425 71A Avenue, Surrey BC. V3W 2L2**

**Phone: 604 594 1718 Fax: 604 594 1785**

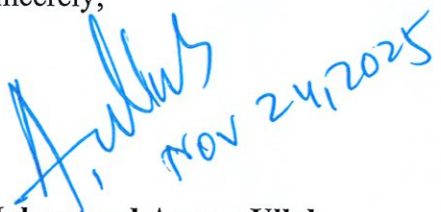
**Email: [manager@deltataxi.com](mailto:manager@deltataxi.com)**

3. Convene a joint industry roundtable with TransLink, BC Transit, taxi companies, HandyDART, and accessibility advocates to ensure the system remains flexible, safe, and customer-centered.

We are proud of the role our drivers play in keeping British Columbians moving safely and with dignity. We ask for your leadership in protecting this model and the communities it serves from unnecessary disruption.

Thank you for your attention and your continued support of inclusive transportation in British Columbia.

Sincerely,



**Mohammed Anwar Ullah**  
General Manager  
GreenCab  
Delta Sunshine Taxi (1972) Ltd.  
Tsawwassen Taxi Ltd.  
t. 604-594-1718  
c. 604-365-6473

**CC:**

Premier David Eby  
Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure  
Brenda Bailey, Minister of Finance

November 13, 2025

To  
Translink Board  
Translink Mayors Council  
Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
Mayor Brad West  
Mayor Linda Buchanan  
Mayor Eric Woodward  
Mayor Nicole MacDonald

**Re: Protecting Accessible Transportation and the Survival of BC's Taxi Industry**

Dear Mayors Council and TransLink Board Members,

We write on behalf of Surdell Kennedy Taxi Ltd, representing hundreds of drivers who deliver door-door accessible transportation every day to seniors and people living with disabilities across Metro Vancouver.

For decades, both BC Transit and TransLink have relied on contracted operators to deliver HandyDART service, a model that works precisely because it combines public oversight with specialized expertise and private investment. What the public may not realize is that licensed taxis are an essential part of this system, providing flexible, on-demand capacity that prevents trip denials, supports emergencies, and ensures no client is left waiting when they need a ride most. TransLink itself has clearly explained how taxis are integrated into the system.

Despite this, the Amalgamated Transit Union is lobbying to bring HandyDART operations fully "in-house," claiming contracted and taxi-delivered trips compromise safety and service quality. These claims are not supported by current evidence or operational experience.

**The Facts Tell a Different Story**

- Independent User Survey (2024): TransLink commissioned an independent survey of 500 HandyDART users, 77 per cent of whom had taken trips by taxi. Overall satisfaction with HandyDART was equivalent to publicly delivered SeaBus service, while taxi-specific trips scored on par with conventional transit, with year-over-year improvements in on-time performance and driver assistance.
- Professional Training and Oversight: All taxi drivers performing HandyDART trips receive standardized accessibility and passenger-assistance training developed with the Justice Institute of BC and the Vancouver Taxi Association. The training includes disability support, mobility-device handling, and securement. Non-compliance results in immediate removal

from HandyDART dispatch lists. Services are monitored through formal contracts, reporting, and audits.

- **Accessibility Investment:** The provincial levy on ride-hailing trips funds expansion of wheelchair-accessible taxis through the Passenger Transportation Accessibility Program (PTAP). Taxi companies have invested heavily in vehicles with ramps, securement systems, and low floors. Those assets must be used — not idled — to serve the very passengers they were designed to help.
- **Efficiency and Value:** The current mixed-fleet model is customer-focused, efficient, and accountable, allowing every dollar to go toward more trips and better service rather than bureaucracy or overhead.

In 2025, HandyDART has fulfilled 99.8% of all ride requests, an achievement made possible through its strategic partnership with taxi providers, which expands service capacity for the most vulnerable, in particular, at peak travel times (when the dedicated HandyDART service is at full capacity). Without this partnership, hundreds of thousands of customer trip requests for essential transportation would go un-answered each year.

Currently, 24% of HandyDART trips are provided by taxis, significantly lower than in comparable systems such as Calgary (55%) and Toronto (28%).

### **What's at Stake if HandyDART Is Brought In-House**

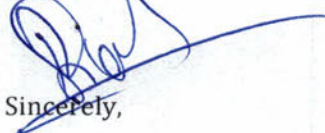
- Reduce total trip capacity and increase wait times for vulnerable clients.
- Erode service coverage in outlying communities and outside peak hours.
- Waste public investment in accessible vehicles and training programs.
- Raise costs for taxpayers without improving performance.
- Endanger the survival of local taxi companies, many family-owned and deeply rooted in our communities.

### **Our Request**

1. Affirm support for the current HandyDART mixed-fleet model,
2. Reaffirm the Province's commitment to PTAP and to using the accessible fleet capacity taxi operators have built.
3. Convene a joint industry roundtable with TransLink, BC Transit, taxi companies, HandyDART and accessibility advocates to ensure the system remains flexible, safe, and customer-centred.

We are proud of the role our drivers play in keeping British Columbians moving safely and with dignity. We ask for your leadership in protecting this model and the communities it serves from unnecessary disruption.

Thank you for your attention and your continued support of inclusive transportation in British Columbia.



Sincerely,

  
General Manager,

CC:

Premier David Eby

Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Brenda Bailey, Minister of Finance