

# Measuring Up Nanaimo

Accessibility and inclusion issues facing persons living with disability

## Introduction

The mandate of this study, launched by the Measuring Up Nanaimo Task Force was twofold: to study transportation issues encountered by people with disabilities and to examine how those issues affect their employment situation. Secondly, to study the current attitudes in the business community towards employing and serving people with disabilities.

The main objectives were to:

- Define the most important issues
- Create public awareness of these issues
- Make short term and long term recommendations based on the results of the study

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This study was conducted by Anne Middleton and supported by the Measuring Up Task Force for a period of 5 months.

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## Transportation Survey Executive Summary

This Task Force recommends support for the RDN 5 year plan to expand both the public and custom transit services (see Appendix #5). More fleet vehicles and more Handy Dart vans on our roads, seven days a week are indicated. We support initiatives to allocate certain service vans to those with daily commitments such as work, volunteering, or frequent medical regimes. We would encourage a subsidized program for low income Handy Dart clients and support the continuation and expansion of the Taxi Saver program.

The City of Nanaimo Works Department should continue their efforts to upgrade all bus stops to accommodate “kneeling buses”, to correct curbing that prohibits wheelchair use, to clear sidewalks and pathways, and to install benches and shelters at all bus stops. The task force supports the allocation of “audible chirps” and Braille schedule wrappers for all main intersections.

It is the conclusion of the Task Force that education programs to build awareness of the value of hiring people with a disability should be initiated. Employers need to be alerted to this untapped resource in the community.

Business owners and managers need to open discussions with service agencies to develop strategies to include people with a disability as employees and as clients through simple changes to their business environments.

Finally, the continuation of the website [www.accessnanaimo.ca](http://www.accessnanaimo.ca) is strongly advised as a forum of communication between people with a disability and local government, the business community, and each other. The public response to this site has been overwhelming and reflects the needs of people with a disability to feel they have a voice and that someone is listening.

### Methodology of Study and Media Campaign

The purpose of the study was to examine and learn how our community presents barriers to the daily lives of persons living with a disability. The research process consisted of two separate surveys: one a transportation survey (**Appendix 1**) and one a business survey (**Appendix 2**).

The **Transportation Accessibility Survey** was conducted in person at various bus stops and during ride-alongs on the regular bus system and the Handy Dart vans, and was answered by individuals attending programs presented by various service agencies, as well as on-line at [www.accessnanaimo.ca](http://www.accessnanaimo.ca) by people with a disability and the general public. The target group for this survey was persons with a disability who have short or long term employment goals.

**The Employers/Business Survey: Accessibility** was distributed through the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce. Over 800 business surveys were mailed. Business owners were asked to fill out a hard copy of the survey, or to go on-line.

A separate **Opinion poll (Appendix 3)** was sent to local service agencies whose clients are persons with a disability for their specific input: CNIB, Vancouver Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Association, Vancouver Island Health Authority, MS Society- Central Chapter, Triumph Vocational Services-Nanaimo, Clay Tree Society for People With Developmental Disabilities, and the British Columbia Paraplegic Society.

Radio interviews were aired on local radio stations discussing the survey, and public service ads were shown on A Channel approximately 30 times. In addition, two ads were created for newspapers, asking, “How do you get to medical appointments?” and “Is your business accessible?” In both cases people were directed to the website to fill out the questionnaire. The Nanaimo Bulletin and The Daily News ran front-page stories, covering the survey and directing people to the website. The website, [www.accessnanaimo.ca](http://www.accessnanaimo.ca) became a forum for questions and suggestions from persons with a disability and information resource links were added, volunteer groups were formed etc. This site has developed into a valuable central link for persons with a disability in the community.

Task force members made presentations to Nanaimo City Council and others attended Regional District of Nanaimo transportation meetings and forums between March and June/ 08 to investigate current and proposed policies. Some of the other public and private resources that were consulted include: City of Nanaimo, Engineering and Roads, B.C. Ferries, Nanaimo Airport, Grey Hound Bus Service, Wheels for Wellness, Taxi companies and Care One Medi Transit. Please see **Appendix 4** for a comprehensive discussion of these resources’ present and future transportation services.

In all **148 Transportation Surveys** and **95 Employer and Business Surveys** were completed. **7 Service Agencies returned Opinion Polls.**

## **Discussion of Survey Results**

### **Transportation Survey**

Because this survey included those riding the regular bus system, those riding the Handy Dart system, and the general public at large, total percentage figures show the cross section between users of the transportation system and those who do not. For instance 49% of all respondents answered that they use public transportation, 50% said they did not. However over 60% of respondents used some type of mobility aid. The comments included in Appendix 1B, reveal some

recurring themes. One of the frequent comments for all respondents was that the bus service was not frequent enough, with connections not synchronized, to be a good substitute for owning their own vehicle. Many people with a disability preferred supplying a car and relying on a driver to get them to appointments, work or other scheduled commitments.

The Handy Dart system was both praised for their caring and patient drivers and criticized for their limitations in availability and hours of operation. Those respondents with a visual impairment voiced a need for: improved lighting, benches, and covered bus shelters at bus stops and Braille schedules and chirp signals at all intersections. Users of wheelchairs requested cleared pathways, and sidewalks, covered shelters, improved curbing, and more frequent and longer hours of operation for the Handy Dart service.

### **Business Survey**

Businesses surveyed displayed a lack of awareness regarding facts surrounding people with a disability. Almost 60% of employers felt they could not employ people with a disability because of: space limitations, required heavy work or other accommodations they might need to make. (See Appendix 2B-Reasons). Some employers gave the reason that employees needed to work all day at a computer, which would suit an employee in a wheelchair, while others felt that the physical demands of the job made it impossible for a person with a disability, but were obviously not thinking of the hearing impaired or other impairments. Most businesses also were uncertain about their accessibility for people with a disability but only 28% were willing to have a physical assessment done of their premises. Possibly they feared an assessment would open the door to legislation requiring them to make expensive renovations. However 66% were interested in being part of a website listing accessible businesses. The comments seemed to reflect an interest in information on how businesses could voluntarily improve their accessibility to the disabled.

### **Opinion Poll Results**

The participation of the various service agencies gave a wealth of information on the specific challenges and needs of their clients. Only a few of the agencies' clients were able to utilize the regular transportation system. The others relied on the Handy Dart service and voiced the same praise and criticism of this system that was voiced by the polled riders and those responding to the survey on-line, i.e. not enough vans, not frequent enough, not enough hours of operation.

## Recommendations

1. Support the recommendation of the RDN expansion plans to add more Handy-Dart vans and allocate some specifically to shuttle clients for scheduled routine work, training or therapy appointments. Support the RDN 5 year plan for expanded hours of operation.
2. Support the RDN expansion of all transit service and hours of operation to provide more frequent service on weekends and longer hours of operation for late shift workers.
3. Propose and support that Nanaimo City Works Dept. create a budget for; upgrading the bus stops still not wheelchair accessible, constructing curb ramps where there are none, improving lighting, and providing benches and shelters where missing. Support and encourage private participation in providing the last two items.
4. Support the new allocations of “audible chirps” and Braille “wrappers” for all main intersections.
5. Support the proposal that Taxi saver coupons become part of the RDN budget. Find funding for subsidy of the Handy Dart coupons to be issued by approved service agencies.
6. Support clearing sidewalks of plantings in the downtown area.
7. Support initiatives to assess business premises for accessibility.
8. Support initiatives to educate business owners on the values of hiring people with a disability. Invite service agencies to participate in this.
9. Continue the funding of the website [www.accessnanaimo.ca](http://www.accessnanaimo.ca) to provide a central on-line information resource for persons with a disability.

## Appendix 1 Data from Transportation Accessibility Survey

Question 1. Age

Under 19 0 19-30 6.7% 31-49 26.4% 50-65 27.7% over 65 39%

Question 2. Do you make use of:

Wheelchair 13.5% Scooter 8% Walker 15% Mobility Aid 25.6%  
Visually Imp 3% Hearing Imp .6% No Answer 33.7%

Question 3. Do you work in our community? No 58% Yes 27%

Part-time 1% Full time 6% Volunteer 7%

Question 4. Have you ever been unable to work due to transportation difficulties Yes 27%  
No 72%

Question 5. Do you use public transportation?

Yes 49% No 50.6%

Question 6. How often do you use the RDN bus system?

Frequently 19% Infrequently 20% Never 58% No Answer 2%

Question 7. How often do you use the Handy Dart system?

Frequently 36% Infrequently 5% Never 57% No Answer 2%

Question 8. How often do you use a Taxi service?

Frequently 12% Infrequently 29% Never 57% No Answer 2%

Question 9. Are you ever unable to use the Handy Dart due to financial

reasons? Yes 7.4% No 84% No Answer 8%

Question 10. Would an increase in Handy-dart hours make it easier to

attend work? Yes 32% No 53% No Answer 14%

Question 11. Do Bus Stops/Waiting areas impact your use of the Bus

system? Yes 39% No 40% No Answer 21%

Distance to nearest bus stop? Less than 1 block 20% 1-5 blocks 25.6%

More than 5 blocks 9% No Answer 46%

Question 12. List your most frequently used bus stop(s) See comments

Shelter? Yes 8% No 40% NA 52%

Is shelter accessible? Yes 13.5% No 34% NA 52%

Bench? Yes 22% No 26% NA 52%

Is there a curb for the bus ramp? Yes 17% No 28% NA 55%

Question 13. List the location of any inaccessible bus stops, including any barriers on route.  
See comments.

## **Appendix 1B Comments from Transportation Accessibility Survey**

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Most of the listed bus stop, there is neither a bench nor a shelter. Bowen at Beban Plaza has a shelter and the stops downtown have benches. "I do not use HandyDart because the pick up/ drop off times are usually too early. Spend too long in transit or waiting for either the appt time or HandyDart pick up time."

To have an independent life, need a car

Trouble getting off bus & too long

Too far to walk

Too far to walk

Too far to walk needs more taxi coupons

Too far, needs to go shopping

never uses bus

wants more taxi coupons

wants more taxi coupons

Taxis too expensive & will not take motorized chair

Medical app & taxis

Taxis discriminate & expensive-heavy chair

Taxis a problem will not pick up motor chairs

Need taxis for medical- req's more coupons

Has to use taxi for wkly needs

Too far to bus stop-dialysis 3 x per week

Must book 1 wk in advance-no add on trips

Expanded hours needed

Not able to stand, need family to drive

Has own car driven, by others

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Needs own car to function

Sundays & ferries a problem

3 km to a bus stop

Bus from Duke point needed

Connecting times difficult

Has own car

Deerwood Park no bus service

Cannot read schedule at stops

Needs more buses scheduled

No buses on Sunday , this is crazy for a city as big as Nanaimo

Need more vans like handy dart. There is far too long a wait for pickup and drop off. taxi's should be a lot cheaper for disabled persons. washroom doors in restaurants are much too heavy to open

No access for scooter at E&N trail, problem with stairs at Brooks Landing & Millstone

Needs own car to function  
Cannot walk to the bus  
Owns car, has to have a driver  
Has a ride, cannot use bus  
Small buses with more frequent routes  
Has own car  
Has to have own car to function  
Dep Bay & Duke Point has no to little bus service  
Bus conn poor , need 2 buses for 5 blocks  
For Bowen seniors to have own van service  
Needs own car to function  
All stops & stairwells need handrails  
drivers friendly, more handydart, more drivers  
dart too expensive  
Dart runs late to and from work  
rides too long, difficult to make appointments with dart  
inconvenient hours of dart, no evening, PRB takes long walk  
Concerns with misbehaviours on bus  
difficult to make appointment  
Not enough benches, use a cane  
Has to have own car  
Cinnabar Valley limited service  
Must have own car  
poor placing of signs poles & benches in our sidewalds, steps, stairs & railings are very limited  
No sidewalks on Hillside or Valley Way  
Need more HD hours  
Needs subsidiary for HD  
Will not use bus, inconvenient, not certain it will take his scooter, finds handy dart impossible, too long a day.  
says bus system is dismal both HD,  
Bus stops too far apart, routes hard to follow, hrs of operation not suitable for working, Nanaimo transport making it difficult to live  
Bus system deplorable.  
Disabled parking spaces by court house, corner of Albert & Selby, no wheelchair ramp  
Needs own car to function  
More bus on holidays & Sundays  
Needs own car, has heard bus are not on time  
Need better connections  
Needs subsidiary for HD  
All buses should be wheelchair accessible  
Use own car, city buses are hopeless  
get rides mostly  
driver most of the time  
use the bus every day terrible service  
student use the bus to the college  
student and drive always  
Drive own car

## Appendix 2 Employers/Business Survey: Accessibility

### Measuring Up Nanaimo

Do any of your employees have physical disabilities?

Yes 16%                      No 74%                      No Answer 10%

If yes: Sensory 10%                      Mobility 5%

Are your premises accessible (ramps, level doorways) to persons with a disability?    Yes 89%    No 8%    No Answer 2%

Is there parking available for persons with a disability?  
   Yes 71%    No 26%    No Answer 2%

Are there washrooms to accommodate wheelchairs?  
   Yes 67%    No 30%    No Answer 2%

Please circle the word that best describes your business.  
Restaurant 5%                      Retail 40%    Social Service 4%  
Consumer service 28%                      Bank/Institute 2%  
Government Agency 12%                      Other 8%

Is your business within 1 block of a bus stop?  
Yes 86%                      No 12%                      No Answer 2%

Is this bus stop accessible for wheelchair or mobility aids?  
Yes 72%                      No 26%                      No Answer 2%

Please circle the estimated number of customers who enter your premises each month.  
Less than 100 24%    100-1000 49%    over 1000 23%    No Answer 3%

Are there positions within your business that could not be filled by persons with disabilities?  
   Yes 58%                      No 39%

If yes why? See comments

Would you be interested in having your premises assessed for accessibility or to get feedback on how to make changes to improve accessibility?

Yes 28%                      No 67%

Would you be interested in having your business placed in our website directory for Nanaimo Accessible Businesses?

Yes 66%                      No 29%                      No Answer 4%

Other comments.

## **Appendix 2B Reasons why business cannot be filled by persons with a disability**

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Do a lot work on computer sitting at workstations  
Constant reaching on high shelves  
Stock person  
Tech challenging position, OH work and tight spaces, tough for any physical disability  
Physical mobility is part of the job, long hrs standing  
Survey crew req's physical ability  
Federally regulated and compliant industry, the airport  
is subject to inspection and guidance of the Canadian Transportation Agency  
Interested to see results & wants to help  
Standing for long periods of time  
Height & weight limitations for stacking shelves  
Height & weight limitations, lifting req'd, do employ 2 deaf  
Must have valid driver's license  
Certain jobs would need to be altered to fit the person  
Bending, lifting & standing req'd for lengths of period. Offices are up a flight of stairs  
N/A  
Medical office, demanding long hours & specific knowledge & skills needed  
First aid instructors, need to get up and down from floor frequently  
No employees home based business  
Possible physical disabled could do office work  
Physical strength req'd  
Physical strength req'd  
Lifting req'd  
High activity req'd  
counter heights  
Retail  
cook server  
steel fabricators requires physical strength & stamina  
one employee only, needs physical dexterity  
No employees home based business  
full mobility need  
not working room  
must be able to ride a skateboard to work here  
Stock is all up ladder  
Store has two levels plus small stairs ect  
depends on disability  
space very small cramped  
depends on position  
depends on disability  
small area, dexterity needed  
self employed  
lifting req'd, carrying heavy paintings req'd  
no room for wheelchair  
Lifting  
some field post.  
office phone only  
hot cooking surfaces  
stairs and small  
two person business  
Small business

## Appendix 4 Public Resources Research

1. Regional District of Nanaimo Public Transport: District #68 and #69
2. RDN Handy Dart System: Custom Transport
3. Taxi Saver Program
4. City of Nanaimo-Engineering and Roads Dept.
5. B.C. Ferries-Customer Service Dept.: Victoria
6. Nanaimo Airport Administration
7. Grey Hound Bus Service

### RDN Public Transport Buses: District #68 & 69

- Conventional transit is looking at a 65,000 hours increase, Custom Transit to increase from 2100hrs presently to 2400hrs reaching the goal of 4500 hours before 2010. **(Appendix #5)**
- Currently 2 buses only are left in the fleet without modification to allow for lifts or low floor accessibility systems. Bus #15 and #92 used during rush hour and overload routes five days a week means that potentially 6 routes per day could be without lifts. Connections are not synchronized, and difficult at 4 major bus turnabouts creating longer than 1 hour trips. The rest of the bus fleet is fitted with the low floor accessible systems, taking two wheelchairs or one motorized chair.
- Wheelchair Accessible Bus Stops are marked clearly with a Wheel Chair Decal. Presently 329 of 800 are wheel chair accessible. Some stops do not have a raised sidewalk access. In such a case, the bus drop ramp is still 4 inches higher than the sidewalk making access impossible. Most problems now are with sidewalks and up ramps. The city is responsible for new areas as are all developers, to construct all new subdivisions to city code with sidewalks and down ramps.
- Four locations were identified as not being wheelchair accessible in areas where they are frequently needed. They were: Jingle Pot Road and Deerwood Estates, Hammond Bay Rd. in the north end, Harewood Rd. off of Bruce Ave., and Lantzville Rd., the ocean route.
- The RDN are progressively moving towards new clearly marked stops, large rectangular posts with maps and matching timetables or new Plexiglas “wrappers” for existing poles. Accessible benches with shelters would be optimum.

## **RDN Handy-Dart System**

- Available 7 days a week or 354 hours per week. Clients must be referred by a doctor. Drivers are staff and casual. Statistics show 3.2 rides are given per hour.
- Cost is \$120.00 per hour to operate, on a yearly budget of \$1.2 million. Clients must book 24-48 hours in advance. Some days need to be booked weeks ahead (i.e. Sunday service).
- There are 2 types of bookings available, subscription (regular/weekly) or one-time trips.
- The cost is \$16.25 for 5 tickets (4 sheets of 5 for \$60.00)
- Pickups start at 7:00 am, with the last pick-up at 4:00pm. The busy period is between 7:00am and 9:00am. Drivers finish at 5:00pm.
- Nanaimo route borders are Cedar and Nanaimo Airport in the South, to Superior Road in Lantzville to the North.
- There are 13 vans in the fleet, 6-9 on the road at any one time, allowing at least 3 in the yard for backup.
- All clients must be treated equally although scheduling does allow for some priority booking, i.e. ER, medical appointments, weekly treatments or work schedules. Clients must expect a wait time of ½ hour for pickup and will be dropped in a timely but “in order” fashion. This means that the delivery or return trip can take as much as an hour each way.

(See **Appendix 4B** Who is Using Handy Dart)

## **Taxi Saver Program –Issued to Handy Dart clients only**

- A subsidy of 50% towards all taxi rides for eligible people, i.e. Handy Dart pass holders. RDN is proposing a \$20,000 increase in the next two years to the Taxi Saver Program.
- Only once every 3 months, clients may purchase 1 pack of 60.00 worth of coupons for \$30.00

Other wheelchair services- e.g. AC Taxi has two wheelchair vans in the fleet. No pre-booking is allowed but they will try to meet the requirement if given 2 hours notice. It is the same fare as regular taxi service.

- There are two private medical transport services available for clients requiring ambulatory care and transport.

## **City of Nanaimo-Engineering/Roads and Trail Ways**

- Improvements are planned to our corridors and sidewalks that are intended to connect urban nodes to trails and sidewalks. All new subdivisions are up to new standards. There is annual funding for improvements to older areas; the Roads Dept. does work upon request in heavily used pedestrian areas such as school zones near major bus routes.
- Intersections-All major intersections should have a let-down ramp and all new sidewalks should be identified for mobility-aid purposes. The larger ramps are diagonal to the intersection main throughway.
- Many of the major intersections and pedestrian crossings now have the “Audible Chirp” (see Appendix 7) system for the visually impaired. The city is now considering new “Tactile” systems that vibrate for the visually and hearing impaired.

## **BC Ferries-Customer Service Department-Victoria**

Both ferry terminals and vessels, washrooms and cafeterias have undergone major work over the past ten years giving wheelchair access and considerations for the Blind and Hard of Hearing. Table heights, washbasins, toilets, ramps and elevators are all updated including Braille indicators and hand railings. There is currently no bus service on board that services between Duke Point and Nanaimo.

## **Nanaimo Airport Administration**

This airport is a barrier-free facility. It is all on one level, has an open design for ease of movement and wheelchair accessible washrooms. The snack bar and seating area are up to standard. Parking is on one level with close wheelchair designated parking. The JAZZ carrier has now installed a fully covered ramp and lift out to planes for all scheduled runs. Nanaimo Shuttle Service has wheelchair pick up service. Some taxi service is available also.

## **Grey Hound Bus Service**

There are circuits available from the Vancouver Bus Terminal to the Horseshoe Bay Ferry Terminal to Nanaimo and the Nanaimo Bus Terminal. Passengers must book a minimum of 48 hours to be certain of a wheelchair accessible bus for transport. Few buses provide lift services. Pacific Coastal Bus Lines at 1-800-661-1725 require 48 hr. notice for wheelchair access on the Vancouver to Tsawassen route, with no Nanaimo service.

## Appendix 4B Who Is Riding Handy Dart?

(Provided by the Regional District of Nanaimo)

Female 66%                      Male 34%

### Disabilities and Mobility issues

Wheelchair	13.5%
Mobility Aid	27.8%
Walker	15%
Visually Impaired	2.8%
Hearing Impaired	1%
Electric Scooter	8.5%
Work	3.1%

### Trip Purposes

Shopping	5.9%
Day Program	52.4%
Medical	15.4%
Social Visit	18.5%

## Appendix 5 Statistics Relevant to RDN Custom Transport

### Appendix #5

#### Statistics Relevant to RDN Custom Transport:

Expansion and the Transit Business Plan (TBP). In 2009-2010 the Short Range Plan provides for an expansion total of 7200 hours in Nanaimo and Oceanside By 2015 transit hopes to almost double and increase spontaneity of service.

#### Custom Transit - Proposed vehicle and hours expansion

	Vehicles	Hours	Description
Short range period			
2009	1	2,400	Increased handyDART in Nanaimo
2010	2	4,800	Increased handyDART in Nanaimo & Oceanside
Medium range period			
2012	1	2,400	Increased handyDART in Nanaimo
2014	1	2,400	Increased handyDART in Nanaimo
2015	1	2,400	Increased handyDART in Oceanside
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14,400</b>	

#### Proposed Expansion of Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver

	Taxi Supp.	Taxi Saver	Description
Short range period			
2009	\$ 35,000		Increased Taxi Supplement
2010		\$ 20,000	Increased Taxi Saver
Medium range period			
2011	\$ 20,000	\$ 30,000	Increased Taxi Supplement & Saver
2013	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	Increased Taxi Supplement & Saver
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 75,000</b>	<b>\$ 70,000</b>	

#### Proposed Conventional Transit Expansion Vehicle Requirements 2009-2018

	In service vehicles	Spare vehicles	Total vehicles
Current fleet (2008)	32	6	38
Short range expansion	10	2	12
Total fleet (2010)	42	8	50
Medium range expansion	24	4	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>78</b>

# Appendix 7 Annual Traffic Signal Report

## Appendix 7

## ANNUAL TRAFFIC SIGNAL REPORT

### 4.0 AUDIBLE SIGNALS

#### 4.1 Introduction

Audible Signals are devices designed to assist visually impaired pedestrians at crossing locations that are partially or fully controlled by traffic signals. They consist of a speaker attached to the "Walk" phase which emits a "peep-peep" (east / west) or "cuckoo" (north / south) sound to indicate the direction to travel and the crossing phase. All locations are push button activated. Section A6.80 of the Uniform Traffic Control Devices of Canada outlines general procedures for selecting sites and installing equipment.

The hardware used by the City and MOTH is the DS-100 Series Audible Pedestrian Signal, provided by Novax Industries (See **Appendix G1**). Unit cost of the hardware is approximately \$556 each, with eight units usually required for a typical four-leg intersection. Installation costs vary by intersection but usually are around \$500.

#### 4.2 Existing Locations

1. Terminal / Commercial	1994 (MOTH)
2. Ross / Norwell	1995
3. Wallace / Fitzwilliam	1996
4. Boundary / Dufferin	1996
5. Boundary / Meredith	1996
6. Terminal / St George - Princess Royal	1997 (MOTH)
7. Norwell / Departure Bay	1998
8. Front / Ferry - Mall access	1999
9. Bowen / Labieux	2000

#### 4.3 Future Locations and Priority Ranking Procedure

Evaluation and construction is completed according to the Canadian Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The installation priority is established by the local CNIB office, with input from the City of Nanaimo.

Contacts for the CNIB are:

- Anne Glemnitz, Community & Rehab Counselor, CNIB (753-0233)
- Elaine Smythson, President White Cane Club (756-9998)
- Winn Ross, VP WCC; Fran Ziebart, Secretary WCC
- Eileen Garcia, Orientation & Mobility Specialist, SD 68 (755-2143)

## Opinion Poll

1. What percentage of your clients display the following disabilities?
  - a. Physical
  - b. Visual
  - c. Hearing impairment
  - d. Speech impairment
  
2. How many of your clients are working within the following:
  - a. Full time
  - b. Part time \_\_\_\_\_ Shift work
  - c. Job sharing
  - d. Volunteering weekly
  
3. What percentage of your clients is using the following means of transportation?
  - a. Public transportation
  - b. Handy Dart
  - c. Walking
  - d. Biking
  - e. Taxi Service
  
4. Can clients access the bus routes?
  - a. With reasonable ease
  - b. With difficulty
  - c. Not at all
  
5. Does transportation meet accessible travel time requirements?
  - a. With reasonable ease
  - b. With difficulty
  - c. Not at all
  - d.
  
6. What percentage are the following barriers to employability?
  - a. Transportation
  - b. Physical Access
  - c. Hours of employment
  - d. Mobility limitations

## **Opinion Poll Results**

### **Poll of Service Providers**

#### **CNIB**

15% of CNIB's clients are employed full time, 15% are part time, 5% are shift workers and 10% volunteer weekly in the community.

72% of the blind population are visually impaired, not totally blind.

Presently 40% of their clients use normal public transportation and over 40% use Handy Dart or taxi. Of the barriers to employability transportation was listed as the main barrier by 50% of those surveyed, 20% listed physical access, 20% felt mobility limitations were their biggest problem, 10% listed hours of employment. Some improvements that were indicated by this agency were better marking of bus stops, simplifying difficult street crossings and improving lighting. Keeping sidewalks clear of tree plantings and making curb cuts uniform and easy to manoeuvre were both mentioned as being of assistance to the visually impaired.

#### **Vancouver Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Association**

This agency works closely with the hearing impaired community to prepare them for the work place through education and skills training. It co-ordinates directly with employers to promote safety, equality and well being for their hearing impaired clients.

55% of the hard of hearing are employed. 75% of clients listed transportation as their greatest barrier to employability.

#### **Vancouver Island Health Authority**

This agency's clients affected by the transportation system are often outpatients attending Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. 50% of their clients rely on Handy Dart. It was suggested that improvements to the scheduling requirements for Handy-Dart would greatly relieve some of the stress from the rehabilitation process for their clients as they recover from injury etc.

#### **Multiple Sclerosis Society-Central Chapter**

Analysis by this agency revealed that although initially only a very small percentage of their clients knew how to reach Handy Dart, who was eligible or how to book, now 87% of MS patients are now or have used the Handy Dart system. Most respondents were very happy with the service and drivers. This agency expressed a desire for priority booking for emergency appointments, a need for priority to be given to wheelchair clients, the need for evening and holiday service and increased weekend service. They also felt the greatest need was for improvements in the present Handy Dart service hours and availability.

### **Triumph Vocational Services-Nanaimo**

This respondent agency noted that many of their clients use the RDN public service or walk. This agency expressed a need for longer weekday Handy Dart service hours for evening work schedules.

### **Clay Tree Society for People With Developmental Disabilities**

Most of this agency's clients currently ride the Handy Dart and the few who do not have regular rides. All were interested in improved hours and availability of the service. Most also require saving coupons.

### **BC Paraplegic Services**

There are presently 5000 people in BC living with a permanent spinal cord injury that affects every aspect of their daily lives. BCPA services provides advocacy and help to people to overcome the challenge of living with a physical disability. The local chapter of BCPA finds that of its members working in the community nearly all own a car or have a driver, thus providing the function and independence they felt the local bus system cannot. The local group felt strongly that extended hours should be offered by Handy Dart to include evening social and sports functions.

# **Access Committee Report**

## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to make Nanaimo an accessible city to all people regardless of disability.

## **Executive Summary**

The Access Committee, a subcommittee of Team Nanaimo, was formed to conduct a task analysis regarding the accessibility of city venues. The committee's initial assessment of city venues on the basis of parking, access, entrance, washroom, circulation and signage yields serious parking inconveniences and frequent access challenges including sidewalk deficiencies and inadequate entrance provisions. Moderate issues include washrooms, circulation and signage.

Major recommendations include the continuation of the Access Committee and its formalization by the city of Nanaimo ensuring functional standards are met regarding accessibility, the introduction of a decal system identifying venues and businesses meeting stringent accessibility criteria, and the strengthening of building codes by further understanding the needs of disabled community.

## Introduction

The Spirit of BC committee for Nanaimo – Team Nanaimo, received Measuring Up funds with the goal to make Nanaimo a city that would be;

- Accessible to everyone
- Allow all citizens regardless of any disability to be inclusive in their community
- Enable the citizens to obtain employment in barrier free environments.

A Measuring up committee was formed. The choice was made to put together an access committee of people with disabilities to do a task analysis of accessibility in Nanaimo.

The Access Committee is made up of Janelle Armstrong, Angela Plasteras, Norm Hemstreet, Kristy Tymos, Valerie Robinson and Karen Townsend with consults from Karen Cross and Steve Clark. Janelle and Angela both have Cerebral Palsy and are reliant on motorized wheelchairs. Norm and Kristy are quadriplegics and use both manual and motorized wheelchairs. Valerie has Multiple Sclerosis and uses a manual wheelchair. Karen has a son that is paraplegic and uses a manual wheelchair. Karen Cross is visually impaired and Steve has a hearing impairment. Each person on the task force brings with them their own personal experiences and needs with regards to accessibility.

## Results

The members of the access committee set out to critique a variety of venues (i.e. restaurants, parks, malls, medical offices etc.) in the community. The pros and cons of each were assessed based on the six criteria set out in procedures.

These are the results:

### 1) Parking

Ideally a very accessible spot would be wide enough to accommodate vehicles that have side ramps and lifts, set on a flat area and have access to meters for payment.

Common complaints were:

- The spots are not wide enough
- There are too few spots
- They are positioned on a slope
- They are not accessible to meters
- They do not have curb cuts (let downs) to the sidewalk.

The parking spots at the Aquatic Centre are on a slope which makes it difficult for wheelchair users to negotiate. The curb cuts should be on a gradual slope to and from the curb and pavement. The curb cuts at the Aquatic Centre are not sloped nicely and make it difficult for a person in a wheelchair to negotiate independently. At this time some of the curb cuts have been improved.

Some of the parking spots at the hospital (especially on the Dufferin Rd. side) are on a slope and the meters are completely inaccessible to anyone in a wheelchair.

The City of Nanaimo allows two hours of free parking with the handicap decal at meter or pay parking spots (except at Robbins parking spots).

### 2) Access/Sidewalks

Ideally trees, planters and signage etc would not encumber the sidewalks. They would have plenty of cuts at the curbs so that the sidewalks are accessible to wheelchairs. For the visually impaired the curbs at crosswalks should be at a 90-degree angle (so they can tell that they are at an intersection) and the crosswalk signals should have a chirping alert.

Common complaints were;

- Without raised sidewalks there cannot be wheelchair accessible bus stops.
- When there are obstacles on the sidewalks it is difficult for people in wheelchairs, on scooters, using canes or with visual impairments to manoeuvre around.
- For people in wheelchairs there are not enough curb cuts to get on and off of the sidewalks and the curb cuts are occasionally placed in the wrong location (i.e. directly in front of where the vehicle is parked or if they are too far away).

The sidewalks between Terminal Mall and McDonald's have no let downs for a wheelchair to get across them.

Rock City Plaza sidewalks are too narrow and a wheelchair has fallen off of them.

There are no raised sidewalks in upper Lantzville therefore wheelchair users cannot access the busses. The bus needs the raised sidewalks to load and unload the people in their wheelchairs.

### **3) Doors**

Ideally all doors would be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, have automatic doors with a push button or have a lever style handle.

Common complaints were;

- Heavy doors that make it difficult for people with limited hand and arm strength and or mobility to open.
- A door that is too narrow for wheelchairs to fit through.
- No automatic buttons or broken buttons on heavy doors.
- Two doors spaced too close together for wheelchair users to open one door at a time.
- Round door handle instead of a lever style handle on large, heavy main doors.

### **4) Bathrooms**

An ideal washroom would have an automatic or easy opening door. Inside the washroom the stall door would swing outwards and have a large easy grab handle to close with and a slide door-lock. The stall would be large enough to accommodate an electric wheelchair and have a raised toilet with grab bars for transferring. The sink would be high enough or cut out to accommodate an

electric wheelchair. Levered faucet handles or sensed taps would be best. Soap and towel dispensers should be reachable from a wheelchair and the mirror would be mounted to accommodate viewing from wheelchair height.

Bathrooms were assessed at restaurants, shopping centres, medical buildings, theatres, parks, recreation centres, bowling alleys and BC Ferries.

Common complaints were;

- Doors swung inward at the stalls making it difficult to get the wheelchair inside.
- Handles difficult to grab and lock.
- Stall too small for wheelchair to fit into.
- Toilet too low for people with mobility problems to get on and off or for easy transferring from wheelchair.
- No grab bars to help transfer on and off of toilet from a wheelchair or to aid the elderly or weakened get up and down from the toilet.
- Faucet handles hard to turn.
- Soap and towel dispensers and mirror out of reach.

The majority of the fast-food restaurants did not have very accessible bathrooms.

Approximately forty popular restaurants in Nanaimo were assessed and found to be on average fairly accessible but most had some room for improvement.

The theatre, recreation centers and BC Ferries bathrooms were all accessible. There have been complaints that the hot water system in the Aquatic Center shower is poor.

The bathrooms in the shopping centers were all rated very good.

Five doctor and dental offices were surveyed and found to be adequate but could be improved upon.

Four parks were assessed and all of the washrooms were in some way not accessible. Also cleanliness of the floor can make it unfavourable. If the floor is dirty, riding through it in a manual chair can be very unsanitary.

None of the bowling alleys had accessible bathrooms for wheelchairs users.

## **5) Circulation**

Ideally you should be able to move throughout the whole area without any stairs or objects in the way.

Common complaints were;

- Cluttered aisles making it difficult for anyone using a wheelchair, cane, crutches, or walker or with any mobility issues to manoeuvre around.
- Rooms too small to manoeuvre about with mobility aids.

Circulation was satisfactory in the stores, restaurants and other venues that were surveyed.

The roped off line-ups in the banks are a problem unless a special area is set aside for customers with mobility aids.

The exam rooms at the doctors' offices are too small for the electric wheelchairs to easily access.

The bowling alleys all had poor circulation.

Generally if there are circulation issues or problems at any of the sites, staff members are more than happy to move things to accommodate the individual.

## **6) Signage**

Ideally there would be many signs in the appropriate areas for the visually impaired. There would also be plenty of Braille resources.

Common complaints were;

- Not enough signs on busses for upcoming stops

## **Other Results**

### **Vancouver Island University**

Bathrooms are wheelchair accessible but have some problems with stall doors and grab bars. The University is built on a steep hillside. There are ramps to all buildings and levels but are fairly steep and uncovered and therefore difficult to negotiate in a manual wheelchair or with other mobility issues and very exposed to the elements. There are good parking spots on each level near the buildings that can be used instead of the ramps.

### **Gas Stations**

Nanaimo has very few full service gas stations. It is possible to get service if you honk and wave, sometimes even at the self serve price at some gas stations.

### **Medical Offices**

The bathrooms of the offices studied were all adequate with some room for improvement. A major complaint was the height of the examination beds. There are few to no adjustable beds in doctor's offices in Nanaimo. All of the examination beds are too high to transfer from a wheelchair on to or to get up on to for the elderly or weakened individuals. This is important for anyone with mobility issues, which includes senior citizens. Also, the examination rooms are too small to get comfortably into with an electric wheelchair.

### **Other**

Due to lack of dexterity of fingers, slow response time and poor vision, touch-tone telephone services can be difficult for individuals with cognitive issues, head injuries and for senior citizens.

### **Transportation**

#### **Handy Dart**

It is good when it is available. The biggest problem is the availability and the hours of operation. The hours are 7:00 am – 6:00 pm Monday to Friday with weekend hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Trips must be booked in advance. There are not enough Handy Darts available so there can be a long wait times between drop-off and pick-up.

#### **Transit**

There are wheelchair accessible buses but only wheelchair accessible stops in areas where there are curbed sidewalks. Some areas of town do not have any bus service or limited bus service. For the hearing impaired there needs to be more signage for upcoming stops.

#### **Taxis**

There are only a couple of taxis in Nanaimo that can accommodate wheelchairs but they are an expensive alternative.

#### **BC Ferries**

Generally the ferries are very accessible. The bathrooms are wheelchair accessible with raised toilet seats, grab bars, cutout sinks and automatic doors.

There are wheelchair spots available at the cafeteria tables, wide hallways with hard flooring for easy wheeling and elevators for those needing them to and from the car decks and the lounge areas.

The lack of spaces for wheelchairs in the lounge areas can cause a wheelchair to sit out and obstruct pathways.

There are no wheelchair-designated parking spots on the car-deck on the ships that sail the Nanaimo/Vancouver routes, instead there are only areas near the elevator that are used for people with mobility issues. This is a major problem during the peak season, busy times and when there is an inexperienced deck hand. There have been times when a person in a wheelchair has not been able to exit their vehicle due to the inaccessible parking spot.

During the busy seasons the lack of priority service for vehicles with wheelchair passengers prior to and after purchasing a ticket can be a major obstacle. This can cause the wheelchair passenger to have an extra sailing wait because of unavailability of wheelchair spots on the ferry. Medically this can compromise the passenger. (Bathroom availability, excessive cold or heat problems, mobility issues and missed medical appointments and meals).

## **Nanaimo Parks and Recreation**

### **Maffeo Sutton Park**

This is an extremely wheelchair friendly park. There is convenient handicapped parking and many level paved pathways. The wharfs and dock are wheelchair accessible although they do have steep inclines. There are washrooms on site with handicapped stalls. Even the park has swings modified for use for people with disabilities.

### **Beban Park**

This is a wheelchair friendly park. There is convenient handicapped parking. There are many level paved pathways around the playground although the pathway into the park is quite a steep incline. There is a portable washroom but there is no accessible washroom in the park.

### **Beban Recreation Center**

Most of the site is wheelchair friendly. There are lots of convenient handicapped parking spots. There are door openers at the entrance to the pool area. There are accessible stalls in the change rooms, pool wheelchairs and a sloped area to access the small pool. The pools without ramps have overhead lifts for access, with exception of the hot tub. The weight room is not accessible as it's on the second floor with no elevator access. The access to the skating rink has a very

steep ramp. There are no door openers and there is a large step onto the ice surface. There is an accessible viewing area.

### **Nanaimo Aquatic Center**

This center is extremely wheelchair accessible. The handicapped parking is off to the side and on a bit of a slant, but there are many spaces. There is a door opener at the entrance. The gym is spacious and has accessible equipment. There are accessible stalls in the change rooms, pool wheelchairs and a large sloped area to access the wave pool. The pools without ramps have an overhead lift for access, including the hot tub.

### **Westwood Lake Park**

This park has many accessible trails, but some can prove difficult to navigate in a wheelchair. The trails are mainly made up of loose gravel and have some very steep inclines and down hills. The public beach has an access ramp to allow a wheelchair to enter the water. There is a waterchair available for use during the summer months between 9:00am and 6:00pm. There are no wheelchair accessible washrooms.

## **Recommendations**

After assessing a variety of sites around Nanaimo we have determined many areas lacking in accessibility. It is an essential project that must be continued.

The access committee recognized early in the process the enormity of the project. With time constraints we were limited as to the number of sites we were able to assess. The access committee chose to focus on more selective places. There are many restaurants that remain to be assessed as well as all of the hotels, more medical clinics, schools and all new businesses.

We recommend that the access committee become a formal committee that would meet regularly and continue to assess old and new sites in greater depth.

The monitoring of the complaints email should be continued on an ongoing basis at [accesscomplaints@accessnanaimo.ca](mailto:accesscomplaints@accessnanaimo.ca).

We recommend that a system be introduced where the access committee can approach old and new venues and offer a decal that will identify the establishment as being barrier free. The venue would be given a list of criteria that would make it accessible and if or when it meets the criteria it would be

presented with a decal that can be displayed depicting it as accessible. We could also keep an ongoing list, perhaps, with the Chamber of Commerce identifying all of the places in the city that are very accessible to visitors and newcomers.

Ongoing recommendations for the task force committee would be:

- The email [accesscomplaints@accessnanaimo.ca](mailto:accesscomplaints@accessnanaimo.ca) was created so that the public could submit their complaints as to areas of inaccessibility in Nanaimo. Also a complaints phone number (250-744-7706) has been set up. The committee would act on the complaints.
- To have a news release to promote the complaints website (Access Nanaimo) and email address [accesscomplaints@accessnanaimo.ca](mailto:accesscomplaints@accessnanaimo.ca). The access committee would continue to add to the website.
- To continue to identify trouble areas and make recommendations as to how to make them more accessible. (I.e. restaurants, parks, hotels etc.)
- Explore ways to adapt and build homes that would give greater access to people with mobility issues. This would enhance the quality of life for many people allowing them the opportunity to be a larger part of the community.
- Explore city bylaws (determine accessibility in strategic planning) to achieve standard wider doorways and level entries etc. This would allow disabled people greater access and increased choices for accommodation and visiting.
- To educate and make aware to the employees of the City of Nanaimo, the politicians, the general public and businesses as to the needs of people with disabilities.
- Members of access committee to meet monthly to continue discussions and dialogue for recommendations for change – bring in officials.

## **Legacies**

To have the access committee continue to meet after the initial survey, to report on and to make recommendations on an ongoing basis to make Nanaimo an accessible city for all.

To maintain and add to the access Nanaimo website, the complaint email and the complaint phone line. To give the citizens of Nanaimo the opportunity to have a voice in accessibility. To give the committee the opportunity to monitor and act on complaints on an ongoing basis.

The access committee is committed to making a change in Nanaimo.

**END OF ACCESS COMMITTEE REPORT**

## General Recommendations

### Recommendations for Measuring Up Task Force

The following recommendations are gathered from:

Measuring Up Transportation Survey  
Measuring Up Business Survey  
Access Committee further analysis of barriers

#### **Recommendations: Transportation**

1. Support RDN recommendations for expanding regular bus service and Handy Dart service.
2. Develop funding budget to continue revamping of bus stops to allow for wheelchairs and compatible curbing.
3. Continue with audible chirp installations at all traffic light intersections.
4. Continue to increase number of bus stops with benches and covers.
5. Remove obstacles to wheelchairs on sidewalks.
6. Continue and increase funding for taxi saver coupons.
7. Support Braille schedule wrappers at bus stops.

#### **Recommendations: General**

8. Continue funding for [www.accessnanaimo.ca](http://www.accessnanaimo.ca) website and the [accesscomplaints@accessnanaimo.ca](mailto:accesscomplaints@accessnanaimo.ca) website and the special complaints telephone number (250-774-7706) and continue to advertise both on a regular basis.
9. Develop a formal committee who would monitor the complaints site and hotline and meet regularly to act as liaison with various municipal planning, bylaw and engineering departments, business owners, and commercial and residential builders and architects to discuss the specialized needs of persons with a disability.

10. This committee to investigate ways to incorporate “barrier-free” building guidelines as part of the future standard for building practices in the province.
11. To develop a barrier-free designation for businesses. Participating businesses would be able to display a decal representing the degree of compatibility and be listed on the Access Nanaimo website, as well as a listing on the Chamber of Commerce website.
12. To educate employers on the advantage of hiring persons with a disability by means of forums and job fairs connecting employers with prospective employees. Assist prospective employers of persons with a disability to find government programs that may aid them.
13. This committee to investigate establishing a workshop setting to provide employment for persons with a disability and to approach the business community to outsource some of their jobs to the workshop.
14. Committee members to meet regularly to continue discussions and dialogue for recommendations for change, and to bring in special guests to further this.
15. To establish an on-line and hard copy newsletter to be written and published by persons with a disability regarding issues facing persons with a disability with updates on community events, sports etc. for persons with a disability and to be supported by advertising to permit an on-going business.
16. To establish a business where an assessment would be done of a business or park, complete with photos/video and then posted on-line. The value would be to the customer to be identified as accessible and this would be available to persons with a disability, tourists, paralympians and others.

## List of Appendices

Appendix 1 & 1B	Transportation Survey & Results
Appendix 2 & 2B	Business survey & Results
Appendix 4	Public Resources Research
Appendix 4B	Handy Dart survey of users results
Appendix 5	RDN proposals for changes
Appendix 7	List of Audible Signal intersections

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