

TransLink Custom Transit Service Delivery Review

Broader Stakeholder Engagement –
Summary Report

January 2017

Prepared for TransLink by

MODUS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction 2**
- Part 1. What We Did 2**
 - Stakeholder Notification And Promotion 2**
 - Stakeholder Engagement Activities 2**
 - Staff Workshop 2
 - Stakeholder Workshops 3
 - Online Survey 3
 - Individual Meetings 3
 - Participation 3**
- PART 2: What We Heard 4**
 - Summary Of Results 4**
 - Overall Summary of Results 4
 - Results For Questions 1 through 4 5
 - Results For Questions 5 and 6 14
 - Results For Question 7 19
- Appendix A: Demographics 25**

INTRODUCTION

TransLink is currently reviewing its custom transit services (door-to-door transit services, such as HandyDART, for people whose mobility needs make it difficult for them to use conventional transit). The review process is formally known as the Custom Transit Service Delivery Review (CTSDR), and more information on it is available at <http://www.translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx>.

TransLink has engaged a custom-built CTSDR Stakeholder Advisory Committee (with service users, advocates, and front-line staff representation) to identify needs, concerns, and objectives to improve the service for customers and to operate more efficiently. They have also worked with consultants to evaluate current system performance and to review services in other jurisdictions, which has also helped to form draft recommendation for improvements.

To ensure this review addressed the needs and concerns of a range of key stakeholders, TransLink held four workshops and two individual stakeholder meetings. This was done in coordination with the execution of an online survey. This report summarizes the results of the stakeholder workshops, online survey, and individual meetings. This report is provided to the CTSDR Stakeholder Advisory Committee to help inform discussions on improving TransLink custom transit services such as HandyDART.

PART 1. WHAT WE DID

STAKEHOLDER NOTIFICATION AND PROMOTION

From December 2016 to January 2017, TransLink worked with MODUS to develop and deliver a robust stakeholder engagement process as part of the review phase. Invitations to stakeholders were sent via email to 155 organizations and individuals, inviting them to attend one of three stakeholder workshops being organized with a request that they distribute the invitation to interested parties who were knowledgeable about HandyDART. Representatives were invited from the following stakeholder groups:

- Municipal government stakeholders
- Frontline HandyDART staff
- Disability and accessibility advocacy groups
- Informed HandyDART users
- Seniors groups.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

STAFF WORKSHOP

A staff workshop took place on January 16th at the MVT head office in Cloverdale with a focus on frontline staff. Invitation notices were posted at all HandyDART depots. Employees submitted their attendance request to the MVT General Manager by email or by phone. Every employee who asked to attend was accommodated.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

Three stakeholder workshops took place between January 18 and 19 in three sub-regions: Vancouver, Coquitlam and Surrey at different times of day. Attendees were seated at tables in groups of 7 or less.

The event began with an opening presentation by TransLink staff, introducing stakeholders to the Custom Transit Service Delivery Review process and its objectives. Staff took questions from the floor, and provided answers before moving on.

Stakeholders then participated in group exercises. Survey questions were used to guide the exercises. Each question began with the table facilitator reading background information, and then:

- For questions 1 through 4: participants were posed with a statement and individually ranked their level of agreement with the statement. Participants wrote their thoughts on each question on sticky notes before engaging in group discussion.
- For questions 5 and 6: participants were given several statements and asked to rank the importance of each in relation to another. Participants wrote their thoughts on each question on sticky notes before engaging in group discussion.
- For question 7: participants were asked to share any other thoughts and comments regarding HandyDART policies or service delivery.

TransLink staff members circulated the floor as content experts. Top issues from each table were summarized by facilitators and shared with the room.

Following each workshop, individual paper surveys were provided to participants. Individuals were encouraged to fill out these surveys if they felt that their opinion had changed throughout the workshop or to note issues that they may have been uncomfortable providing in the group session. In total 23 paper surveys were received.

ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was created and distributed through the TransLink stakeholder list. The online survey ran from January 18 to January 29th, 2017 with 132 total participants. Questions were the same as those posed at the workshops.

INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Several individual meetings were held by request and followed the format used at the stakeholder workshops. Two workshops took place, one at Vancouver City Hall with two individuals and one at Vancouver General Hospital with four individuals.

PARTICIPATION

Participation figures are as follows:

- A total of 68 stakeholders attended the four forums. 6 stakeholders attended individual meetings. In total, 74 participants took part in the broader stakeholder engagement process.
- 23 paper surveys were returned; and there were 132 online survey respondents.

Participants were given the option to provide demographic data for both the online and paper survey questions. A summary of the demographic information is found in Appendix A.

PART 2: WHAT WE HEARD

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The following is a summary of the results of what was heard from all workshops, online survey and individual meetings. An overall summary of results with key highlights is provided, with more detailed results for questions 1 through 7 following. For all quantitative results, the total number of responses may vary between questions as some respondents did not answer all the questions posed.

OVERALL SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Survey questions 1 through 4 were posed with background information and then a statement. Participants were then asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a Likert scale by placing a sticky dot on the rating bar provided. The rating bar ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A summary of the level of agreement for each of the statements were as follows:

- Q 1: Customer access to HandyDART will be improved by extending the trip reservation deadline, from noon (the current deadline) to late in the afternoon on the day before the trip. **(78% Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement).**
- Q 2: HandyDART applications should be expanded to include information about the ability to use conventional public transit services, including bus, SkyTrain, and SeaBus. **(62% Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement).**
- Q 3: TransLink should continue to use taxis for some trips, to maximize the availability of HandyDART. **(67% Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement).**
- Q 4: HandyDART customers should use conventional transit (bus, SkyTrain, or SeaBus) for some or part of their trips when they can, to maximize the availability of HandyDART. **(47% Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement).**

There was only one statement with a high level of disagreement:

- Q 4: HandyDART customers should use conventional transit (bus, SkyTrain, or SeaBus) for some or part of their trips when they can, to maximize the availability of HandyDART. **(40% Disagree or Strongly Disagree with this statement).**

For question 5, workshop participants were asked to rank three statements on service delivery in order of importance. The majority of participants **(52%)** ranked the last statement: **“Do not deny any requested trips (within certain parameters)” as their first priority.**

For question 6, workshop participants were asked to rank four statements on service delivery in order of importance. There was no clear majority for first priority:

- **38%** of the participants ranked the following statement as a top priority: **“Experience during a HandyDART trip** (e.g. timeliness of pickup, duration of trip).”
- **30%** of the participants ranked the following as a top priority: **“Providing the highest number of trips** possible within the funding available.”

General comments from question 7 focused on the topics of: service delivery, availability, and quality; the reservation system; taxi and HandyDART drivers; screening/registration and operational concerns:

- **Availability and accessibility:** Grow the system and make it safer to meet growth due to an aging and changing demographic.
- **Service quality:** Ensure scheduling and trips are more efficient with time accuracies and grouping similar pick-ups, travel and drop offs.
- **Reservations:** Seek to expand to the end of the working day, the day before; use of trip optimization booking system that all users can access (use of app).
- **Utilization of Taxi service:** Ensure taxi drivers (if and when used) are trained along with all staff and drivers, to deliver quality, meaningful and safe service to all client user groups including how clients are spoken to, treated, handled to/from client's locations/homes (especially in poor weather conditions). This includes enabling the right information for all drivers to be aware/ready for their clients' needs.
- **Registration / eligibility:** Ensuring transparent and accountable method of screening for registration: making it easy for all users of the system; and including mandatory travel training.
- **Service delivery model:** whether the HandyDART service functions should be contracted or in-house.
- **Operational aspects:** Ensuring suitable inventory levels and improving safety and access within and to/from vehicles.

RESULTS FOR QUESTIONS 1 THROUGH 4

For questions 1 through 4, participants were posed with background information and then a statement. They were then asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale by placing a sticky dot on the rating bar provided. The rating bar ranged from strongly agree, agree, neutral to disagree, and strongly disagree.

Below is a summary of feedback for each question organized with a graph and comments. A graph displays the quantitative results for each question by meeting location. Ratings are displayed by the locations where the workshops took place: MVT head office, Coquitlam, Surrey, and Vancouver. Ratings from online and paper surveys are displayed under "Surveys." Data from individual meetings are also included. Comments made during the discussion of each statement are noted below each graph.¹ Comments are grouped by theme and are not organized in order of weighting or priority.

¹ "Comments" are intended to be representative of what was discussed at the workshops for each survey question. It is not a comprehensive documentation of every comment received.

1. CUSTOMER ACCESS TO HANDYDART WILL BE IMPROVED BY EXTENDING THE TRIP RESERVATION DEADLINE, FROM NOON (THE CURRENT DEADLINE) TO LATE IN THE AFTERNOON ON THE DAY BEFORE THE TRIP.

Background presented:

Other Canadian transit agencies have a similar reservation window to HandyDART, allowing customers to request their rides up to 7 days in advance. However, the end of the reservation window is different across agencies. Today, the HandyDART booking window closes for trips at 12:00pm (noon) the day before a desired trip.

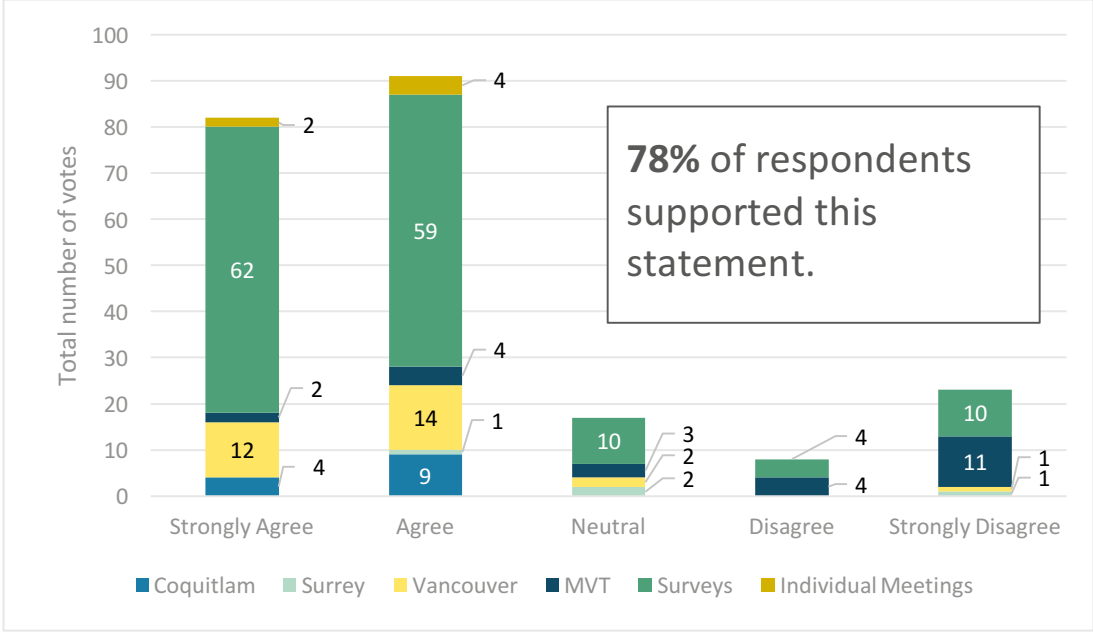


Figure 1 Responses to the level of agreement for the statement "Customer access to HandyDART will be improved by extending the trip reservation deadline, from noon (the current deadline) to late in the afternoon on the day before the trip" across all sources.

Note: When the data is split, comparing the results of all non-MVT sources ("general audience") versus the MVT audience, it yields the following results for this question:

For the general audience (197 ratings), 85% Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement while 8% Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement.

For the MVT audience (24 ratings), 25% Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement while 63% Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement.

Comments

Current system works

- Current system works best for both schedulers and clients
- 12:00pm cut-off allows time to schedule rides
- An extension could result in an inability to secure rides, as there would not be enough buses or enough time for additional pick-ups
- Restore services previously cut
- Clients already have 7 days to book, so it does not need to be any later
- City is too large, and client demand is too high for this to work
- Users of the mainstream transit system can get last minute rides

Longer window needed

- A later cut-off is better for users. Suggestion: why not end of work day (5:30pm)
- A longer window to make changes will accommodate rider last minute changes (appointments, work, social) in plans and allow for flexibility
- Agree there should be more flexibility with scheduling
- Clients should be able to book as late as possible, as that gives them flexibility
- Those with mobility issues need more time in the morning to get ready
- Not all trips can be planned for in advance. There are unpredictable events such as medical appointments
- People with certain medical conditions have good and bad days; need flexibly
- Flexibility helps caregivers
- There are emergencies and other spontaneous events that could occur. Extending the time will assist with this issue

Managing bookings

- This would require more scheduling staff
- If implemented, the stakeholders should carry the costs associated and not the riders
- Consider implementing this through an app
- This will provide customers with better service, but may cause issues for dispatchers.

Limit to last minute bookings

- There should be a limit/cap on last minute bookings
- Likely would not make a difference, as it is already rare to get a last-minute booking even with current system

Other

- The real issue is a lack of service hours

2. HANDYDART APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ABILITY TO USE CONVENTIONAL PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES, INCLUDING BUS, SKYTRAIN, AND SEABUS.

Background presented:

The more information we receive when customers apply for HandyDART, the more we understand about customers' abilities. This improves our ability to make sure customers have the most appropriate travel mode for their trip.

Today's HandyDART application does not provide TransLink with a clear understanding of customers' abilities to use bus, SkyTrain, or SeaBus. The application includes a brief self-assessment by the customer, accompanied by a medical verification of a disability.

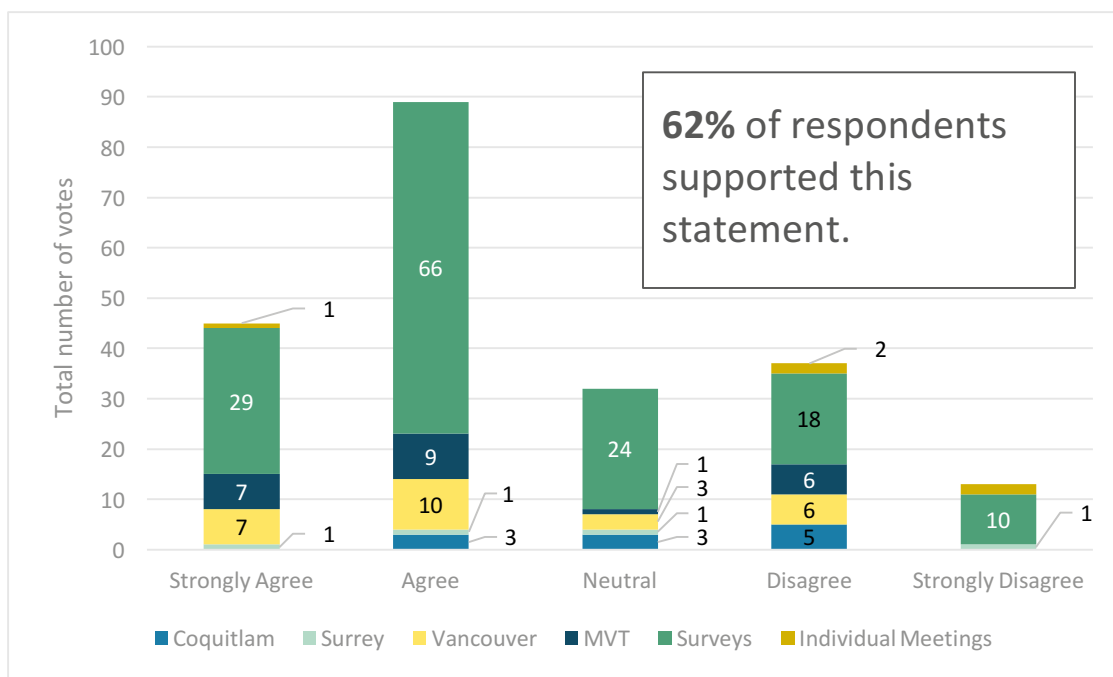


Figure 2 Responses to the level of agreement for the statement "HandyDART applications should be expanded to include information about the ability to use conventional public transit services, including bus, SkyTrain, and SeaBus" across all sources.

Comments

More customer information is needed to help with trip planning

- More customer information is needed about riders and individual needs like cell phone, details about chair or mobility aids, capacity to use other transit modes
- More information from riders could assist staff to schedule trips that make trip planning and direct routes easier/ safer
- Suggestion: 2 distinct forms – an application form; and a separate form that collects data about needs
- This suggestion is perhaps a band aid solution

Concern with the assessment process and criteria

- Who decides/assesses eligibility?
- Clients can determine for themselves, what they need for their independence.
- The process must be respectful and considerate. A longer more complex application process may be a barrier to service and further stigmatize users
- Would this lead to exclusion from the HandyDART service? Does this information disqualify people from the service or truly assist riders?
- The application should be with someone who is qualified to understand needs of the people with disabilities and elderly people. Concern that clients experience good and bad days and can change often.
- Concern that client needs fluctuate. Disability is not always able to be assessed and may change day to day.
- Stronger eligibility requirements are needed to reduce demand on system; when some users are able to, could use other modes
- Take into consideration cognitive (non-physical) disabilities in eligibility criteria
- Asking wrong questions – transit should use data provided by clients to direct changes to conventional transit that would allow more riders to use it

Help and train clients to use conventional system

- Clients may be choosing HandyDART out of fear of conventional transit (as opposed to a need for HandyDART).
 - Information could be a tool to address individual needs, and assist them to get into the conventional transit system slowly after a time using HandyDART

Clarify the management of information

- Provide clarity on who will have access to this information and how it will be stored
- System is going to need tools to accommodate aging population. How will the information stay up to date?
- HandyDART staff should be involved in application process

Physicians should fill out a standardized form

- Provide a standard form for physician to fill out with specific medical needs and abilities

Details should be a voluntary disclosure

- This raises privacy issues. The details on current clients' condition should not be mandatory requirement release. It should be a voluntary disclosure;
- Providing additional information should be up to the client

3. TRANSLINK SHOULD CONTINUE TO USE TAXIS FOR SOME TRIPS, TO MAXIMIZE THE AVAILABILITY OF HANDYDART.

Background presented:

TransLink uses taxis to increase the number of trips available to HandyDART customers. Taxis can:

- *Help keep the number of denied trips low*
- *Provide service to long and out-of-the-way destinations*
- *Serve areas and times when few customers request trips*

Taxis are also used to ensure continued service. For example:

- *Handling emergencies and vehicle mechanical problems*
- *Getting a HandyDART vehicle back on schedule*

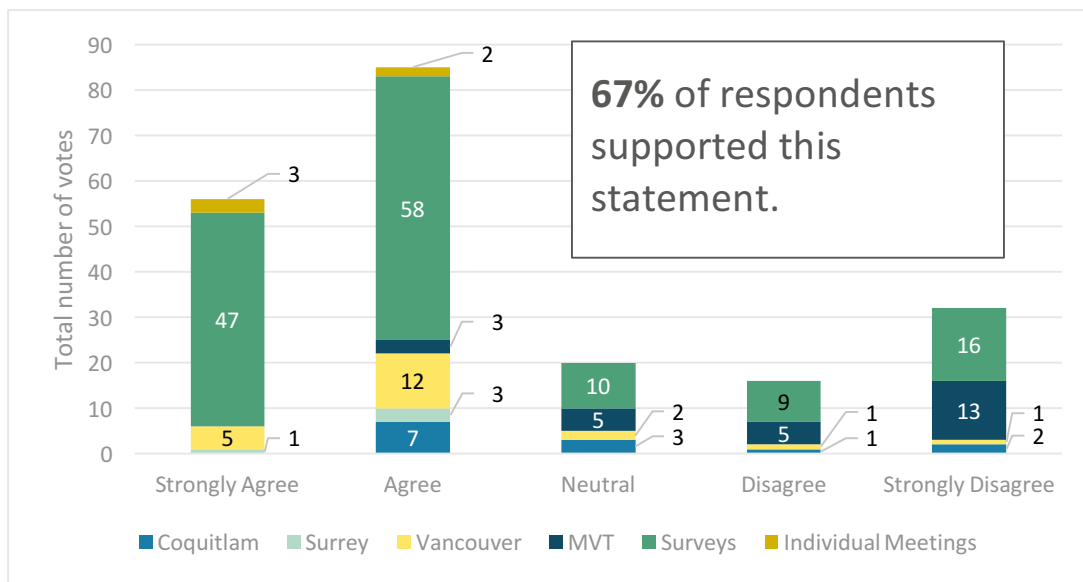


Figure 3 Responses to the level of agreement for the statement "TransLink should continue to use taxis for some trips, to maximize the availability of HandyDART" across all sources.

Note: When the data is split, comparing the results of all non-MVT sources ("general audience") versus the MVT audience, it yields the following results for this question:

For the general audience (163 ratings), 79% Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement while 13% Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement.

For the MVT audience (26 ratings), 12% Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement while 69% Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement.

Comments

Do not use taxis due to training/client care concerns

- Taxis are not the safest option for clients as they lack care management training and appropriate equipment. They do not follow a protocol (ex. Over charge, do not make sure clients are at their door) and do not fully understand needs of clients.
- Taxis do not provide the same level of service as HandyDART and lack training required for clients. They are at times disrespectful, make client uncomfortable and are not vested in the wellbeing of customers. Taxi drivers need training and should be certified to understand how to work with HandyDART clients.
- Taxis should not be used.
- Taxis are focused on making money, are time pressured, and may refuse trips. They are unreliable during rush hour.
- Mistreatment of clients and often cause operational complaints.

Taxis should only be a supplement to HandyDART

- HandyDART service hours should be increased to reduce use of taxis.
- Currently rely too much on taxis when they should be used as a support to the system.
- The use of taxis should be limited, and for emergencies or long distances. Taxis should be used to supplement, not replace the system.
- Taxis are needed but are used too often.
- Should be used as a supplement / emergencies. More HandyDART buses are needed.

Taxis not suitable for some clients

- Taxis may not be appropriate for people with cognitive disabilities.
- Taxis can be used for social travel but not medical appointments.

Use taxis due to increased efficiency, flexibility for client

- Clients should have a choice to be picked up with taxis or not. It may cause anxiety in some.
- Taxis enable spontaneity/flexibility for client/user.
- Taxis are needed. Taxis offset problems of efficiency and availability. Using them provides increased service. Important to have a contingency/back up service.
- Taxis allow efficiency in the system and both clients and services benefit from this.
- Taxis should be used as HandyDART is not always available for appointments.

Manage the use of taxis

- TransLink should provide taxis with all the information needed, (e.g., door-to-door service).
- TransLink should tell client if a taxi is coming to pick them up, including taxi number, name of driver and time of pick up. The courtesy calls are inconsistent.
- Taxis need to be incentivized to complete training and delivery service to HandyDART users. Look at City of Toronto model.

Use other services

- Explore possibility of using Uber in the future.

4. HANDYDART CUSTOMERS SHOULD USE CONVENTIONAL TRANSIT (BUS, SKYTRAIN, OR SEABUS) FOR SOME OR PART OF THEIR TRIPS WHEN THEY CAN, TO MAXIMIZE THE AVAILABILITY OF HANDYDART.

Background presented:

We have heard that customers want to see an improvement in the service quality of HandyDART and increase the availability of HandyDART trips. In addition, the number of people over the age of 70 in Metro Vancouver is expected to increase by approximately 55% over the next 10 years, which could translate into a greater need for HandyDART service.

To provide improvements and address anticipated demand, we have to ensure that HandyDART is the most appropriate service available for each trip requested. As a result:

- *Customers could be required to use conventional services (bus, SkyTrain or SeaBus) for part of their journey, based on their abilities.*
- *TransLink would provide a comprehensive travel training program so that customers who are able to use bus, SkyTrain, and SeaBus would receive staff support to learn and feel confident using our services.*

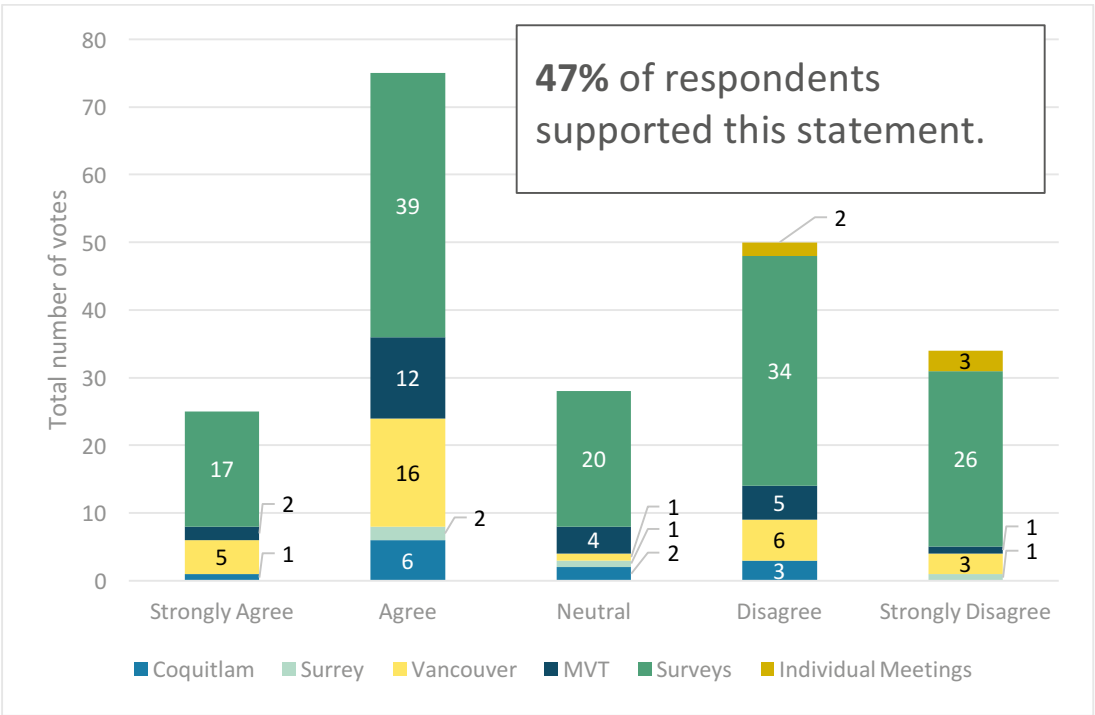


Figure 4 Responses to the level of agreement for the statement “HandyDART customers should use conventional transit (bus, SkyTrain, or SeaBus) for some or part of their trips when they can, to maximize the availability of HandyDART” across all sources.

Comments

Use should depend on client's willingness and ability

- Do not force/require to take conventional transit.
- Clients who are capable of using conventional transit, should.
- Replace "use" and "when possible" with "encourage to use"
- Allow customers to decide when they are able to take conventional transit. Use should depend on the client's ability, willingness and comfort level first. Need to have "confidence"
- There is uncertainty in level of ability for customers on conventional transit. Needs may fluctuate and abilities may vary day-to-day. Changes to routine may cause confusion and anxiety.
- Key question is "when they have the ability to do so."
- Only if the customer agrees that they can use conventional transit

Impartial process is important to avoid concern with exclusion

- Concern about how this could be used to exclude those who need HandyDART. Or later on, the policy could be subject to interpretation and result in loss of service for the user. Mistrust TransLink to be impartial in the process.
- Reduce abuse of the system by those who don't need it

Training for all users as well as HandyDART and conventional transit staff

- Encourage independence
- Other options should be explored to address growing demand as well, such as training all transit staff to assist HandyDART users on conventional transit
- Travel training program is a good idea. The training should be respectful, considerate, sensitive to needs of client
- If more conventional transit, education for all users to understand the needs of HandyDART users is needed
- Should be handled by HandyDART staff

Increase accessibility of conventional services and address barriers

- Improve experience of customers on conventional modes of transit. TransLink must address barriers to using conventional service and increase accessibility of these services.
- Mix of conventional and HandyDART trip causes problems, delays, pass-ups and stranded customers.
- Also consider the entire route, including sidewalk infrastructure and lack thereof.

HandyDART is still a necessity in some cases

- HandyDART riders typically use the service because they need to use it.
- Question is skewed: conventional transit often not an option – HandyDART is a necessity.
- Provide more service overall.

RESULTS FOR QUESTIONS 5 AND 6

For questions 5 and 6, participants were posed with background information and then given several statements. They were then asked to rank the importance of each statement in relation to the other. Using sticky dots, they placed their vote on their first preference, followed by their second and so on. Participants wrote their thoughts on sticky notes before engaging in group discussion.

For question 5 participants were asked to rank the following statements in order of importance:

1. Reduce the pick-up window from 30 minutes to 20 minutes
2. Reduce maximum on-board trip time
3. Do not deny any requested trips (within certain parameters)

For question 6 participants were asked to rank the following statements in order of importance:

1. Experience during a HandyDART trip (e.g. timeliness of pickup, duration of trip)
2. Experience before and after a HandyDART trip (e.g. booking a trip, response to feedback)
3. Ability to be responsive and flexible to changes in operating conditions
4. Providing the highest number of trips possible within the funding available

Below is a summary of the ranking for these questions across all workshops and surveys.

5. RANK THREE STATEMENTS

Background presented:

We want your feedback on some proposed changes to HandyDART service quality.

- *Reducing the pick-up time window (30 minutes) can reduce how long a customer spends waiting for a HandyDART ride. However, this would affect the flexibility of the HandyDART schedule to adjust to issues such as heavy traffic. To retain flexibility in scheduling, the total number of HandyDART trips that can be provided would decrease.*
- *Reducing the maximum time a customer spends on the bus makes a HandyDART trip faster. However, fewer customers can be picked up along the way. If fewer customer trips can be grouped together, fewer trips can be provided.*
- *Eliminating denied trips would mean everyone will receive their trips if they book within certain parameters. This may increase the demand for trips, or require that more people use bus, SkyTrain or SeaBus as a part of their journey if they are able to.*

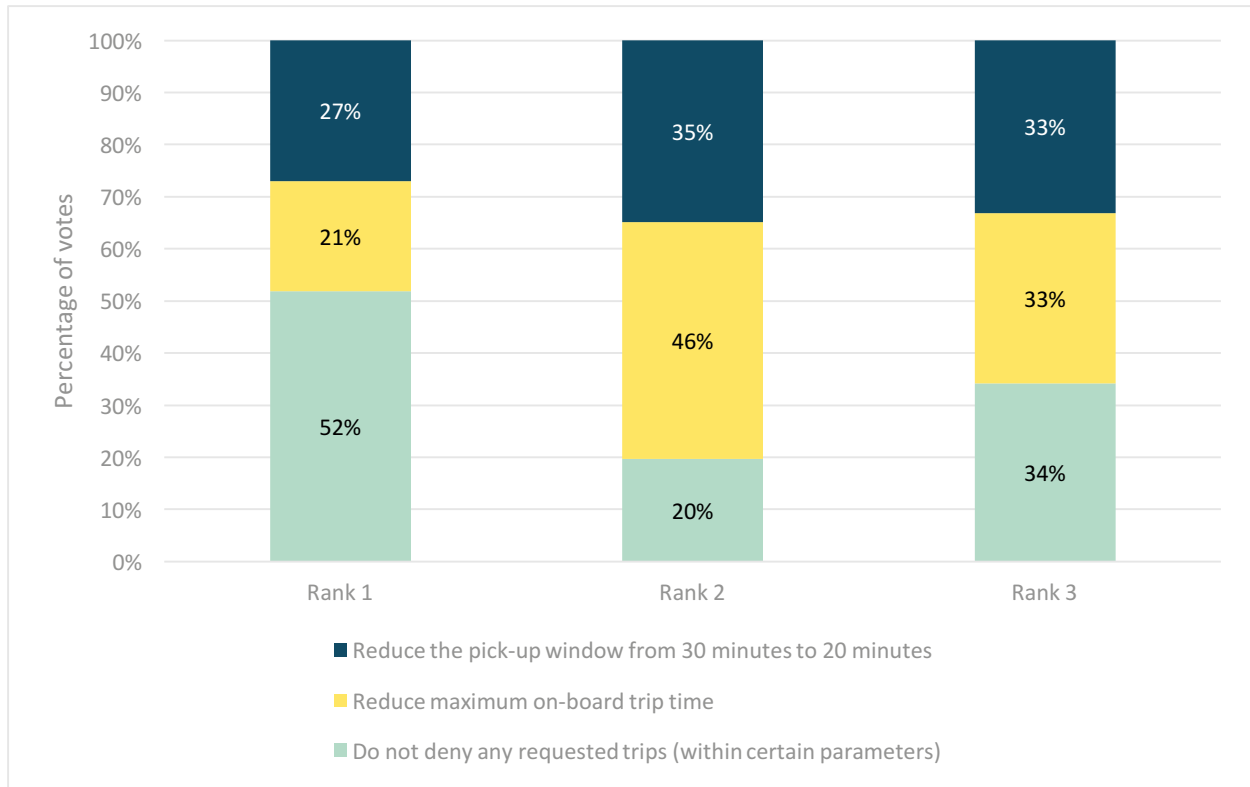


Figure 5 The above graph shows the percentage of votes given to each of the three statements within each ranking. The data is taken from across all sources.

Comments

Reduce uncertainty with scheduling / wait times

- Uncertain wait times leave clients anxious, stressed, waiting outside on the curb. “Waiting is worse than a longer trip time.” Some would rather reschedule than be sitting and wondering if the bus is coming.
- Optimize scheduling to increase quality and reliability. Provide reliability and accurate pick up times for clients.
- Wait windows affect users different. For example, it creates high stress and disorientation for dementia patients.
- Avoid abuse of scheduling
- Window reduction affects both clients and the provider.

Quality customer service is very important for HandyDART users

- Service must focus on clients and their comfort. Quality of service and customer experience are important. The for-profit model hinders this objective.
- There is already enough availability to improve elsewhere.

More service is needed

- More buses/service/service hours are need.

Reduce trip time/lengths

- Overall, trips are too long for clients. Reduce max. on-board time to reduce stress.

- Geography should be considered.
- Arriving to destination on time is very important.
- Cross boundary trips are a challenge and very long.

Trip prioritization is important

- Some trips should not be prioritized over others.
- Prioritize type of trips and time of day.

Training of staff will improve service quality and customer experience

- Trained staff is important to improve quality of service and customer experience.

No trip denials

- True mobility means no trip denials.
- More taxis can resolve these problems.

Other

- HandyDART is a necessity
- Policies should be defined and enforced.
- Process: These issues are equally important and cannot be ranked. The question is misleading. The parameters are unclear. They are all bad ideas. These are the wrong factors. This question sounds like rationalizing service and not adjusting resources to needs of users.

6. RANK FOUR STATEMENTS

Background presented:

TransLink is deciding how to provide HandyDART service in the future, and we would like to know which of the following items are most important to you.

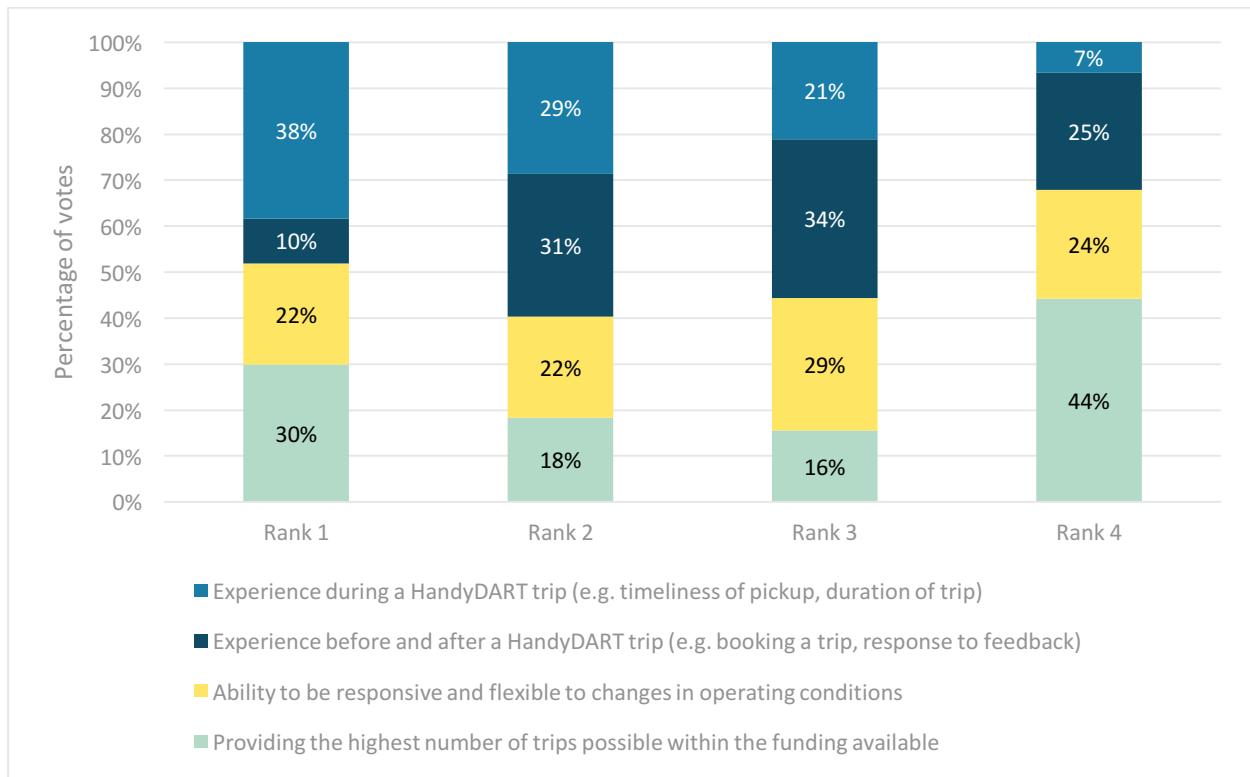


Figure 6 The above graph shows the percentage of votes given to each of the four statements within each ranking. The data is taken from across all sources.

Comments

Customer service / experience is most important

- Experience of customers should come first. Ensure service/rides are a positive experience for customers. Reinforce service; ensure it is there for those who need it. The quality of service reduces stress, increases independence and decrease isolation.
- Do not agree with prioritizing one over another. They are all important.
- Transition time is needed if any changes are implemented.
- Customer service need to be streamlined so wait times to get help isn't long and difficult.
- There needs to be resolutions to issues that are brought up. Booking services should be easier.
- Listen to caretakers to understand needs of users.
- HandyDART drivers are amazing and add positive energy.

Service before and during a ride is important

- Service before and after ride is important as well. Drivers must adapt to each person's needs and they may change daily. System needs flexibility to adapt to changing demographics.
- Higher quality trips is important.

More service is needed

- More service, drivers/service hours and office staff is needed to support.
- TransLink must ensure that HandyDART service can meet future demand.
- The service is already not meeting demand. How will it handle future demand?
- Willingness to pay more and ability to pay more should be considered.
- Increasing number of trips. Shouldn't impact timeliness/quality experience for user.
- Maple Ridge/suburban areas have high denial rates and less service.
- It is onerous to cancel 1 week at a time.

Change HandyDART back to in-house service

- In house service needed.
- Bring service in-house rather than contract out.
- The service is too dependent on taxis.
- For-profit model reduces the budget to improve service.

Training improvements needed for all disability ranges and demographic changes

- Improve training for staff to handle disabilities, especially the wide range in disabilities (such as MS, strokes, cognitive disability).

RESULTS FOR QUESTION 7

The final round of table discussions at the workshops focused on a general question which asked if there were any other comments about HandyDART policies or how service could be delivered. Below is a summary of comments from all the workshops and online survey, organized by broad themes relating to the delivery system overall; service availability/ accessibility; service quality; reservation process; drivers and taxis; screening/ registration; and operational services. Following this summary are detailed comment examples.

Question 7 - Highlights

The following points summarize the combined top comments written for question 7 on workshop post-it notes, on the paper survey and the online survey:

Service availability/ accessibility: The service needs to grow; pick up / wait times and on-board times are too long; there are increasing user demands due to demographics; increasing mental and physical changes in the needs of users due to demographics. Seek more cross municipal trips/increased availability. Safety is a growing concern.

Service quality: Keep trips short and direct as possible. Schedule needs to be realistic; need more accurate pick up, travel and drop off times with more accurate notice of pick up times. Enable more customer-oriented HandyDART feedback. Give more consideration to customers who are blind or partially sighted.

Reservation process: Change reservation window to end of working day, the day before. Sell tickets on weekends and holidays. If a refusal occurs, should be allowed to have trip request waitlisted. Larger quantities of TaxiSavers should be available on a case-by-case basis, e.g. health requirements. Enable improved trip optimization software /booking system including an app; ensure new technology is accessible/useable by all types of riders.

Drivers and taxis: HandyDART vehicles and driver performance should be spot checked regularly, regardless of who is providing the service (taxi drivers, contractors or TransLink drivers). Taxis represent a great opportunity for increasing capacity, responsiveness, timeliness and reducing denials. However, they are not appropriate in all cases. Improve training for all HandyDART staff, including taxi drivers, with regards to customers' unique situations; and the need to be sensitive, understanding, helpful, and compassionate for the needs of all kinds of clients they serve.

Registration / eligibility: Who will decide if client can use public transportation and to what extent? More accountability demands can be placed on the referring agents to make sure HandyDART is serving only those who need it. HandyDART should have detailed disability information on all registered customers (unless client refuses due to privacy). This information needs to be provided to all drivers including taxis. Build travel training for users of HandyDART into the registration system; make information about HandyDART easier to find (web, brochures, social media). Custom transit registration should be universal across Canada. If you are eligible in one system, you should be automatically eligible in other regions.

Service delivery system: Bring HandyDART in-house; use funds saved to improve service delivery. More direct communication with client user; more transparency; more collaboration between stakeholders. Employ more people with disabilities as they would provide more insight into user needs.

Operational services: Concern with insufficient inventory to maintain service levels. Improve safety and access within vehicles; flat floor/low floor. Enable drivers to know about and deliver on pick up / drop off safety details (re: access, back door directions). The complaint process should be independent. Appropriate tracking and reporting back should be to TransLink, not a separate provider, to ensure the process is effective and transparent.

Question 7 - General Comments

The following are some of the more specific comments made at the workshops and via the online survey.

Service Availability/ Accessibility

- HandyDART is an essential service and for some the only way to get around. Therefore needs to be available more often as a regular transit service especially given demographics.
- Keeping the cost of trips low for the individuals is important.
- The cost structure is a barrier to entry and TransLink should consider subsidizing a larger proportion of the cost as taxis are cheaper than HandyDART.
- Increase drivers, staff and bus service. Concern with not enough hours to provide the level of service required.
- HandyDART needs to grow. We are constantly waiting for late arrivals to the day program and late pick ups. Delays in picking up from a site other than a rider's home (e.g., seniors centre) impacts that community agency (e.g., staff stays late until the person is picked up). We do not get paid for our overtime. The duration of transport time for some of our clients is unacceptable.
- Need more help for dispatchers.
- Safety is a concern: Make services efficient and safe for all kinds of HandyDART riders and rider abilities. Overall ensure all policies and services consider the specific needs of aging demographics. Noted that seniors would more (\$3) per trip to improve their safety.
- Ensure safe and accessible parking for HandyDART users.
- Conventional bus stops should all be accessible. People with mobility devices should not be discriminated against, and should be able to get off and on at stops of their choosing, regardless of the accessibility label.
 - TransLink should closely monitor conventional buses to make sure people with disabilities aren't being passed up.
- Can drivers provide passes to riders? Or can the pass be purchased through the mail? Some riders (e.g. blind, intellectual disabilities) must rely on the assistance of another person to pick up their HandyDART pass because of accessibility issues (e.g. Cloverdale location).
- Review catchment zones as some locations are unsafe and people are waiting too long at these unsafe locations.
- Seek more cross municipal trips/increased availability. Cross boundary times don't work for some. Increased night time trips; mirror transit availability.
 - E.g., Very difficult for elderly and riders with developmental disabilities to change HandyDARTs at regional borders and possibly wait another 20-30 minutes at each exchange. A separate service for long trips should be provided, i.e. from Surrey to VGH for medical testing.

- Prioritize trips for medical appointments. E.g., Chemo and renal/dialysis, versus shopping. People who go to hospitals on a regular basis should be grouped together and separated from other trips.
- More spontaneous trip planning or being able to hop on/off at several stops would be ideal for some (being able to stop by a store to pick something up). This is where the bus is more convenient.
- Speed up Compass Card compatibility; link Compass card and HandyDART cards together – too many cards for users with or without disability. Scanners would be nice to avoid drivers spending more time having to call in.

Service Quality

- Customer experience using the system is very important when providing a service. Enhance and improve customer service (lots of feedback on this point).
- Many people use HandyDART for different reasons; there are lots of variables that we did not discuss to improve the customer experience.
- Consider the needs of the people who are blind or partially sighted – especially because seniors' vision decreases over time. Clients who are blind or partially sighted need to be trained to use public transportation by a certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist. Who will provide this training? Currently provided by the CNIB.
- Enable more customer-oriented HandyDART feedback.
- Add a current employee on the Advisory Board.
- Make it easier for customers to travel with a support person:
 - Care aid persons should to accompany mentally challenged riders; do not leave all the needs to the driver to make sure the rider can get in and out of the building or be left alone. If the driver is helping one person to the door who is taking care of the truck. Escorts are important. Use more volunteers to help.
- Keep trips short and direct as possible. Any time spent on the bus puts a client's safety in jeopardy.
 - Schedule needs to be realistic; need more accurate pick up travel and drop off times with more accurate notice of pick up times. E.g., Because of many pick-ups and drop offs, the time traveled on the HandyDART can be up to 2 hours onboard thereby missing 4pm meds at times.
 - Phoning in the mornings with the time expected is a problem as HandyDART is never on time and only agitates the client as they are told it will be here at a specified time.

Reservation Process

- Change reservation window to end of working day, the day before. Sell tickets on weekends and holidays.
- Decrease 7-day window and booking between 5 – 8 pm would be ideal. Change 1-week cancellation process. Should be able to cancel exact dates.
- Ability to book in advance for regular trips outside day program (e.g. Weekly bookings for special Olympics done for a whole season, not calling once a week).
- When HandyDART customers request a trip, booking agents look at a search window that is an hour on either side of the requested trip pick up. This is too large, as users have reasons for not being able to go significantly earlier or later than they request, such as health concerns while waiting in cold weather.

- If a refusal occurs because a user can't leave significantly earlier or later than they requested, they should be allowed to have their trip request waitlisted. Currently, if you have 'refused' a potential trip, you cannot be waitlisted for your desired trip.
- Users who have appointments should be dropped off as close to the appointment time as possible. HandyDART currently uses a window, where the user arrives up to half an hour before their appointment time. If a building is not open that early, it puts the user in a bad position.
- A user should be informed if a taxi is coming instead of a HandyDART bus.
- Some patients live close to the hospital and have shorter times on dialysis, but they have to wait until the HandyDART run for dialysis patients in order to go home. They should be able to book their own subscription trips, apart from the dialysis runs.
- A more transparent process for subscriptions and use of the waitlists needs to occur. Some call for subscriptions for their clients, and are receiving all their rides on a demand-basis, but continue to be waitlisted for months.
- When subscriptions for dialysis change, there is significant lag time to amend the subscription. There should be a more transparent process.
- Larger quantities of TaxiSavers should be available on a case-by-case basis, e.g. health requirements.
- Enable improved trip optimization software /booking system.
 - Check automated systems; gives wrong information. Build in a process so that staff can input real-time information and on-the-ground realities (e.g., taxis have a button that sends an update of arrival time when they are close to picking up).
 - Ensure all updated technologies are accessible to all kinds of users.
 - A callback queue system should be implemented for booking trips.
 - Create an app for booking and tracking position, arrival in real time. The application would allow user to book their trips online, and also track the vehicles location and driver information.
 - This could remove the need for the rider and caregiver to wait for the 30 min or longer pick up.
 - Online booking is a very important tool. This would reduce time spent on hold and would give care providers and health providers more time to complete their intended work.
 - Streamlines HandyDART trip planning/pickups so that time is well utilized. We have seen several busses arrive to pick up people from same location that are going in the same direction. Need to maximize the number of user/passenger in one trip as to their destination.

Drivers and Taxis

- HandyDART vehicles and driver performance should be spot checked regularly, regardless of who is providing the service (taxi drivers, contractors or TransLink drivers).
- Taxis represent a great opportunity for increasing capacity, responsiveness and timeliness. However, remember that they are not appropriate in all cases.
- Future growth for HandyDART and experience before, during and after a trip can all be improved by increasing use of TaxiSavers, use of taxis in HandyDART, and an incentivized and universally accessible conventional public transit.
- Some Taxi drivers and HandyDART drivers have been seen to be less caring/understanding or helpful towards users. The goal should be to deliver quality, meaningful and safe service to all

client user groups including how clients are spoken to, treated, handled to/from client's locations/homes (especially in poor weather conditions).

- Overall comment: do not use taxis, but if needed, then not on a full-time basis; emergency only.
- Some comments on the need to increase the use of taxis to allow more spontaneous trips, reducing wait times and removes denials. However concern that untrained taxis pose a danger for the rider as they do not understand the needs of the rider.
- Consider putting contracts in place with taxis for improved quality of overflow service.
- Improve training for all HandyDART staff, including taxi drivers, with regards to customers' unique situations; and the need to be sensitive, understanding, and compassionate for the needs of high behaviour or low communication clients they serve.
 - All drivers should be trained to provide door to door service (especially in extreme weather periods; e.g., appropriate drop offs and assistance in icy conditions).

Registration / eligibility

- Asking people to use public transportation for part of trip; who will decide if client can use public transportation & to what extent?
 - More accountability demands can be placed on the referring agents to make sure HandyDART is serving only those who need it.
 - Doctors should continue to be responsible for deciding who needs the service, not TransLink staff.
 - It is not easy to assess if someone is capable of conventional public transit. Someone who appears to be capable of taking the SkyTrain, does not mean they can cross busy streets, and navigate the transit system.
 - As a certified orientation and mobility specialist with the CNIB, I teach people who are blind or partially sighted to travel safely. Often their disability is coupled with brain injury, dementia, diabetes, COPD, and other conditions which prevent them from travelling independently without HandyDART. When unaccompanied these individuals are often at risk of falls, fatigue and disorientation.
- HandyDART should have detailed disability information on all registered customers (unless client refuses due to privacy). This information needs to be provided to taxi drivers when used. This is especially important for clients who are blind or partially sighted to ensure that there are no missed pickups.
- Build travel training for users of HandyDART into the registration system – for both HandyDART and conventional transit system use. A certified orientation and mobility instructor is the only person who should be teaching independent travel skills to a person with sight loss.
- Application process is not easy to find or understand. Also, need more information on how HandyDART works.
- Custom transit registration should be universal across Canada. If you are eligible in one system, you should be automatically eligible in other regions.
- With the current application process, social workers are hesitant to indicate that a patient requires an attendant, as it means that there is one less potential seat for someone who needs dialysis; however the attendant is often necessary for travel between the accessible door and the dialysis unit, or to navigate terrain with a manual wheelchair.
- As a parent with a child eligible for service, I found the application process exceedingly difficult, confusing, redundant and arbitrary. There is a tremendous opportunity to streamline the process.

- Concern with dementia/disorientation being low priority for HandyDART; these conditions can lead to loss of drivers license; these people still need to get out for coffee/social events for wellbeing (especially those living in rural areas). Even if they have a caregiver, if that is the only driver, this can lead to caregiver burn out; HandyDART helps reduce the stresses of the conventional transit for users with cognitive disabilities.
- Some seniors use the service more in the winter; the process to re-activate is cumbersome to some, when they are deemed inactive for a period of time.
- Revisit the suspension rule for no show passengers. It needs to have considerations of the needs of the passenger's abilities.

Service Delivery Model

- Positive comments and congratulations noted:
 - For providing such an essential and enabling service. Transportation is such a key component to community accessibility, wellbeing and health. The service needs to keep up with increasing demand.
 - HandyDART is so important to those who cannot take other means of public transportation. It has been a very important benefit for the life of our whole family, making our son's growth into adulthood easier, and giving him more independence.
- Move away from a for-profit business and move HandyDART back in-house.
- Make HandyDART a stand-alone department; less fractured. This puts control back into the delivery of the system. If contracted out, give full successor rights to employees and union certification.
- Increase transparency with the public and consider public peer review reports. Improve collaboration between HandyDART and customers and staff for finding solutions to day to day problems. Seek an opportunity to brainstorm ideas for finding and offering solutions to some of the challenges with HandyDART.
- Improve the ability for a user / client to converse directly with supervisor / manager if desired.
- TransLink should employ more people with disabilities as they would provide more insight into user needs.

Operational – Day to Day Client Services

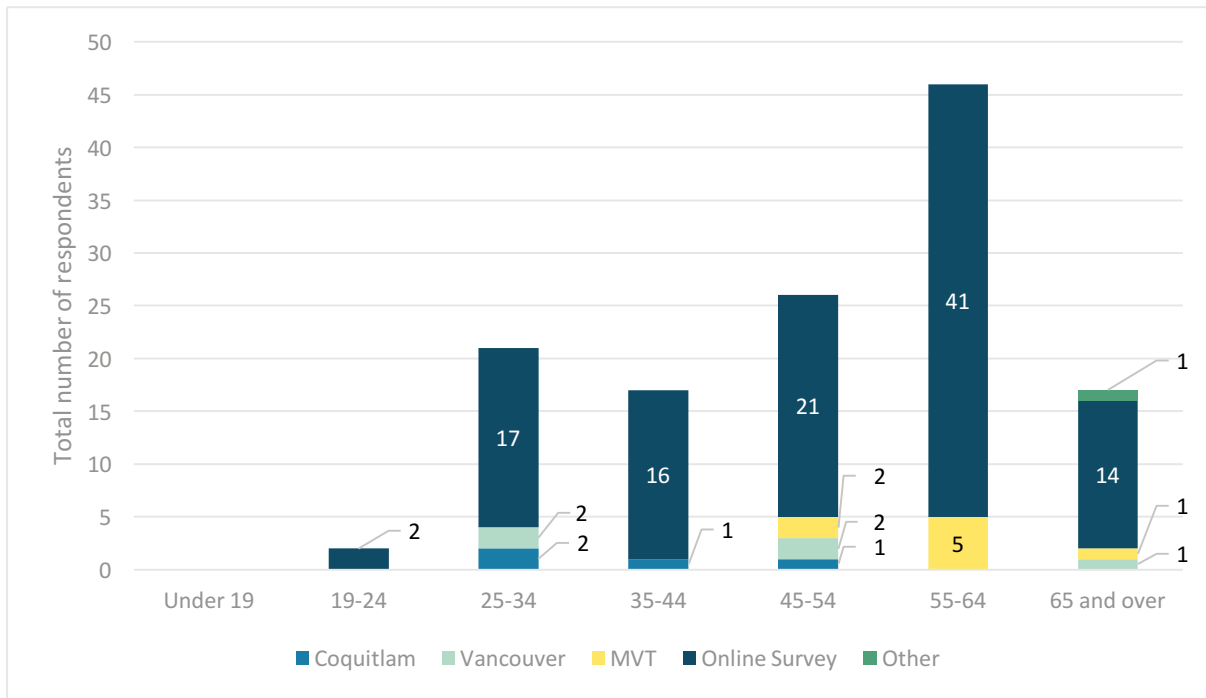
- Ensure some trucks are always available for emergency purposes
- Concern with insufficient inventory to maintain service levels.
- Consider seat belts for the bus. Hand sanitizers for bus drivers.
- Improve safety and access within vehicles; flat floor/low floor.
- HandyDART vehicles should be low floor.
- Consider other types of vehicles beyond a sedan.
- Need a section on the mobile data terminal that can be accessed and changed by Dispatch as needed (re: access, back door directions)
- Complaints and feedback
 - Need to be more anonymous and not reflected back on the customer. Many people reluctant to complain.

- The complaint process should be independent. Appropriate tracking and reporting back should be to TransLink, not a separate provider, to ensure the process is effective and transparent.

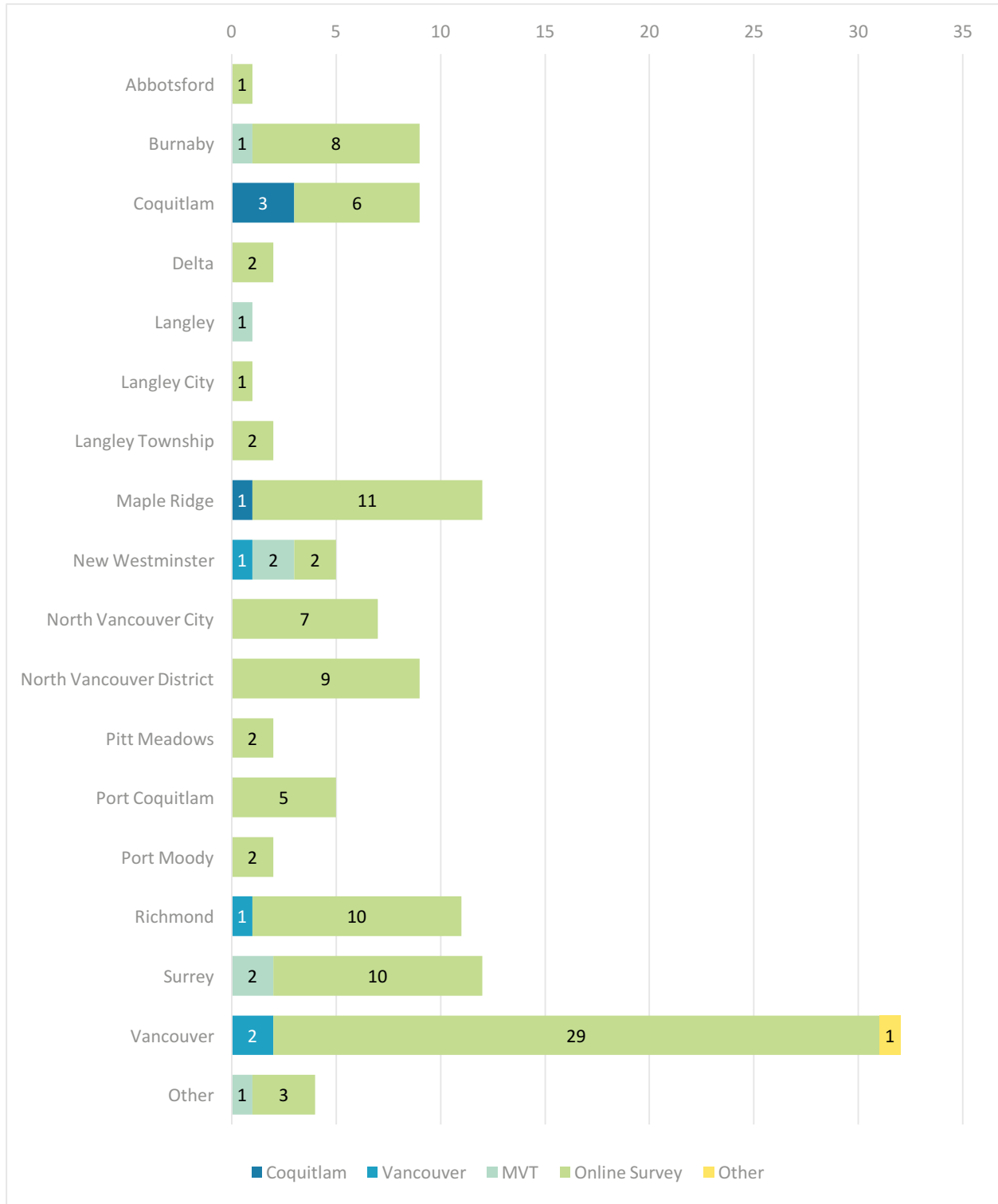
APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Participants were given the option to provide demographic data for both the online and paper survey questions. Participants were asked to identify their age, municipality of residence and stakeholder group from a list of categories. In total, 112 of 132 online survey respondents and 19 of 23 paper survey respondents provided demographic data.

Which age group do you belong to?



Select the municipality you live in.



Which stakeholder category best describes you?

