

TransLink's "HandyDART Modernization Program" 2021 screening proposal

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TransLink is doing consultation on what they call as "HandyDART Modernization Program" from March 29 to April 25, 2021 (see www.translink.ca/hdm). While much of what they are proposing does not seem particularly problematic, their proposal to follow BC Transit's lead in screening out potential riders to reduce costs has the potential to do real harm.

The phrasing TransLink uses in their introduction seems misleading. A "personalized consultation to help meet the needs of customers" makes this sound like a proposal to help out. But later in the text the real intent is to screen out to reduce costs "manage growth to ensure that everyone who needs HandyDART has access to the service" as TransLink has proposed in the past. The outcome of the four step "potential new registration process" would be "a decision on eligibility" rather than further assistance for those who need it.

TransLink states that the process "would be similar to the current registration process in communities served by BC Transit." BC Transit's processes are primarily about denying service to reduce costs, rather than helping in a meaningful way. For example, BC Transit in Parksville - Qualicum Beach "must now undergo an assessment by a mobility co-ordinator to determine their eligibility [sic]," and the screening has been contracted out to a massive 'limited partnership' with over 250 offices.¹

This is not the first time TransLink has proposed a screening out process. In 2011 the City of Vancouver's Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (PWDAC) opposed invasive processes to screen HandyDART applicants as a way of reducing costs:

"Access Transit (TransLink) has been contemplating a new process to deal with increasing demand for HandyDART without increasing funding to meet the need. The process they are contemplating is an invasive, time-consuming, and upsetting process, which would discourage many people, especially persons with language issues, developmental disabilities, persons who are older, frail or confused, from applying for HandyDART. In essence, it solves the problem of not enough HandyDART rides by eliminating the most vulnerable of users."²

TransLink's current proposal seems to be the same as their proposal a decade ago for "eliminating the most vulnerable of users" to reduce costs. Instead, TransLink should be cooperating with other agencies to help out people with disabilities rather than trying to screen out those they can get away with excluding.

¹ www.pqbnews.com/news/parksville-qualicum-beach-residents-require-mobility-assessment-to-use-handydart-bus/; www.cbi.ca/locations

² (2011) *Issues and Concerns about the Translink Report: "Moving Forward: Improving Metro Vancouver's Transportation Network."* p15. cited in <http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf>