

Regional Municipality of Waterloo

# Accessibility Service in the Region of Waterloo

Taxi By-law Review

Prepared for Licensing and Hearings Committee  
4/20/2016

## Accessibility Service in the Region of Waterloo

### Introduction

There are 7 levels of accessible transportation available within the Region of Waterloo. No surcharges are incurred by the user to utilize these services. These services may be scheduled, pre-booked or on-demand as indicated:

- Scheduled Service - **Grand River Transit (GRT)** – All GRT buses are accessible and can accommodate wheel chairs and mobility devices.
- Pre-Booked Service - **GRT Mobility Plus** (Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge) – GRT operates the specialized transit service MobilityPLUS consisting of 30 vehicles and also contracts regular and accessible taxi-cabs. Registered members, that cannot physically access conventional GRT services, can pre-book these transit services. This service also utilizes contracted accessible taxi-cabs in conjunction with the dedicated specialized transit fleet.
- Pre-Booked Service - **Kiwanis Transit** (Woolwich/Wellesley/Wilmot) – Kiwanis Transit, funded by GRT, operates 6 vehicles in conjunction with contracted accessible and regular taxi-cab vehicles. Registered members can pre-book these services. Members that do not require a wheel chair or mobility device may be accommodated in a regular taxi-cab.
- Pre- Booked Service - **GRT MobilityPLUS Taxi-Cab Service** (North Dumfries) – Registered users may pre-book accessible and regular taxi cabs.
- Pre-Booked Service – **GRT MobilityPLUS Commuter Bus Service (Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge)** – provides trips for those with cognitive disability to book trips to and from work or program activities.
- On-Demand Service - **GRT MobilityPLUS TaxiSCRIPT Service** (Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge) – this subsidized service allows registered users to purchase up to 24 books of coupons annually, at 50% of the actual face value, to use on taxi-cab services (both accessible and regular).
- On-Demand Service - **Accessible Taxi-Cabs** – 21 accessible taxis-cabs operated by the 5 Taxi-Cab Brokers can accommodate wheel chairs and mobility devices. The vehicles can accommodate 1 wheel chair or mobility device or 4 persons that do not require these devices. Persons that do not require a wheel chair or mobility device may also be accommodated in a regular taxi-cab. This provides the same level of service available to those without a disability at the same fare rate and equivalent wait times. These vehicles may be used by anyone but priority is given to those with a wheel chair or mobility device, or a person that cannot use a regular taxi-cab.

## Transportation Fees

GRT*/GRT MobilityPLUS/Kiwanis Transit	TaxiSCRIPT**	Taxis (Regular or Accessible)
Cash Fare - \$3.00	\$60 a book, maximum 24 books	Initial Meter Fare - \$3.50
Adult Tickets - \$12.85		Per KM - \$2.10
Reduced Tickets - \$11.15		Per Hour Waiting/Contract - \$31.20
Adult Monthly Pass - \$79.00		
Reduced Monthly Pass - \$67.00		

\* Registered GRT MobilityPLUS clients ride for free on GRT conventional services

\*\* The actual cost per book of TaxiSCRIPT is \$120.00, registered GRT MobilityPLUS clients pay 50% of face value and can purchase a maximum of 24 books.

## GRT

People registered with MobilityPLUS may ride conventional buses free of charge.

## MobilityPLUS Services

MobilityPLUS is a specialized service of pre-booked trips for people with a mobility challenge. People registered with MobilityPLUS can book a ride anywhere within the Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge city limits. . It uses small bus-style vehicles, and regular or accessible taxi-cabs to transport people with impaired mobility.

The Commuter Bus Service is available for those with cognitive disabilities in the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge and uses regular and accessible taxi-cabs

For residents in North Dumfries this service is supplied by regular and accessible taxi-cabs.

People seeking to use this program must meet the eligibility requirements and become a registered member of MobilityPLUS.

## **MobilityPLUS Eligibility**

A person may be eligible for the MobilityPLUS program if they meet any one of the following criteria:

- Physically unable to climb or descend steps on conventional public transportation
- Unable to walk a distance of 175 metres (575 feet)
- Suffer from a temporary disability, such as a broken leg
- Registered with CNIB

## **Booking MobilityPLUS**

MobilityPLUS can book rides in advance, anywhere within the city limits of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.

To book a ride the following guidelines are used:

- Recreational/Personal trips must be booked at least two business days ahead of the trip, and no more than seven days ahead.
- Rides for Saturday, Sunday and Monday must be booked by Thursday.
- Medical, post-secondary education and employment-related trips must be booked at least two weekdays ahead, and can be booked up to 28 days in advance.

Subscription bookings are permanently scheduled rides for the same day and time, and the same pick-up and drop-off location. Such rides are available to take people to and from work, post-secondary education or repeated medical appointments.

## **MobilityPLUS quick facts:**

- Currently, there are 7143 registered MobilityPLUS clients that use GRT conventional buses, MobilityPLUS uses dedicated vehicles and contracts regular and accessible taxi-cabs
- Transportation average cost per passenger on a MobilityPLUS vehicle is \$35.81
- Transportation average cost per passenger in a regular or accessible taxi is \$15.46
- The revenue recovery rate 9.03%

## **Kiwanis Transit**

Kiwanis Transit is a specialized service of pre-booked trips for people with a mobility challenge. People registered with Kiwanis Transit can book a ride anywhere within the Townships of Woolwich, Wilmot or Wellesley. It uses small bus-style vehicles, and regular or accessible taxi-cabs to transport people with impaired mobility.

People seeking to use this program must meet the eligibility requirements and become a registered member of Kiwanis Transit. The eligibility requirements are similar to GRT MobilityPLUS requirements.

A person may be eligible for these offered services if they are:

- 65 years of age or older
- Registered with CNIB
- Physical disability
- Cognitive disability
- Temporarily or seasonally disabled, affecting a person's mobility (such as a broken leg or visually impaired as defined by CNIB)

## **GRT MobilityPLUS TaxiSCRIP**

The TaxiSCRIP program offers increased travel opportunities for MobilityPLUS customers who live and travel in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. MobilityPLUS registrants who reside in these areas are able to purchase TaxiSCRIP which allows them to travel to and from their destination via a taxi. TaxiSCRIP books have coupons that represent a cash value. The cash value of every book is \$60, however a MobilityPLUS registrant can purchase one TaxiSCRIP book for \$30. When a taxi is called and arrives at the scheduled pick-up location, a MobilityPLUS customer can pay for their ride using the coupons in the TaxiSCRIP book. TaxiSCRIP cannot be used for travel within the townships and registrants on MobilityPLUS North Dumfries or Kiwanis Transit services are not eligible for TaxiSCRIP.

TaxiSCRIP is for the personal use of the MobilityPLUS registrant. Coupons cannot be resold or transferred to anyone else. Proven abuse of this policy will result in TaxiSCRIP privileges being revoked. Lost or stolen TaxiSCRIP coupons will not be reimbursed.

### **A TaxiSCRIP Book**

- Contains \$5, \$2 and \$1 coupons that add up to a total value of \$60.
- Is sold to MobilityPLUS customers for \$30.

- Has holes punched to differentiate each denomination for the ease of use for a person with a visual impairment.
- Does not expire.

Customers can purchase TaxiSCRIP books in an annual cycle from June 1 to May 31. Each customer can buy 1 book to a maximum of 24 books, depending on the length of active registration with MobilityPLUS.

Customers are granted MobilityPLUS service for varying lengths of time. If a registrant has service on a short term basis or during winter only, they can only purchase and use TaxiSCRIP in the months that they are actively registered on the program. Any extra TaxiSCRIP coupons that are remaining can be used if and when a customer's registration status is reactivated. If they have year round service, they can buy as many TaxiSCRIP books as they want up to a maximum of 24 books per year.

**To arrange a ride the user must tell the taxi company:**

- They are using TaxiSCRIP.
- If they will require assistance, such as an escort to the door.
- If they use a wheelchair, walker, or scooter.

**To pay a taxi-cab driver, a user must:**

- Show the driver a MobilityPLUS Photo ID card. The driver will record the ID number.
- Use the TaxiSCRIP coupons to pay the fare shown on the meter. If the meter fare is not an even dollar amount then the user pays the extra amount in coins. For example, a \$5.80 fare is paid with five dollars in coupons and 80 cents cash. The driver will not provide change from TaxiSCRIP.
- Others may travel with the user, up to the capacity of the vehicle, at no extra cost.

**Legislative Requirements for Municipalities and Accessible Taxi-Cabs**

Ontario Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards established the following requirements for municipalities and taxi-cabs:

**Duties of municipalities, accessible taxicabs**

**79.** (1) Every municipality shall consult with its municipal accessibility advisory committee, where one has been established in accordance with subsection 29 (1)

or (2) of the Act, the public and persons with disabilities to determine the proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs required in the community. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 79 (1).

(2) Every municipality shall identify progress made toward meeting the need for on-demand accessible taxicabs, including any steps that will be taken to meet the need, in its accessibility plan required under Part I. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 79 (2).

(3) Municipalities shall meet the requirements of this section by January 1, 2013. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 79 (3).

(4) In this section,

“accessible taxicab” means an accessible taxicab as defined in section 1 of Regulation 629 of the Revised Regulations of Ontario, 1990 (Vehicles for the Transportation of Physically Disabled Persons) made under the *Highway Traffic Act*. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 79 (4).

#### **Duties of municipalities, taxicabs**

**80.** (1) Any municipality that licenses taxicabs shall ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs are prohibited,

(a) from charging a higher fare or an additional fee for persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities for the same trip; and

(b) from charging a fee for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 80 (1).

(2) Any municipality that licenses taxicabs shall ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs place vehicle registration and identification information on the rear bumper of the taxicab. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 80 (2).

(3) Any municipality that licenses taxicabs shall ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs make available vehicle registration and identification information in an accessible format to persons with disabilities who are passengers. O. Reg. 191/11, s. 80 (3).

(4) The information in subsection (2) shall meet the requirements of subsection 58 (3). O. Reg. 191/11, s. 80 (4).

(5) Municipalities described in this section shall meet the requirements in this section,

(a) by July 1, 2011, in respect of subsection (1); and

(b) by January 1, 2012, in respect of subsections (2) and (3). O. Reg. 191/11, s. 80 (5).”

### History of Accessible Taxi Service in The Region of Waterloo

After extensive consultation in 2011/2012 with the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRACC) an accessibility taxi-cab ratio was recommended with a multi-year implementation schedule and the following milestones:

- 1) On January 01, 2012 amending by-law 11-060 came into force and the definition of an Accessible Taxi-Cab was established:

**"Accessible Taxi-cab"** means a Taxi-cab which has been built or modified in a manner that allows the conveyance of one (1) or more Passengers confined to wheel chairs.

This same amending by-law also established that no extra fee could be charged for a passenger with a disability or storage of a mobility aid or device.

- 2) In April 2012 the Region of Waterloo had 340 regular taxi-cabs and 15 accessible taxi-cabs.
- 3) On June 27, 2012 amending by-law 12-026 established a maximum of 16 accessible taxi-cabs licenses.
- 4) On December 19, 2012 amending By-law 12-061 came into force. This by-law established the following:
  - A maximum of 40 accessible taxi licenses shall be issued;
  - Taxi-Cab Brokers that hold 10 or more regular taxi-cab licenses shall provide at minimum the equivalent of 7% accessible taxi-cabs by January 01, 2017 and 10% accessible taxi-cabs by January 01, 2022;
  - Taxi-Cab Brokers that hold less than 10 regular taxi-cab licenses shall provide at minimum 1 accessible taxi-cab.

The following chart outlines the Region’s current accessible taxi ratios:

Year	Regular Taxi-Cabs	Accessible Taxi-Cabs	Current Ratio	Required ratio 2017	Required Ratio 2022
2016	345	23	6%	7%	10%



## **Regular or Accessible Taxi-Cab Use, Scheduling, Trips and Financials**

A Regular or Accessible Taxi-Cab user may book the vehicle:

- on-demand;
- pre-book;
- by telephone;
- on-line application;
- street hail/flag;
- taxi stand.

The user may pay for the service by:

- cash;
- credit card;
- debit card;
- GRT MobilityPLUS TaxiSCRIPT.

The regular or accessible Taxi-Cabs are dispatched by their individual Brokers but the calls for service are coordinated between the 5 Brokers.

The vehicles are scheduled 7 days a week 24 hours a day unless vehicle maintenance, break down or accident remove a vehicle from service. The majority of vehicles are made available for peak demand times 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday to Friday and scheduled so that the owners receive an equal amount of revenue hours. These peak demand times include contract obligations for GRT MobilityPLUS, Kiwanis transit, school service and medical appointments.

The accessible taxis, as well as regular taxi-cabs, are used for regular taxi service and also provide moving services, vehicle boosts, package delivery, WSIB service, Canada Post transport and school board service among other things to keep the vehicles financially supported.

Based on limited statistics received staff believe that in 2015 the taxi industry provided approximately 2,555,000 trips outside of contracted service obligations. Of that approximately 55,000 of those trips were dispatched to accessible vans for accessible users.

### **Region of Waterloo Taxi-Cab Costs**

The Region pays direct costs associated with accessible taxis contracted to MobilityPLUS, Kiwanis Transit, North Dumfries Accessible Service, TaxisSCRIPT and Commuter Bus Service.

The Region also pays direct taxi costs for Community Services programs, Public Health and homelessness programs.

The chart below outlines the 2015 actuals for net of GST costs to the Region for Regular and Accessible Taxi-Cabs:

Department/Division/Service	2015 Actual
<b>Grand River Transit</b>	
GRT MobilityPLUS	\$1,428,960.07
Taxiscript Service	\$714,889.68
North Dumfries Service	\$54,026.21
Commuter Service	\$168,878.69
Kiwanis Transit	\$273,941.00
<b>GRT Total</b>	<b>\$2,640,695.65</b>
<b>Community Services</b>	
Children's	\$45.34
EIS Administration	\$36.30
Seniors	\$632.28
Ontario Works Allowance and Benefits	\$1404.00
Housing	\$100.51
<b>Community Services Total</b>	<b>\$2,218.43</b>
<b>Public Health Total</b>	<b>\$6,923.38</b>
<b>Homelessness Programs Total</b>	<b>\$23,093.69</b>
<b>Total Region of Waterloo</b>	<b>\$2,672,931.15</b>

## School Board Taxi Costs

Regular and accessible taxi-cab use for the school board is approximately 377 trips per day for an average of 175 days or 60,000 to 70,000 trips annually. The approximate costs paid by the board are below:

School Year	Costs
2013/2014	\$1,330,000
2014/2015	\$1,250,000
2015/2016	\$1,100,000 (projected)

## Ontario Disability Support Program

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) does authorize taxi-cab use and it is funded by the Province of Ontario. It is for medical transportation and is controlled by a case worker that establishes criteria including number of trips, location and month. The transportation is not provided until the taxi-cab company receives an approval letter from the case worker.

## Taxi Industry Concerns

The Taxi Industry is concerned with the following issues:

- The service is mandatory for the taxi industry and there is no subsidy offered for the service to help offset vehicle purchase or maintenance costs;
- Cost of Accessible Taxi-Cab conversion, usually \$20k to \$30k, above vehicle purchase price of \$20k;
- Vehicle life span and replacement cost, vehicles are only good for 5 years and then must be replaced;
- Vehicle maintenance and repair costs, this includes the ramp, suspension, frame, doors and specialized safety belts, over and above routine maintenance;
- Accessible Taxi-Cabs are currently under utilized by the accessible community, approximately 2.1% of their calls are for actual wheel chair or mobility device users. The remainder of their are for other work to support the vehicle use and make them profitable;
- Time between actual accessible service calls can be extensive;
- The accessible community can use regular taxi-cabs, if they do not have a wheel chair or mobility device, but often will only use an accessible taxi;
- Persons without disability do not like using accessible taxi-cabs.

## **Accessible Community Concerns**

The accessible community identified the following issues pertaining to accessible taxi-cabs:

- Internet applications are not accessible;
- They identified that the meters need to be larger, with increased contrast and larger number displays;
- They indicated that the meters need to have an audible feature;
- They are concerned about wait times and accessible taxi-cab availability, the vans are used for regular service and other types of work over and above accessible service;
- Hours of service do not meet demand;
- They want the freedom of choice to use whatever taxi-cab Broker they want;
- They have a concern that those that require wheel chairs or mobility devices are overlooked;
- They want the accessible taxi-cabs to provide the same level of service as provided by regular taxi-cabs.

## **Accessible Taxi-Cab Owner and Vehicle Requirements**

The following basic requirements are needed to obtain an accessible taxi-cab owner license:

- Owner's name and address;
- Vehicle make, model, year, V.I.N. number, colour and Ontario licence plate number;
- Provide proof that the vehicle has been correctly modified to be used as an accessible vehicle designed to accommodate 1 or more wheel chairs;
- Vehicle ownership permit;
- Provide annually an Ontario vehicle safety certificate for a vehicle 10 years or newer and every 6 months for vehicles 10 years or older;
- Provide annually a propane inspection certificate if the vehicle uses this fuel type;
- Proof of Commercial Vehicle Liability Insurance in the amount of \$2 million dollars;
- Written acknowledgement of the person who will act as the Taxi-Cab Broker;
- Shall only operate for one Taxi-Cab Broker.

## **Accessible Taxi-Cab Driver's License Requirements**

The following basic requirements are needed to obtain an accessible taxi-cab driver's license:

- Valid Ontario Driver’s License with at least two years driving experience;
- Annually provide a current Ontario Driver’s abstract;
- Annually provide a current Police Criminal Background Check or a Police Vulnerable Sector Screen (Brokers require Vulnerable Sector Screens for Accessible Driver’s);
- Provide proof of English literacy;
- Provide written acknowledgement of the person who will act as Licence Owner and Broker;
- Provide proof that they have successfully passed an approved Accessibility Training Course (GRT Mobility provided Train-the-Trainer Services for the Taxi-Cab Broker Trainers).

### Accessible Taxi-Cab Fees

License Type	New Application Accessible	New Application Regular	Renewal Accessible	Renewal Regular
Taxi-Cab Owner	\$145	\$785	\$265	\$265
Additional Accessible Taxi-Cab	\$145	N/A	\$265	N/A
Taxi-Cab Driver’s License	\$145	\$145	\$120	\$120
New Taxi-Cab Plate	\$75	\$75	\$0	\$0
New Spare Taxi-Cab Plate	\$75	\$75	\$0	\$0
Sponsorship Transfer	\$15	\$15	\$0	\$0
License Replacement	\$15	\$15	\$0	\$0
Meter Test	\$30	\$30	\$0	\$0
Meter Re-Test	\$30	\$30	\$0	\$0

License Type	New Application Accessible	New Application Regular	Renewal Accessible	Renewal Regular
Replacement Plate	\$75	\$75	\$0	\$0

**Accessible and Regular Taxi Plates Scan**

The chart below provides a scan of numbers of taxi-cab license, regular and accessible issued in some major Canadian centers compared to the Region of Waterloo:

City	Population	Regular Licenses	Accessible Licenses	% Accessible
Region of Waterloo	568,500	345	23	6%
Ottawa	883,391	1,001	187	16%
Montreal	1,886,481	4,316	206	5%
Edmonton	877,926	1,185	95	8%
Vancouver	640,469	476	113	16%