

## **Backgrounder:**

December 10, 2014

### **HandyDART Riders' Alliance Working to Win Transit Funding Referendum**

The HandyDART Riders' Alliance is mobilizing HandyDART riders to ensure that the upcoming transit funding referendum in Metro Vancouver, which includes a 30% increase in HandyDART service, passes.

#### **HandyDART History and Service Freeze:**

HandyDART is a door-to-door transit service for people with disabilities and older seniors who cannot use the regular transit system for at least some trips. The service has been part of Metro Vancouver's public transit system since 1981 only because people with disabilities and seniors organized and fought to get the service funded.

When elected mayors and councillors sat on the TransLink Board, they listened to people with disabilities and seniors and increased HandyDART service hours by about 5% per year to keep up with demand. But after the provincial government imposed an appointed board in 2008, HandyDART service hours were frozen and HandyDART trip denials soared.

Previous freedom of information requests show that the result of this service freeze is people with disabilities and seniors were denied HandyDART service over 42,000 times in 2013, an eight-fold increase in four years. There were 5,075 HandyDART denials in 2009 and 42,418 in 2013.

The number of people over 70 in Metro Vancouver will increase by about 40% over the next decade – about 10,000 per year. This increase in older seniors will translate into a greater need for HandyDART. For safety, many people with disabilities and older seniors need door-to-door transit service provided by trained and experienced HandyDART drivers.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Transit Funding Referendum**

During the last election campaign BC Premier Christy Clark pledged that a referendum would have to be held before she would approve funding to improve transit service in Metro Vancouver. If the provincial cabinet approves the Mayors Council referendum question a mail in ballot will be sent out in spring 2015, likely with a three to six week window to return ballots.

The Mayors Council on Regional Transportation was tasked with coming up with a transit vision to take to voters. And the HandyDART Riders' Alliance and our allies campaigned to ensure that the Mayors Council would include funding for increased HandyDART service in

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Metro Vancouver's Aging Population and the Need for Improved HandyDART Service* (2013) <http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf>

their vision document, and we succeeded. The Mayors' vision was released in June 2014 and includes a 30% increase in HandyDART service hours over 10 years. This translates to about 2.7% per year compounded. This is an important step forward, although considerably more is really needed after a 5-year freeze and given our rapidly aging population.

The Mayors' Council preferred funding source will likely be a 0.5% regional sales tax to be applied only in Metro Vancouver.

### **Why is more HandyDART service Important?**

Accessible transit, including HandyDART, evolved as our society acknowledged the benefits of allowing people with physical or cognitive disabilities and older seniors to live and participate in society rather than being physically segregated in institutions or isolated at home. Failing to increase HandyDART service would impose substantial costs on the public health system and family care givers, as well as infringing on the rights of people living with disabilities. *Being denied HandyDART service can be compared to being sentenced to house arrest without committing any crime.*

### **About the HandyDART Riders' Alliance**

The HandyDART Riders' Alliance is a group of HandyDART riders and allies working for better HandyDART and accessible transit service in Metro Vancouver. The group was formed in 2013 in response to the crisis in HandyDART service following the 2008 service freeze. For more information see [www.handydartriders.ca](http://www.handydartriders.ca)

### **Allies for better HandyDART service**

The HandyDART Riders' Alliance is working closely with the following organizations to ensure the yes side wins the upcoming transit funding referendum:

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724 [www.atu1724.com](http://www.atu1724.com)

GetOnBoard BC transit coalition [www.GetOnBoardBC.ca](http://www.GetOnBoardBC.ca)

Metro Vancouver Alliance <http://iafnw.org/canada/metrovancouveralliance>

### **Resources**

See our website [www.HandyDARTriders.ca](http://www.HandyDARTriders.ca) for more [resources on HandyDART](#) and accessible public transit.

### **Contacts:**

Beth McKellar HandyDART Riders' Alliance Co-coordinator 604 444 9289

**[www.HandyDARTriders.ca](http://www.HandyDARTriders.ca)**