

DEDICATED ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT SERVICE (DATS) AUDIT

RECOMMENDATION

That the February 18, 2025, Office of the City Auditor report OCA02928, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the Dedicated Accessible Transit Service (DATS) audit.

REPORT

The DATS team, within the Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) Branch, provides door-to-door, shared-ride public transportation for people with physical or cognitive impairments who cannot use conventional transit.

The objective of the audit was to determine if the ETS Branch manages paratransit service effectively and efficiently to serve Edmontonians who are unable to use conventional transit.

Overall, the Office of the City Auditor (OCA) found that ETS partially met the audit objective. The service has several strengths. These include clearly defined values and responsibilities, effective use of technology, and positive relationships with contracted service providers. Staff generally feel well-equipped to do their jobs and DATS clients are satisfied with the service.

However, OCA found the following areas where ETS can improve how it manages the service:

- Eligibility assessment - DATS' documented eligibility assessment guidelines have not been updated since 2018. DATS staff do not directly refer to them when making eligibility decisions. DATS does not have a process to review whether these decisions align with the guidelines.

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- Privacy controls - There are weaknesses in DATS' password security and information retention practices.
- Contract management - The DATS team monitors whether contractors meet some, but not all of the minimum performance standards in their contract. DATS has not charged service assessments when contractors do not meet these standards. The DATS team does not have a second individual review and approve contractor invoices, and the OCA found invoicing errors.
- Strategic planning - DATS has not set goals, linked existing operational measures to them, or established targets for these operational measures. Though the DATS team participates in a Branch-level risk assessment, there is no regular, documented risk assessment process specific to paratransit. DATS has not evaluated its service model since it added contracted service providers in 2019. DATS has not set a timeframe for future service model reviews.
- Data integrity - DATS does not have sufficient data validation controls in place, and does not have a data quality assurance process to make sure data within its paratransit software is accurate, consistent, and complete.
- Training - The DATS team provides extensive training to its staff. However, training materials for some roles are outdated and DATS does not formally track whether these staff have completed training.

The OCA made the following eight recommendations to the ETS Branch:

1. Update and use documented assessment guidelines for making eligibility decisions, and formally review these decisions to provide fair and consistent access to the service for those who need it.
2. Update password requirements and destroy sensitive information in accordance with City rules to better safeguard City data.
3. Improve how it monitors contractors and apply additional formal controls to help enforce contract terms and conditions.
4. Have a second individual review and approve contractor assessments and invoices to reduce errors.
5. Improve its strategic planning by:
 - Enhancing its performance measurement framework to include clearly defined goals, measures, and targets to achieve its mission and vision.
 - Conducting regular risk assessments at the paratransit level to identify and address relevant risks.
6. Regularly review its service model to optimize value for money and service quality.
7. Implement data validation controls and a data quality assurance process to regularly review data accuracy and completeness to help make evidence-informed decisions.
8. Update its training materials and formally track training completion to equip staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide excellent service.

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POLICY

Bylaw 16097, Audit Committee Bylaw, Section 14(d) states that, "The Committee will review all reports from the City Auditor which will include reports from the City Auditor dealing with completed audit projects."

ATTACHMENTS

1. Dedicated Accessible Transit Service (DATS) Audit Report