

# Impact of Cancellation Requirements and Seasonal Conditions

## DATS

### **Recommendation:**

That the October 7, 2015, Transportation Services report CR\_2062, be received for information.

### **Report Summary**

**This report outlines existing processes and impacts of the DATS trip cancellation requirements, as well as the DATS seasonal conditions.**

### **Previous Council/Committee Action**

At the January 21, 2015, Transportation Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report to Transportation Committee on the impact of the revised DATS trip cancellation requirements and the impact of seasonal conditions on service provisions.

### **Report**

#### **Trip Cancellation Policy**

##### Background

Effective September 1, 2013, DATS revised the minimum notice time required to cancel a trip before the beginning of the pick-up window from 30 minutes to two hours. The impact of the change has allowed DATS to proactively reallocate resources to meet other trip demands. The change is in line with industry best practice, as well as a peer review conducted by the American Public Transportation Association (2010) that benchmarked required cancellation notice of Canadian paratransit providers.

##### Concerns from Stakeholders

Since the implementation of the revised policy, DATS has received feedback from customers, caregivers, and advocates. Feedback indicated that two hours advance notice is not always feasible for reasons such as: program cancellations, health concerns, or sudden changes in availability of a caregiver.

DATS intends that its cancellation policy encourage the proactive cancellation of trips, rather than deter customers from notifying when a cancellation is needed. Currently, incomplete trips due to customer no-shows, cancellations at the door, or late cancellations are considered in the same manner. The DATS follow-up process is initiated with multiple warning letters for missed trips and progressively escalates.

Excessive missed trips may result in a temporary suspension.

### Alternatives to the Current Policy

In June 2015, several alternative amendments to the current cancellation policy were presented to the DATS Advisory Group, which consists of DATS users and stakeholders. Feedback confirmed the need to distinguish between the types of missed trips and to establish different criteria for no-shows and cancellations at the door, in comparison to cancellations in advance.

Further stakeholder consultation is required, and is planned to be completed by the end of 2015. Review, creation, and implementation of a revised policy is planned for early 2016. The review will include customer circumstances for any cancellation, as well as the subsequent impact on DATS operations.

### **Seasonal Conditions**

#### Background

In order to foster inclusive communities and sustainable services, the City of Edmonton has committed to increase public transit accessibility features (e.g. low floor buses, accessible facilities, availability of customer training, etc). This commitment has rendered separate transit services like DATS to be the reasonable accommodation for those circumstances when conventional bus and LRT transit services cannot be used by individuals with a physical or cognitive disability.

As a winter city, DATS recognizes that there are challenges to navigating public transit under specific conditions or during certain times of the year. Some DATS customers are capable of using ETS in summer conditions, but not in winter, and this condition is recognized as winter-only eligibility. For example, conventional vehicles, bus stops, and paths of travel are not always accessible in winter for some customers.

#### Impact

An analysis of DATS winter-only (seasonal) eligibility was completed. Of the 8,836 DATS customers, 217 have winter-only eligibility. As a result of the winter-only eligibility program, DATS is able to provide an additional 175 trips per summer month (May through October) to other customers in need.

While there is a modest cost-avoidance due to DATS winter-only eligibility, the greatest value and intent of the initiative is matching customers with the most appropriate form of public transportation option for their abilities, thus promoting independence and an inclusive community. When accessible, conventional ETS services offers citizens a more flexible and convenient service.