

Our File/N/Réf.  
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DATE: 8 June 1999

TO/DEST: Co-ordinator, Transit Services Committee

FROM/EXP: General Manager

SUBJECT/OBJET: **PARATRANSPO CANCELLATION POLICY**

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### **DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Transit Services Committee approve the implementation of a Para Transpo customer cancellation policy (Appendix A attached).**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Para Transpo schedules its service so that 95% of its customers will be picked up within a half hour of an agreed upon time and the majority of its customers delivered to their destination within an hour of the same agreed upon time.

The weekday schedules produced by Para Transpo can accommodate up to 3000 one way trips however due to the high number of customer cancellations received after the schedules have been produced, only about 2500 trips are actually provided. At the same time, 5% of our customers are being refused service because their trips cannot be scheduled with the available resources.

To be able to provide transportation to as many customers as possible, customer cancellations must be significantly reduced. We propose to implement a customer cancellation policy which should reduce cancellations and allow Para Transpo to provide more transportation with the existing resources.

## BACKGROUND

Para Transpo customers reserve their transportation through either the Casual booking or the Regular booking process.

The Casual booking process is used by customers who want to go to a specific location on a specific day, but will not be returning to that location on a regular basis each week. The customer contacts Para Transpo one day in advance to request specific pick up times and locations. A limit of four one way trips can be reserved through this process until all other customers have had the opportunity to book their casual bookings.

The Regular booking process is used by customers who want to be at a specific location at the same time and day each week for a period of at least one month. A customer may have regular bookings once a week or as often as seven days a week and there is no limit on the number of regular bookings a person can reserve each day. A customer only needs to phone Para Transpo once to set up this type of booking and need not call again unless they wish to cancel. By definition, these bookings must be used, unchanged, at least 75% of the time to qualify as a 'regular booking' or they are subject to cancellation.

Unfortunately, some customers are often not using their regular bookings and many of these customers are canceling with insufficient notice. This practice is costly, wastes resources and denies transportation to other customers who might otherwise have been able to reserve a trip. As the number of unaccommodated trips has increased on Para Transpo over the years so has customer cancellations and in 1998, 130,000 one way trips were canceled by Para Transpo customers on the day of service. Unless notice of a cancellation is received prior to 5pm the day before the delivery of service, resources will be wasted and fewer customers will receive transportation.

To be able to provide transportation to as many customers as possible, customer trip cancellations must be significantly reduced. Para Transpo has advised its customers of this problem and have sought their cooperation through take ones that were placed on Para Transpo vehicles and mailed out to the many organizations that have regular contact with our clients. Also, clients who have been canceling the majority of their trips have been contacted and letters have been sent out to customers who cancel the most.

Despite these efforts, the number of customers who cancel with little notice continues to increase which means that fewer trips can be provided with the available resources. The current policy of requiring customers to use 75% of their regular bookings is difficult to enforce since even if a customer's regular bookings were removed, they could simply arrange as many new regular bookings as they wish. Some customers have booked a series of regular bookings each day and use only those that suit their needs, while canceling the majority of them at the last minute.

## PROPOSAL

To ensure that customers with regular bookings either use them as booked 75% of the time or cancel them permanently and use Para Transpo's Casual booking process, Para Transpo has developed the attached cancellation policy. It is similar to a policy presently used at the Toronto Transit Commission in the operation of their specialized transit service, but unlike the Toronto policy it does not remove service totally it simply temporarily removes the privilege of using the regular booking process. In Toronto their cancellation rate was reduced by approximately one third when their policy was implemented. The effects of this policy on Para Transpo services would be reviewed at least annually and recommendations for changes to the policy would be made based on the results of the review.

Para Transpo would like to implement this policy immediately. Staff believe that without such a policy, customer cancellations will continue to increase and so will the cost per trip of providing service.

## CONSULTATION

This policy has been reviewed by the Accessible Transit Advisory Committee and they fully support its implementation. The only concern expressed by the committee was that a customer who loses their regular bookings due to a high cancellation rate should still have access to medical trips. In these situations Para Transpo would ensure that medical trips are provided.

*Approved by  
M.J.E Sheflin, P.Eng.*

**Appendix A****D.R.A.F.T.****PARA TRANSPRO****REGULAR BOOKING  
LATE CANCELLATION/NO-SHOW POLICY**

The following policy applies to any Para Transpo customer who exceeds one or more of the following conditions over any 28 day (4 week) period.

1. Maximum of ten regular booking late trip cancellations\*.
2. Maximum of three regular booking no-shows\*.
3. Maximum of 25% of regular booking trips cancelled and/or no-showed.

\*Cancellations and no-shows are recorded on a single trip basis. A "round" trip is two single trips.

**Policy Actions**

Dependent upon the number of times a customer has exceeded the policy limits, different policy actions are taken.

The policy actions are as follows:

4. First letter is a warning.
5. Second letter within six months results in a one week suspension of regular bookings.
6. Third and each subsequent letter within twelve months, results in a one month suspension of regular bookings.

Cancellations and no-shows are not allocated to a customer when the Para Transpo service arrives after the 30 minute scheduled pick-up window.

Any cancellations which are determined by Para Transpo to be due to unusual circumstances (i.e. Para Transpo declares a snow emergency) will not be used in determining if a customer has exceeded the conditions of the policy.

### **Customer Appeals Process**

Since it would be impossible to document every circumstance which would constitute an exception to the policy as part of the policy itself, an appeal process is available to Para Transpo customers.

The appeals process is detailed below:

For the first policy action, the customer who wishes to appeal must telephone Para Transpo to resolve their appeal with the Supervisor of Administration and Customer Service, whose decision is final.

For the second and subsequent policy actions, the customer must appeal in writing to 'Para Transpo Administration'. In cases where a resolution cannot be achieved to the satisfaction of both parties, the appeal will be referred to an appeals panel consisting of a senior Para Transpo representative and a member of the Accessible Transit Advisory Committee. The panel will convene approximately once a month to resolve outstanding appeals.

Appeals must be received by Para Transpo within 10 days of the issuance of the letter of suspension. Appeals relating to the second or subsequent policy action letter must be made in writing, to the attention of 'Late Cancellation/No-Show Appeal', care of:

**Para Transpo Administration  
1500 St. Laurent Blvd.  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1G 0Z8**

Failure to appeal will result in the automatic application of the appropriate policy action. The customer's appeal documentation shall include the customer's name, registration number, address, telephone number, and a statement explaining the reason for the appeal.

From the time an appeal letter is received until the decision of the appeal panel is issued, the customer will continue to have access to the regular booking process.

### **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

#### **Late Cancellation**

A late cancellation is any trip cancelled on the day of service or the day before after 5 p.m., except as noted as 'Policy Exceptions'.

#### **No-Show**

A no-show occurs when the vehicle arrives within the 30 minute pick-up window at the designated pick-up location and either the trip is cancelled by the customer at the door, or the driver cannot locate the customer, except as noted in the ?Policy Exceptions?.

**Policy Action**

Warning letter or withdrawal of a type of service which is applied to a customer who fails to

**Policy Exceptions**

Cancellations that result from the arrival of the vehicle after the scheduled 30 minute pick-up window or that occur in circumstances determined by Para Transpo as unusual and unavoidable such as high cancellation days caused by a snow storm, etc.