

BACKGROUND

HANDYDART: A BACKBONE OF PROVINCIAL HEALTHCARE

April 5, 2017 -- HandyDART is a door-to-door, shared ride service for passengers with physical or cognitive disabilities when they are unable to use conventional public transit without assistance. Its net annual operating cost of \$60 million is 100% funded by regional taxpayers and riders.

This critical service provides mobility to those in the community who have few other transportation choices. In particular, it provides a vital link to the provincial healthcare system, including medical appointments, outpatient services and supports. In fact, 67% of HandyDART trips are used to access these services, as opposed to just 5% of all trips on the conventional transit system.

Giving these residents a mobility option to access these provincial services improves the quality of their healthcare, and allows the healthcare system to offer more outpatient and community-centered care, reducing costs and demand on hospital-based services. Demand for this service is expected to increase as the population of residents aged 70+ increases by 55% over the next decade, and as the provincial healthcare system continues to shift more services to community-centered care.

Phase One of the 10-Year Vision has already increased HandyDART service by 15%; by 2027, the 10-Year Vision will increase this service by 30% (as compared to a 25% increase to conventional service). However, this significant increase will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region. This service shortfall is in large part a reflection of the lack of provincial support for this service which is a backbone of the provincially funded healthcare system. This represents a download of provincial costs onto regional taxpayers.

The Mayors' Council is calling on all B.C. political parties to commit to working with TransLink and HandyDART riders immediately to more fairly fund HandyDART, including to commit to improving service above and beyond the 30% increase proposed in the 10-Year Vision, so our residents have access services at a level comparable to other major Canadian cities.