



HandyDART Customer-First Plan

November 2025





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Summary of Initiatives

SECTION		INITIATIVE	STATUS
Before You Go	Section 1 Matching Needs & Services	1.1 Simplified Application Process	Planning
		1.2 Personalized Eligibility and Review Process	Planning
		1.3 Enhanced, Personalized Travel Training	Planning
	Section 2 More Flexible Travel Options	2.1 Online Trip Booking	In Development
		2.2 Improved Trip Availability	In Development
		2.3 Expanded Hours of Service	Launching Soon
During Your Ride	Section 3 Convenient & More Reliable Travel	3.1 Improved Trip Reliability	In Development
		3.2 Integrated with Compass Modernization	Research
	Section 4 Modernized Fleet	4.1 Smaller Vehicles	Planning
		4.2 Electric Vehicles	Planning
	Section 5 Increased Peace of Mind	5.1 Improved Real-Time Trip Information	In Development
		5.2 Timely and Customized Notifications	In Development
		5.3 Enhanced Visual Identification for Non-Dedicated Service Providers	Planning
	Section 6 Enhanced Quality of Care	6.1 Expanded Training for Non-Dedicated Service Providers	Planning
		6.2 Non-Dedicated Service Provider Certification	Planning
		6.3. Strengthened Accountability	In Development
There When You Need Us	Section 7 Building Customer Connections	7.1 Easier to Connect with Us	Planning
		7.2 Improved Customer Feedback Process	In Development
		7.3 Evolving the HandyDART Brand	Research
Behind the Scenes	Section 8 Making it Possible	8.1 Enhanced Internal Capacity	In Development
		8.2 Specialized Delivery Partners	In Development
		8.3 Facilities	In Development
		8.4 Software & Data	In Development
		8.5 Coordinating with Provincial Partners	In Development
STATUS LEGEND	Research: exploring range of ideas, to determine which might be worth pursuing Planning: scoping promising initiatives, includes defining how it will work, timelines, and budgets In Development: designing and implementing the initiative, including testing		



Introduction

HandyDART is TransLink's door-to-door custom transit service for customers who are unable to independently use the conventional transit system due to disability. It's a vital service that connects people to healthcare, work, post-secondary education, errands, and opportunities to stay connected with family and friends.

Today, HandyDART is one of TransLink's most valued services with over 32,000 registered customers. The service continues to earn high marks for customer satisfaction and trip delivery. In 2024, 1.2 million trips were delivered, 91 per cent of which were delivered on time, and, with an 8.8/10 customer satisfaction scores were among the highest of all TransLink services in key areas like ease of booking and overall service quality.

8.8/10

Second highest customer satisfaction score ever recorded (2024)

1,200,000+

Trips delivered (2024)

As the region's population continues to grow and age, demand for HandyDART services is growing with it. Changing demographics are expected to increase demand for HandyDART services by more than 30 per cent by 2030. Rising demand, shifting demographics, and evolving customer expectations mean we must continue to improve services to support the customer experience. We must also do so cost-effectively so that we can ensure that when people need HandyDART we are able to provide them with a high-quality experience.

The HandyDART Customer-First Plan charts a course for HandyDART's future, building on past engagement and updated research that helps us better understand who our customers are, why they use HandyDART, and what improvements we can make to service that will support their journey.

Building on the 2007 Access Transit Strategy, which set a long-term vision for the service, and the 2017 Custom Transit Service Delivery Review, which identified opportunities for service improvement, and the 2023 Accessibility Plan actions, which identified accessibility improvements for all TransLink services, this plan also aligns with Transport 2050, the region's vision for the future of transit and transportation in Metro Vancouver.

The initiatives discussed in this report respond to customer and stakeholder inputs collected during engagement processes in 2021 and 2024, through the ongoing work of the HandyDART User Advisory Committee, and from feedback received from customers through their everyday use of the service. This plan will continue the evolution of HandyDART into a more responsive, cost-effective, and inclusive custom transit service.

HandyDART Guiding Principles

HandyDART service is anchored by TransLink's Customer Promise: to always put you first – your safety, your time, and your connection to the people and places that matter most.

This plan builds upon this promise and is guided by several core principles:

- **Customer Convenience:** Deliver a flexible and adaptive service that effectively responds to the evolving needs of customers and the region.
- **Reliability:** Match customers with the most effective trip for their needs, using data and insights to minimize customer wait times and time spent in the vehicle.
- **Safety and Comfort:** Provide every customer with a safe, consistent, and high-quality travel experience.
- **Affordability:** Deliver a cost-effective service, while balancing trip availability and high-quality customer experience.
- **Sustainability:** Explore opportunities to integrate sustainable practices across operations.

Understanding Customer Needs

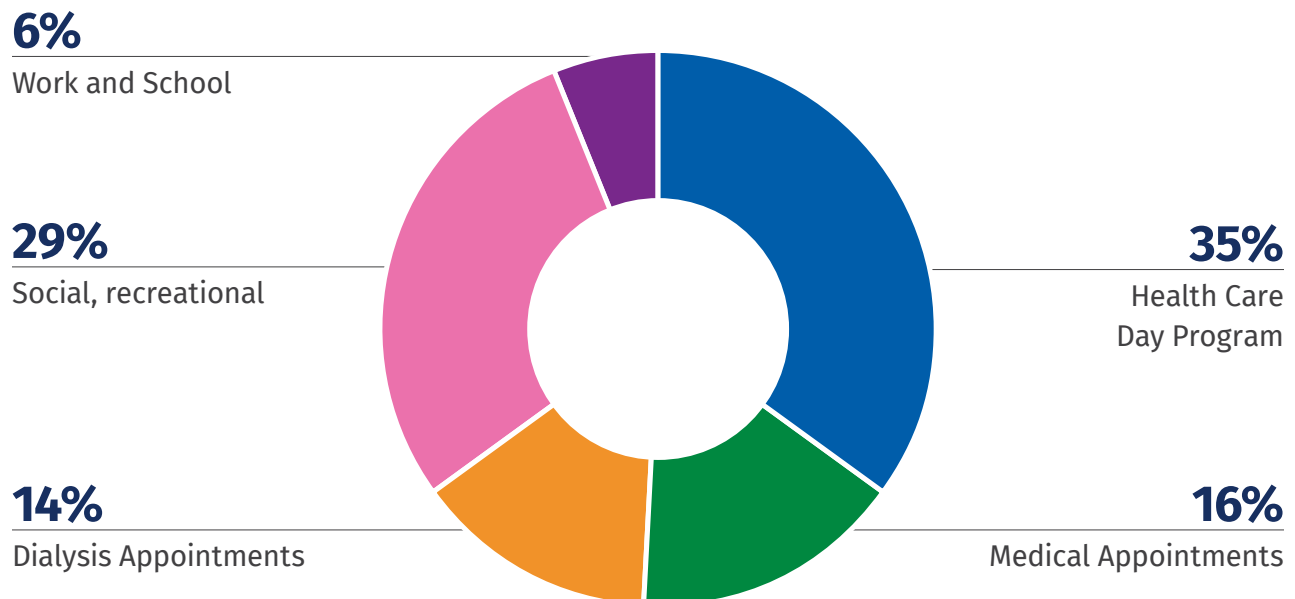
HandyDART customers are a diverse group of individuals with different abilities, from a variety of age groups, genders, and cultural backgrounds. Customers with physical challenges, sensory issues, or cognitive disabilities may need additional assistance to help navigate public transit.

HandyDART bridges these accessibility gaps by accommodating customer needs with a more personalized approach to transit. Trips are supported with individualized trip planning and are delivered using a mix of specialized vehicles, including shuttle buses, vans, and sedans. All HandyDART services are provided by drivers specially trained to support customers with disabilities.

HandyDART Supports a Diverse Group of Customers

With more than 32,000 registered customers, HandyDART connects people with healthcare, employment, education, errands, and opportunities to stay in touch with friends and family. HandyDART customers have varying needs, which means we must offer a range of service solutions to support them.

Figure 1: 2024 HandyDART travel by trip purpose



Knowing who our customers are and why they use HandyDART service helps us better respond with service options that meet their diverse needs.

Health Care Day Program participants make up more than one-third of all HandyDART trips. This group includes two very different age ranges: young adults (ages 20–30) and older adults (ages 80–90). These customers travel an average of three times per week and book the highest number of subscription trips to attend day program locations. Approximately one third of these customers require handoff to a caregiver.

Social, recreational, and business activities are the next most common reasons for HandyDART trips. Most of these customers are older adults (ages 80–90), but they also include young seniors in their 60s. About 90 per cent of these trips are on-demand bookings. They average 5.8 km in length, with customers typically travelling three to four times a month to seniors centres, recreational facilities, and shopping districts.

Medical appointments are the third most frequent trip purpose. Most customers are seniors, with demand peaking around age 70. On average, they travel twice a month to medical facilities, and almost all trips are booked on demand.

Dialysis appointments are the fourth segment of trips, and second largest source of subscription trips. Most customers are in their mid-70s and travel twice a week to dialysis treatment centres. These trips make it possible for patients to receive recurring life-sustaining medical treatment, while continuing to live in the community.

Work and school trips make up the final segment. These customers are mostly young adults aged 20–30. They travel one to two times per week, usually over longer distances to post-secondary institutions and employment districts. Bookings are evenly split between subscription and demand trips.

Desire for More Spontaneous Travel

Over the past five years, customer travel patterns have undergone noticeable shifts. Subscription trips (e.g., pre-booked and recurring) have decreased by 10 per cent in favour of on-demand trips (one-time appointments or events that do not recur regularly). HandyDART customers have also told us that they want the freedom to travel more spontaneously.

The growing demand for flexible travel has implications for scheduling and routing HandyDART vehicles, as it necessitates accommodating more varied schedules and travel patterns.

Supporting this desire for more spontaneous travel means that ensuring the accessibility of all TransLink's services will be key to meeting the shifting needs of customers.



Accessible Transit Has Evolved to Meet Customer Needs

In 1980, HandyDART was launched with a small fleet of lift-equipped shuttle buses. From the beginning, HandyDART has been operated by specialized providers with demonstrated expertise in delivering paratransit services and customers have played an integral role in the service's evolution.

The introduction of HandyDART went beyond providing specialized services for people in wheelchairs. Over time, all of TransLink's services — bus, SeaBus, SkyTrain, and West Coast Express — were redesigned to be more accessible.

A More Accessible, Integrated System

By 2008, every vehicle in the fleet could be used by customers using mobility devices such as wheelchairs. Change didn't stop there, our 2023 Accessibility Plan covers key initiatives in four action areas that help further TransLink's commitment to make the entire transit system accessible and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities.

In addition to accessible vehicles and stations, TransLink offers additional support

for independent travel such as sighted guide assistance and tap-free fare gate access at SkyTrain stations. Most recently, braille and tactile signs have been added to all bus stops, and a new public washroom has opened at Metrotown Station. These efforts help make conventional transit an option for more customers.

Many customers need door-to-door service for every trip. Others only need it occasionally, such as for medical treatments or during extreme weather. Once registered, customers keep their HandyDART status regardless of the frequency with which they take either HandyDART or conventional transit, which makes it easy to integrate the use of many different kinds of transit based on customer need.

With accessibility enhancements in place across the rest of the transit system, HandyDART is increasingly a solution to bridge accessibility gaps and connect customers to fast and frequent conventional transit services, while continuing to serve customers who require door-to-door service.

Diverse HandyDART Services

Meeting diverse customer needs is about more than just supporting a connected, integrated transit system. It also means offering a range of service types within

HandyDART to best support customers on their journey.

One of the ways HandyDART meets this need is by using both dedicated shuttles and non-dedicated taxis. HandyDART taxis are a critical aspect of HandyDART service delivery, ensuring customers can get to their destination. Taxis are arranged, at no additional cost to the customer, if a HandyDART shuttle is unavailable due to high periods of demand, traffic delays, or other circumstances such as to accommodate some larger mobility devices that requires a taxi with a wheelchair ramp.

Taxis play a critical role in enabling HandyDART service

In 2024, 1.2 million HandyDART trips were delivered. But, without taxis, more than 271,000 trips would have been denied in 2024 alone.

Leveraging taxis to support paratransit service delivery is common industry practice. Other major transit systems across North America also rely on taxi services to support their custom and paratransit services. For example, Montreal relies on taxis for the vast majority of their paratransit trips, and Calgary uses taxis for about 55 per cent of trips.

All HandyDART taxi drivers are required to maintain the same standard of care as HandyDART shuttle operators. Only approved companies and drivers who complete specialized training for serving customers with disabilities are permitted to provide HandyDART taxi trips.

TransLink recognizes that taxis may not be the right fit for all customers due to medical or mobility requirements; the HandyDART team works with customers and their caregivers to find the vehicle options that best suit their needs.

HandyDART's Evolution: Shaped by Users

Pre-1980	▶ Transportation services for people with disabilities offered by charitable organizations, such as Easter Seals.
1980	▶ Dedicated paratransit service for people with disabilities began, overseen by Urban Transit Authority (now BC Transit) and operated by third party service providers.
1999	▶ TransLink was established and took over responsibility for all public transit services in Metro Vancouver, including HandyDART.
2005	▶ Customer and community input for TransLink's Access Transit Strategy, including from the Committee to Promote Accessible Conventional Transit (ComPACT).
2007	▶ Access Transit Strategy adopted by TransLink Board, supported by ComPACT. Included direction to streamline HandyDART service delivery from 8 contracts, establish Access Transit Office and Users' Advisory Committee to ensure ongoing user input into decision-making.
2008	▶ Access Transit User Advisory Committee established, building on ComPACT's legacy of user and stakeholder input in creating accessible transit.
2009	▶ HandyDART service delivery streamlined from 8 contracts and service areas to one service provider
2010	▶ First annual HandyDART customer survey and report
2013	▶ Introduction of taxis on HandyDART to meet rising customer demand for the service. Resulted in drastic decrease in trip denials.
2016	▶ Custom Transit Service Delivery Review commenced with dedicated stakeholder advisory committee
2017	▶ Custom Transit Service Delivery Review and 28 recommendations adopted by TransLink Board.
2019	▶ Custom Transit Service Delivery Review recommendations implemented, including dedicated HandyDART User Advisory Committee established, first HandyDART Service Performance Review developed, and Travel Training program introduced.
2021	▶ HandyDART Modernization Program development and customer and stakeholder engagement.
2021	▶ Implemented age-based fare discounts and Compass on HandyDART initiatives from HandyDART Modernization Program.
2022	▶ Adoption of Transport 2050, the region's vision for the future of transit and transportation in Metro Vancouver.
2024	▶ Customer, operator, and stakeholder engagement held as part of HandyDART Service Delivery Model Review
Today–2025	▶ HandyDART Customer First Plan developed to progress customer priorities

Customer Engagement Drives Our Way Forward

User advisory groups and customer engagement have been essential in shaping many of the policies, standards, and technical decisions behind HandyDART over the past decade, and they continue to be critical moving forward.

Some of the key milestones that these groups have helped guide include:

2017: We engaged customers and stakeholders to help shape recommendations for the Custom Transit Service Delivery Review, which focused on ways to improve the service, meet growing demand, and secure ongoing funding. TransLink actioned all of the recommendations from the Delivery Review. One particularly noteworthy outcome was the creation of a standalone HandyDART User Advisory Committee in 2019.

2021: TransLink invited customers and stakeholders to share their views on the HandyDART Modernization Program, which focused on improving customer experience.

2024: We engaged customers, HandyDART employees, and key stakeholders to understand what they value in the service as we embarked on the HandyDART Delivery Model Review.

In addition to these formal project engagements, TransLink has ongoing channels that allow customers and stakeholders to highlight opportunities for improvement including the HandyDART User Advisory Committee, annual HandyDART Customer Service Performance surveys, and the Access Transit Customer Care call centre.

The feedback received through these and other channels along with formal engagement efforts have informed the development of this plan.

Through all our customer and stakeholder engagement, the message has been clear: the service works well, but we can always find ways to improve it. Common themes we have heard from customers and the community include:

- **Increased service availability and flexibility:** Customers have expressed a desire for more trip options and easier bookings.
- **More convenient, reliable service:** Customers have expressed interest in shorter travel durations and less waiting.
- **Taxi quality and care:** Customers have expressed a desire for enhancing taxi service quality and care for those with complex care needs.
- **Customer service:** Customers have expressed a desire to streamline customer service channels and decrease call wait times.

This customer-first approach to HandyDART aims to put this feedback at the forefront and ensure that every service enhancement focuses on improving the customer's experience.



Customer-First Initiatives

Building on what we've heard from customers, their caregivers, and the community, the initiatives outlined in this report will improve the customer experience while ensuring TransLink continues to run an efficient and effective service so that it is available to the growing number of people who need it.

These initiatives respond to evolving customer needs and expectations through an increasingly integrated system, delivering changes in seven key areas:

- **Matching needs and services**
- **More flexible travel options**
- **Convenient and more reliable travel**
- **Modernized fleet**
- **Increased peace of mind**
- **Enhanced quality of care**
- **Building customer connections**

In the coming years, these changes will make HandyDART service more reliable, available, and resilient. Projects are moving steadily from Research (understanding the issue and exploring feasibility), to Planning (setting out how to best achieve project objectives), and then to Development (securing resources, design, and implementation). Customer and stakeholder engagement will continue as part of the individual initiatives within this plan, to ensure they continue to reflect user needs.



BEFORE YOU GO

1. Matching Needs & Services

TransLink is committed to enhancing customer experience by improving how customers apply, qualify, and travel across the network. The initiatives below are designed to align HandyDART services with evolving customer needs while supporting long-term system efficiency.

These initiatives include:

- **A simpler application** that reduces paperwork.
- **A more personalized eligibility and review system** that focuses on individual ability and ensures every application is handled with care.
- **Expanded travel training** to give customers the knowledge and confidence to use HandyDART and conventional transit together.

These changes put customers first, ensuring the service continues to meet a wide range of needs and increasing demand.

1.1 Simplified Application

Customer Benefits:	Convenience, Faster Document
Status:	Planning Phase

Applying for HandyDART will be easier than ever with a new digital experience.

Customers will complete a simplified application online. If preferred, hard copy applications will still be available.

The new application process will emphasize skills and ability over medical diagnosis. There will be no cost for this simplified service, and no need to download or print forms. Once approved, customers can start using HandyDART right away.

1.2 Personalized Eligibility and Review Process

Customer Benefits:	Convenience, Fairness, Accountability
Status:	Planning Phase

After submitting their application, customers may receive an invitation to meet with a TransLink occupational therapist for a personal assessment of how TransLink's services can best meet their needs. Customers can also choose to see their own medical doctor for their personal assessment.

Every application will be treated fairly and with care. To reduce barriers for individuals who can't travel independently on the conventional system, certain applications may not require a personal assessment.

New customers who require door-to-door service only in certain situations may qualify for a new type of flexible HandyDART eligibility. This designation will prompt the new booking system to match the customer with the best service option.

All applicants will have the right to appeal eligibility decisions. Appeals will be reviewed by a newly created panel, following a transparent process. Every appeal will be given careful consideration.

1.3 Enhanced, More Personalized Travel Training

Customer Benefits:	Confidence, Flexibility, Faster Travel Time
Status:	Planning Phase

Expanded access to on-system, one-on-one travel training will provide customers with the orientation, information, and confidence necessary to use accessible conventional transit services appropriate to their needs as identified through the application process.

Travel training has proven to be a huge benefit for customers unfamiliar with the transit system. It is currently offered in workshops, virtually, and on the system. Training is also available for staff and volunteers supporting our customer groups. Existing in-person workshops and sessions cover topics such as how to board and exit a bus using a mobility device and how to get assistance on transit. Other tools include our Accessible Transit in Metro Vancouver Guide, available in multiple languages in print or digital, and the Travel Training Videos online.

Customers will have the option to book expanded one-on-one training sessions directly online or over the phone.

2. More Flexible Travel Options

We know that HandyDART customers want more flexible service. The introduction of new booking technology, coupled with select operational changes aim to address this desire, delivering greater convenience, flexibility, and access to the system.

The following sections highlight three initiatives that are at varying stages of planning and development:

- **Online Trip Booking** – enabling 24/7 booking and cancellation of trips online, while maintaining phone-based options.
- **Improved Trip Availability** – using advances in scheduling software to provide increased travel options.
- **Expanded Hours of Service** – extending operating hours later into the evening to better meet customer needs.

Together, these initiatives will modernize how HandyDART customers plan and book their trips, delivering greater convenience, flexibility, and access.

2.1 Online Trip Booking

Customer Benefits:	Convenience, Choice, Time Savings
Status:	In Development

New online services and digital tools will make booking trips faster and more convenient. Customers and their care providers will be able to request a single trip (one-way or return) or set up a series of regular trips using the HandyDART booking page on their browser or through a smart phone mobile app. They will also be able to more easily cancel or modify trips. This service will be available 24/7.

For those who prefer, booking agents will still be available by phone. TransLink will also assess opportunities for using new digital tools to make phone-based trip requests available 24/7.

2.2 Improved Trip Availability

Customer Benefits:	Choice, Flexibility, Time Travel Savings
Status:	Planning Phase

The latest generation of scheduling software will deliver better ride matching and, in turn, increase trip availability. This improvement will build on the trip availability gains previously captured by the 2025 cancellation policy update and will result in more trip availability at time of booking.

In addition, the new software will make it possible to generate additional integrated travel options based on time of travel, destination, customer profile, and travel conditions. Customers requesting door-to-door travel may also receive options for integrated trips combining HandyDART and conventional transit that provide them greater flexibility for when they travel.

Together, these initiatives will give customers more choice with trips that match their needs and abilities through operational efficiency.

2.3 Expanded Hours of Service

Customer Benefits:	Convenience, Accessibility
Status:	Launching soon

To provide greater access to late night travel to all customers with disabilities, HandyDART is expanding hours of operation to offer late-night service. This service hour expansion extends operating hours, with last drop off extending from 12 a.m. to 2 a.m., seven days a week. TransLink will monitor demand and make adjustments as needed.

Following implementation of the booking and dispatch software improvements, TransLink will also assess opportunities to expand the HandyDART booking window. This would be a further response to customer demand for more flexible and spontaneous accessible travel.



DURING YOUR RIDE

3. Convenient & More Reliable Travel

Designed to give customers greater peace of mind, make service delivery more transparent, and ensure HandyDART keeps pace with advances in fare systems and complementary programs, these initiatives are focused on strengthening reliability, accountability, and integration.

The following sections highlight two priority initiatives:

- **Improved Trip Reliability** – using advanced scheduling software to reduce cancellations and optimize routes to avoid congestion and delays.
- **Integration with Compass Modernization Program** – reviewing fares to ensure ongoing equality and further simplifying payments for custom transit.

Together, these initiatives will reinforce HandyDART as a reliable, transparent, and fully integrated service within TransLink's broader transit network.

3.1 Improved Trip Reliability

Customer Benefits:	Reliability, Peace of Mind
Status:	Implementation Phase

The latest generation of scheduling and dispatch software will include real-time route optimization features to help HandyDART vehicles avoid congestion and unexpected road closures, resulting in more on-time arrivals and faster and more predictable travel times.

For customers this will mean less waiting and less time travelling, and more reliably getting where they need to go, when they expect to be there.

3.2 Integration with the Compass Modernization Program

Customer Benefits:	Convenience, Choice, Comfort
Status:	Review Phase

HandyDART customers already benefit from easy payments through the Compass program and age-based discounts, implemented following requests from customers for easier travel on conventional transit in 2021.

As part of the future Compass Modernization Program, TransLink will review custom and conventional transit fares to ensure fairness and simplified payments for the growing number of customers making trips across

the integrated system. This may include removing fare disincentives that exist for some customers who combine HandyDART and conventional transit trips. The Compass Modernization Program also provides an opportunity to review the TaxiSaver program to understand its usage and how it might be adapted and modernized to support the region's vision for custom transit.

In the future, HandyDART customers may also not need to show any form of payment when boarding a HandyDART vehicle. Their fare could be linked directly to their booking, and the payment processed automatically in the background, increasing convenience and comfort for users.

4. Modernized Fleet

Changes in customer travel behaviour over the last number of years have resulted in a significant shift towards 'demand' trips, leading to less efficient scheduling and fewer passengers on average on board each custom transit trip.

This has resulted in a current fleet sizing and mix that is not aligned with present demand. Historically, the HandyDART shuttles have been our default choice, but advances in trip-matching, brought about by the new booking software, will make it more feasible to deploy a wider mix of vehicles, including smaller vehicles that can be more closely aligned with customer occupancy patterns, operational needs and electrification plans.

Together, these initiatives will help shape the future HandyDART fleet, balancing accessibility, reliability, and sustainability.

4.1 Smaller Vehicles

Customer Benefits:	Time Travel Savings, Convenience, Flexibility
Status:	Planning Phase

HandyDART service is currently provided by a mix of vehicle types, including two sizes of dedicated shuttles as well as a diverse fleet of taxi operated sedans and wheelchair accessible minivans. This diverse fleet mix helps to meet the diverse needs of HandyDART customers.

TransLink will pilot introducing smaller vehicles (e.g. sedans or vans) into the dedicated HandyDART fleet to increase operating efficiency while also improving convenience and comfort for customers who do not need a lift-equipped shuttle. Operating efficiency gains may also translate into increased service availability for customers.

Customer and operator feedback on these smaller vehicles will help inform TransLink's ongoing fleet renewal decisions

4.2 Electric Vehicles

Customer Benefits:	Sustainability, Comfort
Status:	Planning Phase

Electric vehicles are also anticipated to provide smoother and quieter rides for HandyDART customers.

Customer and operator feedback on the first electric HandyDART vehicles will help inform the overall fleet electrification plan.

5. Increased Peace of Mind

Improving communication, transparency, and trust throughout the HandyDART customer journey will reduce customer waiting times and give them greater peace of mind by providing real-time information, strengthening connections with operators, and ensuring vehicles and drivers are clearly identifiable.

The following sections highlight three initiatives in various stages of development:

- **Improved Real-Time Trip Information** – enabling real-time tracking with estimated arrival times vehicle information for all HandyDART trips.
- **Timely and Customized Notifications** – expanding automated messaging so customers know when their vehicle will arrive and whether to expect a HandyDART shuttle or HandyDART taxi.
- **Enhanced Visual Identification for HandyDART Taxis** – renewing efforts to make HandyDART taxis easier to recognize through branded vests, advance alerts, and, in future, the potential for driver profiles with names and photos.

Together, these initiatives will strengthen customer confidence by making every trip more predictable, transparent, and secure.

5.1 Improved Real Time Trip Information

Customer Benefits:	Peace of Mind, Convenience, Security
Status:	In Development

Through the new software, map-based, real-time vehicle tracking, with an estimated arrival time, will allow customers to better time their arrival at the designated pick-up location.

“Where’s My HandyDART” and “What’s My Vehicle” information will help customers and their caregivers know not only where their ride is, but also what kind of vehicle is picking them up.

Mobile tools also create the possibility of taking it one step further in connecting customers with their HandyDART operators. The new software platform may include opportunities to share information between the two parties before and during travel that will further simplify pickups and drop-offs, such as driver profile photos and customer real-time location.

5.2 Timely and Customized Notifications

Customer Benefits:	Peace of Mind, Convenience
Status:	Planning Phase

Software enhancements and improved real time trip information will enable improvements in the reliability and utility of alerts and notices across all means of customer communication. Automated messages could be delivered via phone call, text, email, or mobile app to provide timely and more accurate notifications of vehicle arrival time and type.

This will also include options for clients to customize their alert preferences, so that they receive the trip reminders and notifications in the way that best helps them prepare for their journey and avoid unnecessary waiting.

5.3 Enhanced Visual Identification for HandyDART Taxis

Customer Benefits:	Peace of Mind, Security
Status:	Planning Phase

To help make HandyDART taxis and their drivers more easily identifiable to customers, TransLink is exploring multiple ways to integrate the brand with taxi services. This will include updated vests with HandyDART branding and visual identity as part of the required taxi driver uniform. The HandyDART taxi uniform will also include any additional identification developed through the HandyDART taxi certification program, such as a photo ID badge. TransLink will also explore opportunities for exterior visual identifiers for taxis vehicles providing HandyDART service.

Once the new booking software is implemented, the website and digital tools will offer “What’s My Vehicle” and “Where’s My HandyDART” in real time. This system may include adding driver profile information including a name and photograph.

6. Enhanced Quality of Care

With roughly one-quarter of HandyDART trips now completed by taxi, it's imperative that there is a consistent, high-quality customer experience across all service providers.

The following section highlights three initiatives in the planning phase that will progress this goal:

- **Expanded Training for HandyDART Taxi Drivers** – enhancing the existing program with new in-person sessions and a modern learning management system (LMS) that delivers interactive modules, real-life customer scenarios, and knowledge testing.
- **HandyDART Taxi Driver Certification** – introducing a formal certification program to recognize successful completion of expanded training, supported with identification materials, with annual recertification required.
- **Strengthened Accountability for HandyDART Services** – expanding taxi performance monitoring and improving public reporting.

Together, these initiatives will strengthen the role of HandyDART taxi within the network and increase accountability across all HandyDART services, ensuring that customers receive safe, comfortable, and reliable service at all times.

6.1 Expanded Training for HandyDART Taxi Drivers

Customer Benefits:	Safety, Comfort, Customer Experience
Status:	Planning Phase

Both HandyDART shuttle operators and HandyDART taxi drivers receive specialized training in passenger assistance, our door-to-door service standard, and disability awareness.

All HandyDART taxi drivers are required to meet the same standard of care as HandyDART shuttle operators. In the past customers have reported inconsistent experiences with HandyDART taxis, and expanded training aims to address these concerns.

A new digital learning management system (LMS) has been rolled out to dedicated HandyDART operators to supplement in person training. This LMS will be expanded to HandyDART taxi operators to provide a full suite of training modules featuring interactive content, customer scenarios, and more robust knowledge tests. This will expand upon the current mandatory training and annual refresher program for HandyDART taxi operators, to keep their specialized knowledge current.

6.2 HandyDART Taxi Driver Certification

Customer Benefits:	Safety, Comfort, Customer Experience
Status:	Planning Phase

A “Service Provider HandyDART Certificate” program will be introduced to officially recognize successful completion of the expanded HandyDART training and testing for taxi drivers.

Those who qualify and maintain their certification through annual re-testing will be registered as Certified HandyDART drivers and issued branded badges and uniforms for easy identification.

This certification will become a requirement to deliver HandyDART taxi service.

6.3. Strengthened Accountability for HandyDART Services

Customer Benefits:	Customer Experience, Comfort
Status:	Planning Phase

We will be renewing efforts to strengthen accountability for HandyDART taxi operators by improving performance monitoring with better data, conducting more audits to ensure quality standard is being met, and continuing to prioritize strong positive performance and behaviour, while addressing poor performers.

We will be enhancing our annual **HandyDART Service Performance Review** with more detailed data for dedicated and non-dedicated trips enabled by new software, to provide transparency in ridership and performance reporting.

To guide this work, new Custom Transit Service Guidelines will consolidate and refine existing policies and performance measures across operations, service quality, and customer experience, providing greater clarity and consistency in planning and reporting.



THERE WHEN YOU NEED US

7. Building Customer Connections

Simpler access points, better feedback systems, and a refreshed brand identity will help strengthen the customer's relationship with HandyDART. These efforts are designed to make it easier for customers to connect with services, share their experiences, and see their needs reflected in how HandyDART operates.

The following sections highlight three initiatives in various stages of development:

- **Easier to Connect with Us** – creating a single, easy access point for HandyDART information and services, beginning with one phone number and paving the way for integrated system connections.
- **Improved Customer Feedback Process** – enhancing contact channels, surveys, and app features such as Rate My Trip to support faster resolution, recognition of service quality, and better understanding of customer needs.

- **Evolving the HandyDART Brand** – reviewing how the HandyDART identity and service delivery model can evolve to better reflect customer aspirations for independence, flexibility, and full community participation.

Together, these initiatives will ensure HandyDART remains customer-focused, responsive, and aligned with the values of the communities it serves.

7.1 Easier to Connect with Us

Customer Benefits:	Convenience, Time Saving
Status:	Planning Phase

It will be easier for customers to access HandyDART support with a single point of entry to reach information and services. Beginning with reducing the number of contact numbers from five to just one phone number, this approach will make it easier to book trips, get travel support, and provide feedback on HandyDART, while paving the way for future customer service system integrations that deliver a more seamless experience for accessible travel.

Improved customer communications through newsletters and other channels will ensure customers, caregivers, and stakeholders are kept in-the-know about what's happening with HandyDART service – including the implementation of this plan

7.2 Improved Customer Feedback Process

Customer Benefits:	Performance Improvement, Recognition
Status:	Implementation Phase

While HandyDART service receives very high marks from customers, there are always opportunities for improvement. TransLink's annual customer survey will continue to gather data separately for the five identified HandyDART trip categories (day programs, social/recreational, medical, dialysis, and work/school) to better understand differences in sentiment and priorities for each.

New software tools for booking and dispatch will enable additional means for customers to provide direct feedback and data to TransLink, such as a "Rate My Trip" feature. Improvements in real-time data will also give employees quicker access to trip information, speed up complaint resolution, and support better customer service.

Direct customer feedback and input from the HandyDART User Advisory Committee is also vital to shaping and improving HandyDART service quality for all categories of customers. We will continue to engage these groups as well as customers, their caregivers, and other key stakeholders where appropriate in all custom transit improvement initiatives.

7.3 Evolving the HandyDART Brand

Customer Benefits:	Customer Experience, Flexibility
Status:	Review

TransLink's HandyDART custom transit service is going through major change, transforming and modernizing, while also becoming part of a more integrated accessible transit system. Customers have shared that the current service name "HandyDART" is dated and carries with it negative connotations that are inconsistent with TransLink's values and commitments to equity and inclusion.

A review of the HandyDART brand will examine how TransLink can continue to evolve the delivery of accessible services in a way that best serves customers and the community.



BEHIND THE SCENES

8. Making it Possible

To support the successful delivery of the customer initiatives outlined in this report, TransLink must undergo change behind the scenes. While these efforts may not be visible to our customers, they are necessary to enable the suite of customer improvements contained in this plan. All of the internal initiatives within this section are currently in development.

8.1 Enhanced Internal Capacity

Customer Benefits:	Matching Needs & Services, More Flexible Options, Convenient & Reliable, Modernized Fleet, Increased Peace of Mind, Quality of Care, Customer Connections
Status:	In Development

HandyDART is a critical transit service that is undergoing significant changes in technology and operating practices to better support the customer experience. TransLink will enhance our internal capacity to both manage the day-to-day HandyDART service and oversee its transformation. Key to this will be bringing together staff working on custom transit into a more coordinated HandyDART team, with dedicated resources to guide the transformation program.

8.2 Specialized Delivery Partners

Customer Benefits:	More Flexible Options, Convenient & Reliable, Modernized Fleet, Increased Peace of Mind, Quality of Care
Status:	In Development

To enable the improvements outlined in this plan, TransLink will continue to work with partners to deliver HandyDART service and adapt operations to align with customer initiatives.

A modernized contract emerged in the HandyDART Delivery Model Review as the most viable option for the organization to deliver the most trips for customers and deliver on their needs. We will continue to engage a specialized service provider through a modernized contract, to leverage expertise in custom transit operations and modernization. This approach will include strengthened performance standards, particularly for non-dedicated service providers, to ensure high service standards are met while remaining cost-effective.

8.3 Facilities

Customer Benefits:	Convenient & Reliable, Modernized Fleet
Status:	In Development

TransLink will make investments in HandyDART facilities to support growth, ongoing operations, and planned improvements. Long-term HandyDART operating facility leases or purchases will be

secured to ensure business continuity and mitigate the risk of future cost increases. Facilities will support existing custom transit fleet needs as well as planned fleet initiatives such as electrification and introduction of a more varied dedicated fleet.

8.4 Software & Data Systems

Customer Benefits:	Matching Needs & Services, More Flexible Options, Convenient & Reliable, Modernized Fleet, Increased Peace of Mind, Quality of Care, Customer Connections
Status:	In Development

TransLink will continue to invest in HandyDART software and data systems to support ongoing service operation and the planned transformation of booking, scheduling and dispatch, and application processes.

We will engage a best-in-class software provider to deliver a proven modern custom transit software solution. TransLink will work with this provider to adapt this system to our unique needs and build the necessary integrations with existing TransLink digital systems (such as Compass fare payment system, and our customer alerts and notification system). Data management and reporting tools will be developed to take full advantage of enhanced business intelligence opportunities.

8.5 Coordination with Provincial Partners

Customer Benefits:	Matching Needs & Services, Convenient & Reliable, Increased Peace of Mind, Quality of Care, Customer Connections
Status:	In Development

TransLink will continue to work with provincial partners in areas of shared interest to advance HandyDART initiatives outlined in this plan.

BC Transit's Custom Transit Strategy identifies a number of similar themes, such as taxi performance, reviewing TaxiSaver usage, and considering custom transit branding. TransLink will continue to collaborate with BC's Ministry of Transportation and Transit, particularly as relates to passenger transportation licensing and planned enhancements to training and standards for HandyDART taxis.



Conclusion – An Inclusive & Flexible Future

The HandyDART Customer-First Plan is a comprehensive guide to transform custom transit in Metro Vancouver.

Delivering on customer priorities identified through engagement, and grounded in TransLink's customer promise, identified through engagement, the initiatives outlined span seven key focus areas: application and eligibility, trip booking and scheduling, reliability and integration, fleet renewal, communication and transparency, operator training, and customer engagement. Together they work to deliver a transit service that is more reliable, flexible, and inclusive.

This strategy recognizes that the demand for accessible transit will continue to increase as the region's population ages and mobility needs become more nuanced. By combining advances in technology, service design, and customer engagement, HandyDART will be

better equipped to deliver safe, dependable service today while preparing for the needs of tomorrow.

Achieving a modernized service is not a single project, it's an ongoing process. The initiatives described in this report set a clear direction for a HandyDART system that is seamlessly integrated with the broader transit system, strengthened by customer input, and responsive to the changing needs of the community. With continued investment and collaboration, HandyDART will remain a cornerstone of inclusive transit – ensuring mobility, independence, and connection for thousands of people across the region for decades to come.

