



MINUTES – ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

September 12, 2023, 4:08 P.M.

ESQUIMALT NATION ROOM, CITY HALL, 1 CENTENNIAL SQUARE

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt People
Meeting conducted electronically via Zoom and in-person

PRESENT: L. Bartram, S. Hough

PRESENT

ELECTRONICALLY: S. Jennings, C. Marks, N. Moss, J. Scott, P. Singh

ABSENT: C. Paisley

STAFF: A. Galiev - Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Lead, S. Mackenzie - Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator, S. Young – Climate & Environmental Sustainability Specialist, B. Roder – Senior Legislative Coordinator, A. Klus – Legislative Coordinator

A. Call to Order

S. Hough assumed the role of Chair and called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

B. Land Acknowledgement

The Committee acknowledged that the City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations communities, and thanked them for allowing us to live, work and play on their lands.

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved By L. Bartram

Seconded By S. Jennings

That the agenda be approved.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

D. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

D.1 **Minutes from the meeting held July 11, 2023**

Moved By L. Bartram

Seconded By S. Jennings

That the minutes from the meeting held July 11, 2023 to be adopted with the following revisions:

F.1 EV Charging Cord Cover Licensing (Public Works- Energy and Climate Action). Level of Engagement - Consultation

Committee discussed the following:

- 1. The EV chargers' temporary use while a vehicle is being charged, and is intended to be removed from the sidewalk when it is not in use*
- 2. How to ensure the cord cover is secured to the pavement*
- 3. Concern for white cane users navigating over the 2cm height of the cord covers, and that it will be a tripping hazard for pedestrians using mobility aids*
- 4. Committee had an interest in testing the cord cover with a variety of mobility aids*
- 5. Inquired about whether Vancouver had reached out to their accessibility advisory committee to receive feedback on their project implementation*
- 6. Concern that blind people are experiencing increasing barriers to independent and safe mobility due to climate action initiatives (e.g. bike lanes) and that this initiative will potentially add another barrier in their immediate neighbourhoods*
- 7. Suggestion that charging be conducted during specific hours of the day (ex. 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.)*
- 8. Concern for the temporary nature of the cord cover, and whether poor placement could increase the tripping hazard*
- 9. Suggested alternative options, such as cords that run overhead, underground, or on the outer edge of the sidewalk*
- 10. Cautious that this initiative is a hinderance to individuals with mobility issues and/or disabilities*
- 11. Exploring options with BC Hydro to use their existing light poles, but will not be available in the near future*
- 12. Suggested charging stations in parks and public places*
- 13. Cost concerns involved in embedding the cord into the sidewalk*
- 14. This initiative does not comply with the Accessible BC Act as it is potentially creating a barrier*
- 15. Inquired about how the City will enforce cord cover usage to ensure they are put down properly and removed when not in use*
- 16. If the cord cover is not secured, it may get caught on wheelchairs and drag*
- 17. Used the cord covers at the fair grounds as an example for why it is a safety concern and hazard for wheelchairs*
- 18. Suggested installing a groove in the sidewalk with a grate ovetop to lay the cord in*
- 19. Requested that charging for powerchairs and scooters be included*

20. Requested that research be collected from BC and across Canada regarding the usage of EV cord covers, and how they have been adapted to be more accessible

F.2. Community Roundtable

L. Bartram expressed the importance of the Accessibility Impact Statement on staff reports being brought to Council, as it is currently being used inconsistently. She also mentioned the international blind community's successful efforts in advocating for electric vehicles to have an audible warning sound when moving at a slow speed and their unsuccessful efforts in Victoria to remove the safety barriers created by floating bus stops associated with the bike lane network.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

E. Welcome Remarks from the Chair

The Chair expressed appreciation for the member's dedication and commitment to the Committee and looks forward to future Committee project work.

F. NEW BUSINESS

F.1 Accessibility Strategy Work Update. Accommodation Policy and Procedures discussion (Urban Matters)

C. Marks joined the meeting at 4:13 p.m.

Committee received a presentation from Isha Matous-Gibbs and Alannah Rodgers, Consultants with Urban Matters, regarding the City's Accessibility Framework, which included a review and update on the City's compliance with the Accessible BC Act.

Committee discussed the following:

- 1. The new Accessibility Strategy will be a focused document that will outline City's commitment, vision and approach to accessibility*
- 2. Consultants conducted an extensive research and consultations with other municipalities, City departments, AAC and disability community on the review of the accessibility approaches.*
- 3. Embedding accessibility best practices and approaches into project management resources will allow for city departments to consider accessibility at the beginning of the project.*
- 4. In the past couple of years, The EDI Office has been instrumental in improving departments' approaches and capacities and engaging them with the AAC.*
- 5. There is a need to expand beyond the built environment and include data and lived experiences in decision making.*

6. *The goal is to embed meaningful access, universal design, and equity considerations within updated 3P focus areas: 1) Public Infrastructure and Built Environment; 2) Policies, Programs and Services; 3) Partnerships, Capacity Building and Collaboration.*
7. *The email accessibility@victoria.ca and a City website form are now available for members of the public to provide feedback mechanism in compliance with the Accessible BC Act*
8. *Supported the inclusion of environmental sensitivity barriers in the new Accessibility Strategy, and a focus on attitudinal barriers*
9. *Agreed to simplify the City's Commitment to Accessibility statement using plain language to ensure it is readable and understandable for all members of the public*
10. *Agreed to use the Province's definition of accessibility or modify it to align with the City's Strategy, which intends to focus on improving access to people with disabilities*
11. *Support for the proposed section of the strategy "ways to embed accessibility"*
12. *The Goal of the Accommodation Policy and Procedures is to have high-level guidelines for accommodation. Individual departments will develop their own approach to accommodation that is reflective of the services, programs and policies they provide.*
13. *The consultants are drafting the following four documents: Accessibility Plan/Strategy, Accessibility Impact Statement, Accommodation Request Policy, Accessibility and Inclusion Policy*
14. *The Accessibility Strategy will be available in several formats and can include a Braille based summary, ASL video, screen readable document, and be available in 2-3 languages.*
15. *Future steps will include applying and streamlining best practices on accessibility standards (including the Rick Hansen Foundation certification) across departments and building capacity and understanding of the Accessible BC Act, Accessibility Strategy and relevant plans and policies.*
16. *The Committee is seen as a crucial part of embedding accessibility within the 3 focus areas and supporting the City.*

N. Moss left the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

F.3 EV Charging Cord Cover Demonstration (Public Works- Energy and Climate Action)

Committee received a verbal presentation and demonstration from the Climate & Environmental Sustainability Specialist, regarding the EV charging cord covers project, which included an opportunity for members to test the cord covers and provide feedback.

Committee discussed the following:

1. *It was confirmed that cord covers were reviewed by the City of Vancouver's accessibility committee during their project implementation*
2. *AAC still had concerns that the cord covers would present an accessibility barrier*
3. *Based on the testing at the meeting by the two AAC members present:*
 - *The plastic cord covers were deemed unacceptable as they slid along the pavement when touched by the foot, wheelchair wheels or the white cane.*

They also had a slightly higher profile and were more likely to be caught by the foot. The cord was also not as securely held in the cover.

- *The preference was for the rubber-Made cord cover which was less likely to slide, had a slightly lower profile and secured the cord more firmly. It also came in yellow which is the recommended colour as it would be more visible, particularly at night when the cord would be employed.*
- *Because only two AAC members were present, it was recommended that a pilot be carried out prior to the program being launched, to ensure that the rubber covers did not present an accessibility barrier to those using wheeled walkers, support canes, strollers, seniors and those with partial sight. Staff were open to this suggestion.*

F.2 Curb Cuts and Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (Linda Bartram)

Committee, by unanimous consent, postponed consideration of this matter to the October 10, 2023 Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting.

G. Next Meeting Agenda & Date – October 10, 2023

H. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By S. Hough

Seconded By L. Bartram

That the meeting be adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY