



Replacing the computer system

ACCES

In reaction to the announcement of the replacement of ACCES 1 at the end of 2001, a number of customers expressed their concerns about the relevance of such a change for the clientele.

Transport Contact asks Mr. Michel Lemay, manager of Paratransit Service of the STCUM, some of the questions you came up with.

T.C. *Why change the computer system ?*

M.L. The main reason to justify the replacement of the current system is to try to find a solution to the many problems that plague our customers when they try to get a line to the Call Center. And then, who must wait for a long time on line for their request to be processed. The processing of a transportation request is presently cumbersome.

T.C. *What is the main problem with the system we have now ?*

M.L. It's while processing a request that the current system shows it's not able to process quickly and efficiently a request.

Right now, almost each request must be handled manually by an agent of the Call Center. This takes up the time and energy of the agents and accounts for the waiting hiatus. We processed 1.25 million trips last year, that should give you an idea of how many manually-processed transactions were completed by the staff of the Call Center.



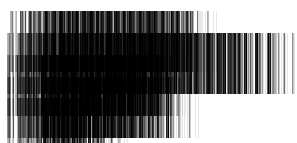
The automation of nearly all the request processing is the core of the new system; it will enhance the quality of our service.

T.C. *Will this new system mean some changes for the customers also ?*

M.L. Yes indeed, but everybody has been waiting for these for a long time. The idea behind all this is to improve the service.

By reducing the time needed to process a transportation request we kill two birds with one stone. That is to say, a significant decrease in time waiting on the phone for users, and, because more calls will be processed, this will relieve the overload problem of the call center. Users are waiting for that.

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TRANSPORT



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is an information bulletin published
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Change of address



July is right around the corner. Every year, many of our customers move. If this is your case, avoid problems. Notify us in time of your change of address.

This is all the more important if you have a regular transportation schedule. You must know that most changes of address require us to cancel the programmed schedule, and develop a new one based on the new address.

There are two ways in which you can do this

The first requires that you register your change of address using the Interactive Line. You simply have to dial 280-7400. After selecting Module 3 (Modifying a Personal File) and at the request of the system, you punch in your **file number** and **personal access code** (consisting of the day and month of your birth in that order : if your date of birth is June 1st, you punch in 01-06). Pressing 1 will give you access to the change of address voice mail. The system will provide the information you need before you record your message. You can then listen to your message and confirm the information provided therein. It's easy. You'll see!

The other way of registering your change of address is to call *Customer Service* at 280-5341, Monday to Friday from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. The agent who take your call will note your new address and

ensure that your trips will be programmed from there, as of the requested starting date.

Reminder to Summer camp organizers

The following points are important to consider when planning group transportation for a summer camp. You must :

- * Send us the group reservation at least 10 days in advance.
- * Validate the complete list of individuals who will be using our services as soon as possible.
- * If need be, make all required cancellations as soon as possible, before the date of departure.
- * See to it that **luggage which cannot be handled by clients is transported to departure and arrival point by a vehicle other than those provided by Paratransit Services.**

Replacing the computer system ACCÈS,
an interview with Michel Lemay.

ACCÈS

In addition to the fact that the call center will be more efficient and that requests processing will be done more rapidly, we are also looking at the way we're doing things and how it could be made better. Among other things we would like to set up a Single Entry Point where access would be gained through a single phone number, thus reducing dramatically the length of time required to process a regular transportation request, and to fully utilize the potential of our Interactive Line.

T.C. *Are customers involved in the project ?*

M.L. Yes, absolutely. Customers' complaints, combined with some surveys (to which hundreds of users answered), pointed out very strikingly to the problems. Subsequently, from the beginning of the project, proceedings were submitted to the Paratransit consultative forum on the MUC

territory, the Comité Usagers Transporteur. Representatives from users and partners were kept informed on the progress of this issue.

Furthermore an advisory committee on which seat representatives of our many clientele is consulted regularly. Besides, their involvement will grow in the last eighteen

months of the project. Along the way, this committee shall be able to suggest original solutions—either technical or functional—to the team running the project, but also could be asked to test and validate other solutions.

T.C. *Why wait till the end of 2001 ?*

M.L. After the preliminary studies and the choice of the software, there is still a lot of work to do. To put this in perspective, let's state that while the day-to-day operations that will lead to the completion of 1.3 million trips by the end of 2000 and even more in 2001 must continue, we have to come up with new and better ways of performing. To say it differently,

A communication plan was worked out to ensure that customers and partners will receive in due time all information needed in regard to the progress of this major project. Your Transport Contact will, of course, always bring you up to date on the subject.

it would be much akin to start a whole new company before the end of 2001 while running at the same time another one at full capacity. Now this is a real challenge!

The system we selected is presently in operation in Toronto. In the past few months we identified some improvements that should be introduced in order to meet our own needs. Once this will be done, in August, we will be set to review our modes of operations and computer system development.

This crucial phase will last until spring of 2001. After that, more time will be needed to train all employees and conduct a variety of tests before starting the implementation of the new system at the end of 2001. This is only a very short summation of all the work still ahead of us. What's sure is that the next eighteen months will be very busy.

T.C. *How will this project be financed ?*

M.L. Over the past winter the Board of Directors of the STCUM—which is very much aware of the Paratransit Service needs—authorized a loan by-law to cover the total cost of the project, whose value is set at \$8.3 millions. Now, talks are on-going with the Quebec Transport Dept, our main source of funds, to lay down the financial terms of the project. Things are moving along.

T.C. *Mr. Lemay, thank you.*



Snowstorms in February

An awful week

For more than a full week last February, snowstorms had a strong adverse effect on our capacity to fully deliver the service we normally provide. During these trying circumstances, and in spite that our fleet of minibuses was in full use, we could run only 1,000 of the 5,000 trips normally completed each day. Question is how can crisis like these be managed?

WHAT TO DO IN SUCH SITUATIONS ?

First, it must be stated that 70 % of all transportation is done during peak hours; during which period of time February's snowstorms made road conditions particularly strenuous. Moreover snowstorms were heavy and time needed for snow removal operations greatly disturbed traffic flow on secondary streets. And on top of this, snowbanks were huge enough to denied access to boarding or deboarding points.

Second, in normal peak-hour conditions, we are already facing a lack of available resources from the taxi industry. With more than 3,000 completed trips on weekdays, taxis count for more than 60 % of all transportation. When nature strikes, the lack of taxicabs is felt even more so; especially since requests from the regular clientele increase dramatically; combined with the numerous delays, this creates a dramatic shortage of

resources and greatly limits our capacity to serve our clientele.

In circumstances of the sort, we must consequently restrain our service to the resources which are available at the moment. To act in any other way would not allow us to provide proper and safe transportation.

Before things deteriorate, Exploitation Officers are out on the streets to assess road conditions and accessibility of major public areas. Meanwhile, at the Call Center, availability of taxicabs is closely monitored. And as things develop, decisions are taken accordingly.

From February 14 to 18, tough decisions had to be called. With regards to our limited capacity for service, only requests related to transportation for medical and work purposes, or to attend post-high school education classes, were accepted and processed.

Given the limitations imposed by the current computer system, we are unable to sort through the huge number of cancellations we process when circumstances of the sort arrives. However, some of the trips matching the selection criteria can be reprogrammed after a call.

Customers must understand that such dire measures are taken only in case of absolute necessity and that we regret all inconveniences they may have caused to them.

In such circumstances, our one and only goal is to provide proper service with the resources at hand.



PARTNERS, LET'S GET CONNECTED!

Hospitals, CLSC, rehabilitation centers, community centers, CHSLD, promotion organizations, etc;

Let's keep in touch by sending us your Email and Internet address

Our email:
Transport.adapte@stcum.qc.ca

TAXI shortage and consequences

For some time now and like many other transit companies in the province, the STCUM Paratransit Services is having some very serious problems due to a shortage of taxicabs in peak-hour periods or during severe weather conditions. This situation is not new. However, the shortage causes many inconveniences to our clientele and a little explanation is required. Actions in the mean time had to be taken in order to find a solution to this problem.

A few numbers

Most likely you know that Paratransit transportation is done in minibuses and taxicabs. But did you know that more than 60 % of Paratransit transportation on the MUC territory is done by regular taxi drivers and that 70 % of the trips are completed during peak-hour periods? But what does happen when there is a shortage of taxicabs?

Consequences : delays, refusals and the overloading of the call center

Delays will be the first manifestation. They will be more numerous and longer depending upon the circumstances of the moment. The worst the weather, the greater its impact will be on the whole situation. An extreme example would be—as when last February's snowstorms hit—that a majority of taxi transportation will have to be cancelled.

Another problem will surface when

new requests for regular or group transportation in peak-hour periods are made at a time when taxi suppliers are running at full capacity. At that point it's fairly easy to guess what will happen next. It will become near to impossible to fulfill these new requests. Some of them will be flatly rejected, while others will be changed into outside peak-hour requests in order to be able to accept and process them.

Another non-negligible downfall of this shortage will be the overloading of the call center. As some schedule requests will be delayed or rejected, the number of occasional transportation requests will increase and bear such a strong demand on the call center as to totally clog it up.

Measures taken

Each taxi company's capacity to fulfill peak-hour requests is monitored on a daily basis. In the event of a shortage of taxicabs, requests will be given to a second company. This must be viewed strictly as a temporary measure, to benefit our clientele.

On the other hand, the actual legal framework forces the STCUM to hand over to the taxi companies all transportation requests that can be fulfilled by car. Contracts are adjudicated following a public call for tender where taxi companies are invited to compete. Contracts are granted to the lowest bidder whose bid comply with all requirements of the call for tenders

documents.

The law is actually under revision. Last Fall, during some public hearing, the STCUM and organizations representing customers submitted briefs to the Quebec Minister of Transport.

In its brief, the STCUM came up with multiple possible solutions to the very difficult problem of the shortage of taxicabs. A new bill should be introduced this year in the National Assembly.

Short-term solution

But it became imperative to act before the introduction of a new legislation. So, within the spirit of the recommendations, it is possible that, and even before the publication of the next issue of Transport Contact, the STCUM will be authorized to move forward with a pilot project that will remedy this chronic shortage of taxicabs.

If authorized by the Quebec Transportation Dept., this pilot project would allow the STCUM to award transportation requests to fifty holders of a new specialized taxi license, thus improving the conditions and quality of customer service.

Your Transport Contact Bulletin will keep you posted on this issue.

Low-floor buses

A network more and more integrated

Are you using a wheelchair to get around? Can you travel by yourself or do you need the aid of somebody? The STCUM is now providing wheelchair users with service on seven bus lines. Line 24-Sherbrooke and 45-Papineau are joining the existing 11-Montagne, 14-Amherst, 27-Saint-Joseph, 51-Édouard-Montpetit and 97-Mont-Royal to create a crisscross network where north-south and east-west travels are now possible. This improved service can be accessed weekdays from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. and after 6.30 p.m., as well as all day Saturdays, Sundays and on holidays.

The User's Guide to Low-Floor Buses will help you plan your trips, as

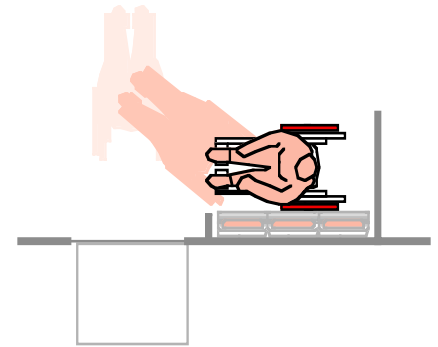
the bus stop. To hear the latest, the STCUM has set up for wheelchair users a dedicated phone line which can be accessed by dialing A-U-T-O-B-U-S. All this information can also be gathered on the STCUM web site (www.stcum.qc.ca), along with other useful references.

We would recommend that you be accompanied for the first few times you'll be using the service, and to participate to a prior information meeting to familiarize yourself with boarding and deboarding procedures. Take note that your personal aid can accompany you and is not required to pay any fare.

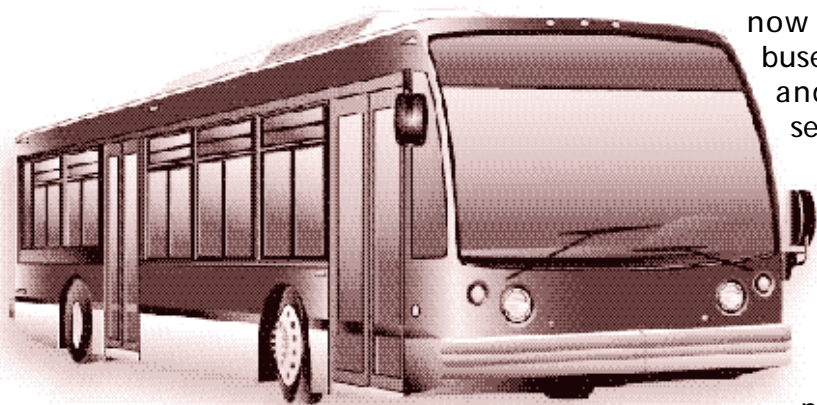
The STCUM owns as of now 456 low-floor buses in a 39-, 36- and 31-place seating design. At present only 36-, 31-seat vehicles offer service to wheelchair users. In its procurement plan for 2000-2002, the STCUM

expects to purchase 300 low-floor vehicles. What's more, this year's goal has been set to provide wheelchair users with service on 30 additional lines. By the end of 2002, no less than 100 bus lines shall offer service to wheelchair users.

all you need to know is contain therein. Running time of buses on this service are indicated by a star in the Planibus of accessible bus lines, which are available on request. You will also obtain running times of your buses by dialing the TelBus number listed on



Please remember that low-floor buses can accommodate one and only one wheelchair user at the time and that this service is not intended to replace Transportation for the Disabled. It should be regarded more as its complement. To obtain documentation, customers must contact the STCUM by dialing 280-5100. For additional information, to receive documentation or to participate in information meetings, you can also contact the Regroupement des usagers du transport adapté (RUTA) at 255-0765.



Ridership 2000

ON THE RISE...

For the first three months of 2000 ridership rose by 4.2 % compared to the same period of 1999 (see Table). This increase was registered in spite of snowstorms which created some tough conditions during the month of February. Had it not been for the 18,000 trips lost in February, the ridership increase would have topped 7.2 %.

Ridership in March is a perfect illustration of the increase trend in ridership. A new ridership all-time high was set in March when more than 128,324 trips were performed. This is a 5.2 % increase over the previous all-time high of 122,000 trips set in March 1999.

Since the year began, ridership

Total ridership as of March 31, 2000			
	RIDERSHIP '99	RIDERSHIP '00	DIFFERENCE
Minibus	119,241	123,325	3,4%
Regular taxi	185,185	195,385	5,5%
Accessible taxi	13,405	12,319	-8,1%
Total	317,831	331,029	4,2%

increases were registered on both main modes of transportation, minibus and regular taxis. And the fact that new and more *versatile minibuses* were put on the road contributed in no small way to the ridership increase recorded by

minibuses. These vehicles will gradually replace the vehicles reserved for our ambulatory clientele; they come with an hydraulic lift and can accept wheelchair-user customers. The interior design of these vehicles offers more versatility.

All passenger seats flip to free enough space for the transportation of six wheelchair users and 4 ambulatory passengers. And seats can be set in an open position to accommodate a larger number of ambulatory customers.

In the past years, the restructuring of services offered to intellectually-disabled customers led to a decrease in minibus transportation

more versatility as to enhance the services we provide to all our customers.

With a forecasted increase of the clientele of the five rehabilitation centers for the intellectually



Mrs. Colette Tremblay and Mr. André Lemieux. User and Exploitation Officer test the versatility options of the new minibus.

disabled located on the island of Montreal, we expect in the coming years a strong demand for transportation by this very clientele and an even stronger demand for transportation by taxi.

Since it will bear a significant impact on budgets to come, this whole issue will be monitored carefully to make sure that enough resources will be available to provide service to these customers.



FALL 2000

Don't wait to plan regular transportation

Summer vacation

Cancelling regular transportation

If you're going on vacation and you've got a regular transportation schedule, don't forget to contact us to cancel trips you won't be needing during this period, SEE HANDY NUMBERS (CANCELLATION). **Right after the cancellation period, your regular schedule will be automatically reinstated.**

Trips can be cancelled for up to 8 weeks. *If you will be away for a longer period of time however, it will be necessary to cancel your regular schedule altogether.*

These cancellations are most important. Not only do we avoid sending you a driver when you're absent, but we can also make your seat available to users in need of occasional transportation.

Fall is drawing near, and as the number of requests for regular transportation rises, it becomes important for you to get your request in early. This year, you can request a regular schedule for your fall transportation as of July 15. This will allow us to plan our work and the resources needed for the 5,200 trips we handle daily on week days.

By forwarding your request early, you enhance your chances of receiving confirmation for your schedule before the beginning of your activity.

Confirmation

If you've acted soon enough, say a few weeks before your trips are due to begin, call the appropriate number to obtain your confirmation (see Confirmation under **Handy Numbers**).

For requests registered only shortly before the activity is set to begin, it

might be necessary to call **Reservation** two days before the beginning of your activity. (see Handy Numbers.)

AS LONG AS A SCHEDULE HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED, YOU MUST CALL TO MAKE OCCASIONAL TRANSPORTATION REQUESTS FOR EACH AND EVERY TRIPS YOU PLAN TO TAKE.

Consequently, you can avoid repetitive and unnecessary calls by making your request as soon as possible.

You can send us your request by mail, fax, or phone (see Handy Numbers).



HANDY NUMBERS

Request for regular or occasional transportation and reservation changes

280-5353 Minibus 280-5445 Taxi

Info-Delay, Confirmation, On-Call Return Trips

280-5313 Minibus 280-5444 Taxi

Cancellation

280-6325

IMPORTANT

Until further notice transportation requests will not be accepted through email or internet. Stay tuned.

Fax : (groupe request, regular schedule)
280-6313

Interactive Line

280-7400

Teleprinter (TTY)

280-5308

Customer Service

280-5341

Web Site

www.stcum.qc.ca/t-adapte/index.htm

Email

Transport.adapte@stcum.qc.ca