

TRANSPORT CONTACT

December
2001

Communication and information bulletin for paratransit services users

ACCÈS V

Confirmed funding for new computer system

Funding for the replacement of the current computer system by Giro's ACCÈS V was confirmed early in October.

A 6.2 million dollars grant was approved under the Canada-Quebec Infrastructure Works 2000 program. Ottawa's contribution is set at 2.74 million dollars, while Quebec's is set at 3.48 million dollars. Since the global cost of the project is 8.45 million dollars, the remaining 2.23 million dollars will be picked up at the municipal level.

Quebec Transportation Department's representatives helped find this new source of funding. It adds to the usual paratransit funding source, the Transportation Department's own *Paratransit Assistance Program* and has the effect of shielding the current level of service offer while increasing our ability to purchase the best technological tool on the market.

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

Created by the Montreal-based firm Giro, ACCÈS V will optimize the use we make of all the resources at our disposal, thereby improving customer service through better couplings and the reduction of the time needed to reach an agent and get a confirmation for a transportation request. Furthermore, respect of schedules constitutes a major objective.

The new technology will simplify the use of our services by allowing customers to reserve through the *Interactive Line*.

As there is much to do before the project's end, implementation is expected only for the summer of 2003.

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Special reservation procedure for the *Holiday Season*

Following the many appreciative comments sent by customers, the special procedure in place for the past six years will again apply for all your transportation requests during this year's Holiday Season, that is to say **from December 24 to January 4 (inclusive)**

Consequently all regular transportations for that period will be cancelled. On the other hand, you will be able to submit an advance reservation request for transportation during the period.

PROCEDURE

From **November 26 to December 14 (inclusive), whatever the reason for your trip**, you will be able to submit any transportation request by **calling** 280-5445 (taxi) or 280-5353 (minibus), or by **faxing** your request at 280-6313.

All **mail requests received no later than December 14** at the following address will be honoured :

**SICUM-Paratransit
Advance reservation
3111 Jarry Street East
Montreal, Quebec
H1Z 2C2**

Effective December 15, occasional transportation requests and modifications will be processed according to standard procedure.

On December 21, 2001

As some activities are expected to end sooner than usual next December 21, any request for modification to a regular transportation return time will be processed according to the procedure described above.

CONFIRMATION

No more than two days in advance, you may obtain your confirmation of transportation by calling, preferably after 6 p.m., 280-5444 (taxi), 280-5313 (minibus), or by using the **Interactive Line** at 280-7400.

Please be aware that if you need to change the starting location or the destination point of your regular transportation, you'll have to cancel that transportation request outright and enter a new one.

Don't wait until the last minute. Act soon

Keeping accesses clear of snow

With winter knocking on our doors, we would like to remind you that it is important to ensure that snow is adequately cleared from accesses to boarding and disembarking points.

Snow banks are major stumbling blocks created by street and sidewalk snow removal operations. At this time of the year, it becomes essential to check for accessibility before a vehicle arrives.

If conditions do not allow for boarding or disembarking, the trip should be cancelled as soon as possible to avoid having a vehicle dispatched needlessly. Your help in this matter is greatly appreciated.



New customers and partners information

If you are a new customer, or a member of the family or just someone who wish to help a user of STCUM Paratransit, it might be useful to have a knowledge of the services we provided and the procedures we follow. Even a seasoned user may wish for a refresher course. Consequently we offer everyone the option of attending one of our information sessions. Just call our Customer Service to register.

For the partners

Whether you are an employee or a beneficiary in a group home, someone working in a CLSC, or a member of an association of people with disabilities, if you ever feel the need to increase your knowledge of our services we will meet you where you are with great pleasure.

To plan such a meeting just give a call to our Customer Service at 280-5341, Monday to Friday, between 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m.

The person in charge will evaluate with you what your needs are and make the arrangement for the meeting if the case may be.

RIDERSHIP

Improvement expected for the last months of 2001

Considering how thin were the resources at our disposal, the year's first eight months imposed an undue hardship on our clientele. Even though the Call Centre became easier to reach, transportation capability was down.

Lack of financial resources forced us to put a limit on the service offer and to create a waiting list for all new customers. These measures were enforced partly to ease the

pressure on the Call Centre, on the other hand they created a slight decrease in ridership (see Table).

At the end of July, the Quebec Transportation Department finally awarded the additional funds we were asking for. As of September 21 (the time this text is written), an increase in ridership is expected for the last part of 2001 as things return back to normal.

Total ridership as of August 31, 2001			
	2000	2001	VARIATION
Minibus	310 366	303 568	-2.2%
Regular taxi	485 062	457 341	-5.7%
Accessible taxi	44 674	55 482	24.2%
Total	840 102	816 391	-2.8%

Safety of users with intellectual or psychological impairment

In order to ensure the safety of users with an intellectual disability or a psychological impairment, the driver is required to accompany the customer right up to the disembarking point and make sure that someone is there to take charge of the customer. Likewise at the embarking point where the driver is expected to receive assistance by someone in charge for the correct identification of the user.

However, it so happens that sometimes drivers are faced with a no-show at the pickup or drop-off

points by the expected person in charge—which unduly complicates his task.

To avoid these unpleasant and stress-inducing situations for both customers and drivers, we take this opportunity to remind those whose task is to take charge of customers or provide assistance at the embarking point that their collaboration is crucial to a safe and efficient service.

Because unexpected problems may arise, we would like to make families and workers aware of the

importance of providing customers presenting an intellectual or psychological impairment with some proper mean of identification that can be used at the embarking or disembarking point, or even when travelling. The STCUM Paratransit identification card serves that purpose but only to such an extent. For customers who may not be able to handle that card, some other method must be supplied.

Trips to Laval or the South Shore

No consent, no transportation

When the new service to Laval and the South Shore was implemented in 1998, each customer of STCUM Paratransit was invited to fill in the form entitled Consent to the communication of personal information. Lately, however, a few clients who never completed the form found to their dismay that their requests for transportation to Laval and the South Shore were turned down.

It must be understood that the STCUM must comply with the Act respecting Access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information. This Act makes it an obligation for us to get your consent before forwarding any information that other transit corporations may need in order for transportation to be carried out on their territories.

The time where a certain tolerance was accepted is now over. From now on, to take advantage of this service, you need to complete the form and send it back to us.

If you want transportation to Laval and the South Shore, please make sure to fill in the form and forward it to us soon. You can find one by calling our Customer Service at 280-5341

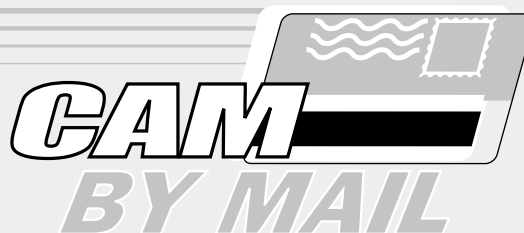
INTERACTIVE LINE

A confirmed transportation can be very easily cancelled through the Interactive Line. First dial 280-7400, then press 1 to access the Transportation management module. After entering your file number and authenticating your name, compose your four-digit access code. You must then select option 21 (Cancellation of trips scheduled for today, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow), and follow the instructions provided by the system to cancel each trip one by one. Don't forget to cancel both going and return trips, since they are considered two separate trips.

Another way of cancelling a trip is to call 280-6325 where an agent with cancel the trip for you.

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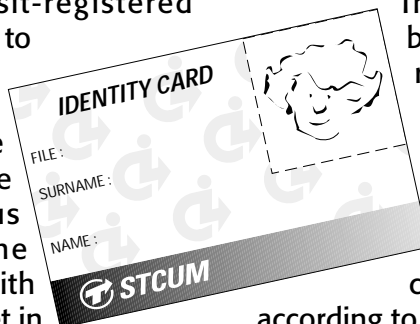
 **STCUM**
www.stcum.qc.ca

Access to regular system for personal aide is free

The STCUM has implemented various measures in the past few years to ease access to regular transit system for people with impairments.

One measure authorize free access to regular transit system for the personal aide of a customer registered with Paratransit.

The Paratransit-registered customer just has to show his or her Paratransit **identification card** to the fare collector in the métro or the bus operator for the person who is with him or her to be let in without having to pay.



This measure is applicable when accessing the regular transit system only and does not carry over to services provided by Paratransit. All users of Paratransit services must pay their fare according to regulations.

Taxi problems :

What we are doing about it

Paratransit customers who use regular taxis have had to contend for the past years with a shortage of vehicles, especially during peak hours or when the weather is bad, due to rain, cold or snow. This is a complex problem and the STCUM staff has worked around the clock to find solutions.

Short-term measures

Planning and Scheduling first did a thorough monitoring of each company's ability to provide service. The ensuing follow-up allows to divert runs to other companies and to spread the strong pressure of demand accordingly. Over time and with the growth of the demand, we noticed that by far and large our suppliers had problems and could only respond in part to the demand during peak hours. This is even more noticeable in the core of the Island of Montreal, where demand is mostly concentrated. Other measures includes dispatching multiple runs to the same driver and the establishment of a fixed-trip sheet, an advantage to the driver and the clients both.

Long-term measures

The shortage of vehicles was a hard problem to crack within the legal framework in which transit corporations must operate. This bounded together the STCUM and all Quebec transit corporations who then set out to ask that the Quebec Transportation Minister amend the

Act respecting transportation by taxi in order to create a legal framework that would allow new solutions to the shortage of vehicles. These representations, along with representations by customer interest groups such as OPHQ, RUTA, etc., lead the government to adopt **Bill 163** an Act respecting transportation services by taxi, which addresses the problem head-on.

Among other things the new Act will allow specialized licenses to be issued as deemed fit. License holders will be restricted to providing paratransit services only. The Act should be voted in the beginning of 2002. The STCUM shall be most alert during the consultation phase that is to follow the unveiling of the proposed regulation.

The government of Quebec announced in his last budget the implementation of a assistance program for adapting taxi vehicles to the transportation of persons in wheelchairs. This program's goal is to make a large number of minivans accessible to people with disabilities and also to people in charge of organizing services directed toward customers with disabilities. A 1.4 million dollar annual grant is to be allotted for the adaptation of minivan-type vehicles.



Shortage of taxis in peak hours :

HOW CAN YOU HELP ?

Customers who are using regular taxis to carry out their trips can help us relieve the shortage of vehicles during weekday rush hours.

If the transportation you require need not to happen during weekday rush hours, we suggest you proceed this way :

If possible request that your transportation be scheduled between 9 a.m. and 2 :30 p.m. or after 5 p.m.

And this could work to your advantage, too. That would make transportation easier and faster to schedule, and the risk of having your request turned down should be lowered.

Thank you for your understanding and co-operation in this matter. Through small gestures like these, we shall be able to carry out even more trips.

Symposium on paratransit



For the third year in a row, the annual Quebec symposium on paratransit was organized jointly by the *Canadian Urban Transit Association* and the *Alliance des regroupements des usagers du transport adapté du Québec (ARUTAQ)*. Participants gathered in Rimouski, the year's host city, from September 19 to 21.

Under the theme *Changes on the horizon : Collective action*, lectures and panel discussions were held on a great variety of topics on a background of municipal amalgamation, revision of the Paratransit assistance program and the new *Act respecting transportation services by taxi*.

Among keynote speakers were ARUTAQ's Raymond Desjardins, Gilles Cloutier from the Quebec Transportation Dept., Mrs. Monique

Léveillé, general secretary of the *Association du transport urbain du Québec*, Claude Martin from the Quebec Transportation Dept., Mrs. Diane Mainville from the Canadian Transportation Agency, and Norbert Robrigue, president of the *Office des personnes handicapées du Québec*. The author Victor-Lévy Beaulieu came in to give his thoughts about *Manu*, the wheelchair-bound character he created for his television series *Bouscotte*. The STCUM Paratransit Service was represented by its director, Michel Lemay, and by Jacques Lussier, service delivery superintendent.

Easier access to the Call Centre



For the first time in a long while, our Call Centre was relatively quiet after the summer recess. A quicker way of processing regular transportation requests, along with the addition of resources awarded by the Quebec Transportation Dept. and a new procedure for medical appointment seemed to create a positive impact.

At the time this article is written, a decrease of 76 % in the number of complaints on this matter is noted for the first eight months of 2001 over last year. The fact that phone lines were easier to reach meant that transportation requests were much easier to complete in 2001 than in 2000. What's more, this trend is growing.



Cancelling as soon as you can is important

From the moment you are sure you won't need a transportation that has already been confirmed, we urge you to cancel it. Cancellations are made by dialing 280-6313 or through the Interactive Line (280-7400).

The same goes for regular transportation. A regular schedule that is used only on occasion should always be cancelled, and the same applies if you need to change your starting or destination point. You must then cancel the old transportation and request a new one.

The collaboration of all in this matter means that more seats will become available for others.

Information about service interruption

During a snow or an ice storm, or for any other reason, the STCUM may reduce the service offered by Paratransit and even shut it down for a while. **In such cases AM and FM radio stations are notified and should broadcast the information. Stay tuned !**



Name change and users representation on the *STM*'s board of directors

In the wake of municipal amalgamation the government of Quebec, through the adoption of Bill 24, fixed the legal framework that will regulate provincial transit corporations from now on. Indeed, on January 1, the STCUM will change its name and become the *Société de transport de Montréal (STM)*.

Users representation on the Board of Directors

An interesting feature of the Bill concerns the composition of the

board of directors. The Bill stipulates that the new corporations shall be run by board of directors constituted of seven or nine members to be named by municipalities located on their territory, including two to represent users of public transportation services and of services adapted to people with disabilities.

In Montreal, the municipal council of the new city will name the members of the board.

By the way, the STRSM will be renamed as Société de transport de Longueuil.



Season's Greeting

Employees of the STCUM Paratransit Service and members of the Admittance Committee wish you all a very happy and merry Christmas. Let the New Year bring health and prosperity to you, your families and friends.



STCUM

Paratransit services center
3111 East Jarry St.
Montreal, Quebec
H1Z 2C2
www.stcum.qc.ca

Written and edited by :
Gilles Vaillancourt

Production coordinator :
Monique Juteau

Translation :
Richard Tremblay

Graphic design :
André Cardinal

Transport Contact

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