

Subject: Amendment to Policy 002-NTC – Niagara Transit Commission Charter Policy (Charters and Free Transit Community Requests)

Report to: Niagara Transit Commission Board

Report date: **Tuesday, February 18, 2025**

Recommendations

1. That an amendment to Policy 002-NTC – Niagara Transit Commission Charter Policy **BE APPROVED**; and
2. That the General Manager **BE AUTHORIZED** to develop and/or amend any procedures as may be required to implement this policy change.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to seek the Niagara Transit Commission Board's approval of a Charter Policy Amendment (Appendix 1) to move to an administrative process for organizations to request charter service from the NTC.
- This proposed change is responsive to the Board Member Information Request made pursuant to NTC 14-2024 at the June 2024 meeting, whereby Member Olson requested consideration be given to providing authority to staff for approval of the charter fee grant waivers. In accordance with Section 6.1(n) of By-law 2022-38, Being A By-Law to Establish the Niagara Transit Commission, the Board has the authority to establish policies and procedures as the Board determines are appropriate that align with the Region's programs, by-laws, policies and procedures.
- In addition to moving to an administrative process for organizations to request charter service from the NTC, this process also introduces new eligibility criteria for applicants.
- Subject to the approval of this report, the General Manager will develop and/or amend the necessary procedures to implement the policy. A copy of the revised draft Charter Request Form is appended for the Board's information.

Financial Considerations

There is no cost associated with the policy amendment. The Charter Fee Waiver Program budget will remain at \$100,000 per year.

Analysis

The current procedure for approving fee waiver requests is that each application is brought to the Board for review and approval. In many cases, the timelines of events and applications mean that the event has passed and fee waiver granted prior to board approval.

The proposed change to the Charter Fee Waiver Program would move from the current, board approval model, to an administrative model. Staff would administer the program and decide on whether to grant a charter fee waiver based on a set of established criteria for organizations and their applications. Staff would retain the option to bring a fee waiver request to the board for approval. This could be done in cases where the application is of a sensitive nature, does not meet the criteria for a fee waiver, or any other reason deemed appropriate by staff to do so. Staff would bring a quarterly report to the board containing all requests made, whether they were granted or denied, the value of each and the total budget remaining.

The proposed Charter Fee Waiver program requirements are as follows and would be added to the form on the Niagara Transit website:

Fee Waiver Event/Organizational Requirements

- must be an incorporated non-profit or charitable organization.
- must provide programs, services or events that are of general benefit to the community.
- must primarily provide services for Niagara residents.
- must not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, colour, religion, gender, age, national origin, physical or mental health, sexual orientation, or any characteristic protected by law.
- must comply with applicable federal, state/provincial, and municipal laws and regulations.

Additionally...

- Applications will be evaluated on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Niagara Transit limits fee waivers to no more than of 10% of the fee waiver budget, per calendar year, per organization and/or event.
 - Certain legacy events may be exempted from this limit. Please contact Niagara Transit if you feel this may be applicable to your request.
- Applications may not be made more than 12 months prior to the event.
- Applications must be made no less than 4 months prior to the event.
- Niagara Transit may grant full or offer partial fee waivers.
- Niagara Transit reserves the right to refuse any application without explanation.
- In certain cases, Niagara Transit may seek board approval for applications to the fee waiver program.

Alternatives Reviewed

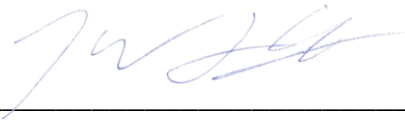
The Board may decline to approve the new policy and keep the current policy, but this is not recommended as the timeline issues with fee waiver reports will continue.

Relationship to Niagara Transit Commission Strategic Priorities

Customer Focus: Providing more clarity and timely responses to fee waiver applicants.

Other Pertinent Reports

- [NTC 13-2023 Niagara Transit Commission Charter Policy \(Previous implementation of Charter and Fee Waiver Program\)](https://pub-ntc.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=88) (https://pub-ntc.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=88)



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Appendices

Appendix 1 [Current Fee Waiver Grant Application](https://forms.nrtransit.ca/Fee-Waiver-Grant-Application) (Website)
(<https://forms.nrtransit.ca/Fee-Waiver-Grant-Application>)