



# MEETING MINUTES

**SUBJECT:** Northeast Accessibility Committee September Meeting #12

**MEETING DATE:** SEPTEMBER 12, 2024

**TIME:** 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

**LOCATION:** Virtual – Zoom

**FILE:** UM1958.0495.01

ATTENDEES	COMPANY / COMMUNITY
Darcy Guay	Peace River Regional District
Diana Jewan	Community Member - Hudson's Hope
Hillary Sheppard	Northern Rockies Regional District
Kristi Leer	Community Member - Fort Nelson
Marla Reed	Community Member - Dawson Creek
Sherri Maycock	District of Taylor
Steve McLain	District of Chetwynd
Jake Papineau	Urban Systems Ltd.
Kiyomi Coffman	Urban Systems Ltd.

REGRETS	COMPANY / COMMUNITY
Annette Andrews	Peace River Regional District
Bill Darnbrough	City of Dawson Creek
Chris Civic	District of Hudson's Hope
Deanne Ennis	District of Chetwynd
Denis Bento	District of Tumbler Ridge
Devon Aaroe	City of Dawson Creek
Edwina Nearhood	Fort St. John - Guest/Community Member
Ellen McAvany	District of Chetwynd
Gracie Boake	Peace River Regional District
Gerri Bird	District of Hudson's Hope
Jan Atkinson	Community Member – Dawson Creek
Jennifer Morris	Pouce Coupe – Community Member
Kelsey Shewfelt	District of Hudson's Hope
Lisa Thompson	Northern Rockies Regional District
Lori Slater	Community Member - Fort St. John
Marsha Dufresne	Tumbler Ridge – Community Member
Matt Chorney	Prospective Community Member – Pouce Coupe
Naomi Larsen	Community Member - Chetwynd

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Radha Adhikari	Northern Rockies Regional District
Ryan Kirkham	Peace River Regional District
Savonnaé Street	City of Dawson Creek
Vanessa Harris	City of Fort St. John
Kathryn Rutherford	Urban Systems Ltd.
Kenna Williams	Urban Systems Ltd.

Item	Topic
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| 0.0 | <p><b>Materials provided in advance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August 8, 2024 Northeast BC Collaborative Accessibility Committee Meeting Minutes #11</li> <li>• September 12, 2024 Northeast BC Collaborative Accessibility Committee Meeting Agenda #12</li> <li>• August 8, 2024 Northeast BC Collaborative Accessibility Committee Meeting Minutes #11 – Accessibility-Checked Version</li> <li>• September 12, 2024 Northeast BC Collaborative Accessibility Committee Meeting Agenda #12 – Accessibility-Checked Version</li> </ul> |
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| 1.0 | <p><b>Territorial Acknowledgement, Introduction, and Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We respectfully acknowledge that the communities of Northeastern BC are situated on the traditional territories of the Dane-zaa, Dene, Cree, Dunne Tsaa, Tsáá? Çhé Ne Dane, Tse'khene, Dene Tha', Kaska peoples, Dunne-za, and the Métis Nation BC Region 7. The Northeastern BC Collaborative Accessibility Committee recognizes the many Indigenous communities with ongoing connections to the land base on which we are situated, and the many more whose communities have meeting grounds, gathering places, and travel routes across the region. We recognize and value the significant contributions of Indigenous Peoples who have lived and worked on this land since time immemorial.</li> <li>• <b>Jake Papineau</b> delivers a territorial acknowledgement from Edmonton on Treaty 6 Territory, the ancestral and traditional territory of the Cree, the Nakoda Sioux, the Dene, the Sauteaux, as well as the Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations.</li> <li>• Acknowledgements from attendees:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Hillary Sheppard</b> is calling from the heart of the traditional territory of the Dene, Cree and Dunne Tsaa people of Fort Nelson and Prophet River First Nations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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- **Kristi Leer** is calling from another location but acknowledges that her home community is on the traditional territory of the Dene, Cree and Dunne Tsaa people of Fort Nelson and Prophet River First Nations.
- **Jake** is excited to see the Action Tracker slowly getting shorter each month.

## 2.0 Action Tracker

Item #	Description of Action	Action By	Status	Timeline
4-7.3	<p>All Committee members to bring forward at the next meeting some ideas for SPARC local government campaign.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This is a standing action item until the SPARC <a href="#">Local Community Accessibility Grant</a> Program is closed to new applications.</li> <li>● More information about the grant can be found online at <a href="https://www.sparc.bc.ca/partnerships/local-community-accessibility-grant-program/">https://www.sparc.bc.ca/partnerships/local-community-accessibility-grant-program/</a></li> </ul>	All Committee members	In Progress	July 2023 – March 2026
6-2	<p>UM will draft a letter of invitation to local First Nations communities that all local governments can take to their council to get approved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Kiyomi</b> has completed a first draft of the letter, which will be shared with the Committee alongside the meeting minutes.</li> </ul>	Urban Matters	In Progress	Late September 2024
9-4	<p><b>Jake</b> from UM to put together an outline of the annual report over the summer, which shall be reviewed, discussed, and approved by the Committee before September. The Committee shall decide how the report will be shared and who it will be shared to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Jake, Kathryn,</b> and Executive Committee members have been populating the report, and a draft will be</li> </ul>	Urban Matters	In Progress	Early October 2024

	<p>ready for the Committee to review by the next Committee meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Committee can then determine how, who to share it with, and when.</li> </ul>			
9-5	<p>The Committee to review the TOR recruitment language and include September as the dedicated open application period for new Committee members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This item is worth scheduling a special meeting with the executive Committee member to discuss the language and determine the next steps to open up the recruitment process.</li> </ul>	All Committee members	In Progress	Early October 2024
11-4	<p><b>Kiyomi</b> from USL to create a visual guide or tool to help Committee members navigate the SharePoint site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Kiyomi</b> has been working on a visual guide for the SharePoint but has elected to wait until she has updated and rebranded the site before finishing the guide.</li> <li>The finished document and related material will be sent to the Committee and added to the SharePoint, meeting minutes, and agendas.</li> </ul>	UM/Kiyomi	In Progress	Mid-October 2024

### 3.0 Committee Updates

- On behalf of **Devon Aaroe, Jake** shares that invitations have been sent to Committee members for an on-site downtown accessibility meeting hosted in Dawson Creek.
  - This event is a voluntary on-site meeting (30-60 minutes) on September 25, 2024, to discuss operational accessibility issues downtown at the old Wildcat Video lot (10 St and 103 Ave). Relevant City staff will be present to hear lived experiences and discuss possible solutions to the concerns they receive.
    - Some financial support is available to cover travel costs for those interested in participating, but a process has yet to be determined.
    - In the meantime, **please save your receipts** or send them to [jpapineau@urbansystems.ca](mailto:jpapineau@urbansystems.ca) so we can reimburse you as soon as possible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Kristi Leer</b> indicates she will attend and is curious if others on the Committee will also participate in the meeting.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Marla Reed</b> notes that they will be there, as well.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>4.0</p>	<p><b>SharePoint Site Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Committee members should have gained access to the SharePoint following the June 13, 2024, meeting.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The SharePoint link will continue to be attached to the Zoom meeting invitations and added to emails containing the agenda and meeting minutes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Kiyomi</b> shares her screen and conducts a SharePoint walk-through exercise with the present Committee members. Not everyone was able to attend the August Committee meeting, and this provided other Committee members with the opportunity to get an idea of how to access, use, and navigate the Committee SharePoint until Kiyomi finishes the visual guide.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Please see the <a href="#">Committee SharePoint Site</a> using this link: <a href="https://northeastaccessibilitycommittee.sharepoint.com">Northeast Accessibility Committee - Home (sharepoint.com)</a></b></li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Jake</b> asks if it is possible to change site permissions to allow Committee members to add their own events to the calendar.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Kiyomi</b> notes that it is currently set up to allow Committee members to view the calendar, but she will change the settings to enable them to create their own events and add them to the Committee’s calendar.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>5.0</p>	<p><b>Committee Funding Proposal Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Jake</b> and <b>Vanessa</b> have been working together to figure out how to fund the Committee because several local governments will be working with the City of Fort St. John. It is coming together.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ They are moving along regarding the work that needs to be done and have been deciding how the contract will be set up, among other administrative tasks that need to be done beforehand.</li> <li>○ The approach will likely resemble a funding agreement that spans a one-year period, and the idea would be to look for a multi-year agreement afterward. This would ensure the Committee’s work could continue and give the involved parties time to continue sorting through wrinkles.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>6.0</p>	<p><b>Committee Open Discussion / New Business</b></p>

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- **Kristi** shares that a UBC student named Roshan is looking for individuals living with a disability to participate in a study group so that he may gather information about daily life, work life, and other insights into how people navigate with their disability and what barriers to accessibility they encounter. He will be conducting this activity for another year.
  - **Kristi** will share more information with anyone interested.
  - **You can contact Roshan by email at [roshanpaul2@gmail.com](mailto:roshanpaul2@gmail.com).**
- **Edwina Nearhood** (absent) shared that the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) is hosting Connecting the Dots in Edmonton on November 4. This event will focus on accessibility from a blind or low-vision perspective. Attendees will gain valuable insights on accessibility, which could benefit the public and potential employers in understanding how to create inclusive environments.
- **Diana Jewan** shares that she was able to go swimming using a chair loaned to Hudson's Hope. It was a little wonky but worked well when backed into a pool. She had some help, but it felt very freeing, and she is even considering getting a season pass.
  - The district representative said she would get one for the coming season.
  - **Diana** will inform her that the chair does not have to be sourced from the district's approved sites because other retailers may sell the same ones for much cheaper.
- **Hillary** has taken an exam to receive her certification from the International Association of Accessibility Professionals in Accessibility Core Competencies. She found many resources helpful and would recommend the program to others working in the field or even just looking into the content.
  - **Hillary** emphasizes the importance of using plain language, especially on the municipal side. It is easy to forget what plain language and everyday speech are like, and municipal/professional language can often be preoccupied with making reports look.
  - Someone sent her a document requesting feedback before they released it to the community. **Hillary** converted it to plain language using AI and was fascinated by how quickly she could make it easier for the public. She encourages more people to rethink how we communicate information to the public.
- **Hillary** suggests that the action item table should include a column or a row for 'estimated timeline,' which would help keep track of some of the standing or long-term items.
  - **Action item 12-6: Urban Matters to add a row/column in the action tracker for the estimated timeline of action items.**
- **Hillary** wonders about the status of action item 6-2 regarding the letter to First Nations. It has been a while, and she wants to proceed with the letter.

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- She suggests using language and terms, like 'round table' to emphasize the intent of bringing together more perspectives and voices about accessibility. This would be an opportunity to increase the exchange and input from Committee Members.
  - **Kiyomi** asks the Committee what the intention and level of participation the Committee is requesting from Indigenous communities and nations through the letter. Is it to invite their governing bodies to join the collective and similarly send appointees as local governments currently do, or is it to see if any community members from these communities are interested in participating in the meeting? Who is the letter speaking as or on behalf of?
  - **Hillary** recalls that the motion is intended to invite communities to see if they want to participate. If any community does, there could be a conversation about joining the collective and providing a financial contribution at some point down the road. However, we want to gauge their interest in participating, and this would be a government-to-government letter of invitation.
  - **Jake** adds that representation is the goal, and the Committee first needs to build a relationship with them before considering what a long-term relationship would look like for the Committee. **Hillary** and **Kiyomi** agree.
- **Jake** shares thoughts on what he has recently learned through his work with the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. They have completed 20 audits, and he discovered they can now be conducted virtually.
  - The Rick Hansen Foundation certification examines seven different aspects of buildings or sites. During the virtual audit, they can use Facetime to walk through facilities and identify accessibility barriers and deficiencies.
  - What makes this interesting is that there are some rural and remote communities across Wood Buffalo, and some of them aren't very accessible for site visits. With virtual audits, they can complete a site visit without travelling to these communities, making it more affordable. This expands the scope of places that they can work with.
  - **Kristi** is excited to hear about these audits happening in rural and remote communities. It is disheartening when peers say they accept when places aren't accessible, but the community/businesses can't afford to bring an expert in to make the necessary changes for accessibility.
- **Steve McLain** shares that the District of Chetwynd has started some of the projects that he mentioned earlier this year, such as paving from one end of town to the other to make it more accessible, which they are excited about. They have also built a couple of new sidewalks, which have helped. The downtown core is preparing for a revitalization program with some

water line replacements, and they will be adding bike lanes and some alternative forms of foot traffic in the area as a part of the project.

- **Jake** asks if the work is being done through the SPARC grant.
- **Steve** indicates they have been working with the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, as they were doing much of the paving in Chetwynd. This resulted in an almost 40% reduction in the cost of asphalt, so they ended up paving more walking trails than they initially planned.
- **Steve** has received comments asking why they paved a walking trail along the South Access Road since nobody walks there. However, nobody walked there because there was no place to walk. Now, they are seeing bicycles, wheelchairs, and mobility scooters out on these paths. Other people say they can access a whole part of town that they couldn't before. This improvement required minimal effort to make the town noticeably more accessible; it just needed a bit of thought and time. This is the due diligence that local governments need to do now, which will help everyone in the community.
- **Steve** asks if anyone saw the article that came out recently about a group of people starting a class action lawsuit against the City of Whitehorse due to the lack of snow removal around accessible parking spots and other accessibility issues. People are frustrated, and we need to continue making progress to ensure that people can actually access the accessible spaces in their home community.
  - **Hillary** finds the article very encouraging and sees the lawsuit as a watershed moment in advancing accessibility. Whitehorse is being accused of not standing up for everybody, and this might set a good precedent for other communities to take accessibility more seriously to prevent something similar from happening to them.
  - **Jake** is saddened that the individuals taking action against Whitehorse were pushed to take that route because they had no other way to show the City that accessibility is serious business. However, he agrees with **Steve** and **Hillary**. He notes that even though the City is being forced to make changes rather than deciding to make those changes, it is a significant step forward and will encourage other communities to initiate change.
- **Steve** recalls a back injury he suffered and has since recovered from. At the time, he experienced mobility issues due to the injury. Currently, his wife has been recovering from a brain injury. She faces many accessibility barriers because the world isn't as accommodating for invisible disabilities. She will often lean on him for support and experiences double vision and dizziness, and many people have assumed she is drunk. It has been interesting for him



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to revisit accessibility, especially in areas where people make well-meaning assumptions about individuals who don't outwardly appear as someone living with a disability. Public opinion and understanding have been frustrating and require a lot of patience.

- **Steve** notes that not everything will be accessible for everybody all the time, but even though there are still barriers he notices today, he has noticed a difference between how accessible the world was over twenty years ago and how accessible it is today overall. He commends the Committee and the collective effort of the participating communities for making enough small, incremental changes that he can now feel a slight difference in the region.
- **Kristi** echoes Steve's observation about noticing a positive shift. She feels that since the Committee started, she has felt more seen in communities, and her needs are being recognized more often. It will take a while to get to a point where everyone will notice a significant improvement, but she can sense that the work everyone is doing is working.
- **Hillary** adds that lifespans are increasing, and aging individuals are getting closer to being able to age-in-place with every change.
- **Hillary** shares a good news story about the Northern Rockies Accessibility and Inclusion Committee. Last year, a nonprofit group had come forward with a recommendation or a request asking if there could be any temporary accessibility signage created for groups or events to borrow or rent if they were hosting an event on private property to establish some accessible parking. This year, they needed accessible parking for an upcoming street festival. The Arts Council went to the rec centre, borrowed some temporary accessible parking signs, and set them up around the event. They later received an email from the Arts Council, which said there was a larger attendance at the festival this year. The signs offered clear communication from the highway and were visible when entering the parking lot. They also allowed the festival to expand priority for people living with reduced mobility and enabled more participation by improving community access to events.
  - She recognizes that the whole project took around \$2,000 to complete but greatly impacted many people that day.
  - **Hillary** adds that they did apply for SPARC funding to add more permanent accessible parking and to build a sidewalk connecting key locations across the community.
- **Hillary** reminds the Committee that it is disability employment month. Fort Nelson is hosting a community barbeque to celebrate diversity.
- **Jake** shares news on behalf of **Vanessa Harris** (absent), who informed him that **Edwina** had provided some feedback to their Planning and Development team about some planters, and

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the next day, they were able to move the planters so that they no longer presented as a barrier to her or others.

- **Vanessa** expressed a sense of openness in responding to those 'easy wins,' which is encouraging.
- **Jake** feels that Committees like this one are important because they act as a mechanism for people to provide feedback and allow us to see changes happening. Not only do you hear about the feedback people provide about accessibility barriers, but you also get to learn about the wins when those barriers are addressed. It reinforces the positive impact.
- **Kristi** is excited to start uploading information and news to the SharePoint because there is a lot of excitement and energy whenever the Committee shares positive news. Especially between meetings, when there is a dip in energy and excitement, it will be a great platform to boost the energy by seeing the wins people share.
- **Jake** thinks this would be a good opportunity to revisit the communications plan and rethink how to showcase these events and projects. It would be great to tell the stories of people with lived experience and of people coming together to make spaces and places more inclusive and accessible. There should be a way to share this news and these feel-good stories with people across the region.
- **Kristi** reminds the Committee that September 15 is the annual Terry Fox Run and encourages members to participate in their local run if they can. She recognizes that not every community has a run, so if there is an opportunity to set one up, reach out to **Kristi**, and she will help you get one started in your community.
- **Kristi** shares a story from the Paralympics. She felt there wasn't enough coverage of the Paralympics, so she and a few friends and family decided to start a letter-writing campaign. They each wrote that they would like to see the Paralympics games hosted before the Olympic games to boost visibility. The feedback they received was identical and explained that there is a historic long-term agreement between the International Olympic Committee and the International Paralympic Committee, which is in place until 2032. The host of the Olympic must also organize the Paralympic games, so the two organizations work together to increase visibility for both games. This agreement also gives the International Paralympics Committee some financial stability, which benefits the entire Paralympic movement. **Kristi** was informed that the current order of events is beneficial for the Paralympic games because almost 1 million of the total 2.5 million tickets sold for Paralympic events were purchased before the opening ceremony.

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- **Kristi** recognizes that the order of events isn't the issue, as there is already more coverage and visibility for the Paralympics than she realized. Unfortunately, the app needed to watch both the Olympics and Paralympics is not free, so that was a barrier for many people and reduced the accessibility of both games for everyone.
- **Kiyomi** recalls having the opposite perception because she does have the app and received regular updates about sports and medals for both Olympic and Paralympic events. She didn't notice a difference between how each was being covered and promoted, and it was easy to forget that not everyone could see what she could.
- **Kristi** adds that she is in Edmonton with the Paralysis Recovery Centre, which will be hosting a 'Rise of the Phoenix' Gala on November 15, 2024. It would be great if someone from Urban Systems or Urban Matters could attend because it is a big deal for people who go to ReYu. There will even be a fashion show and stories of people recovering at the centre. There is a fee, but it would be worth looking into.
  - **More information can be found online at <https://www.reyu.ca/copy-of-activity-based-therapy>.**

## 7.0 Closing Business

- Next meeting date: October 10, 2024, 1:30 – 3:00 PM
- The meeting minutes, along with other discussed information, will be sent out.
- The meeting ended at 2:28 PM (PST).

**URBAN MATTERS CCC LTD.**

Jake Papineau,  
Committee Facilitator

cc: All Committee Members