

ST. JOHN'S

Inclusion Advisory Committee Report

November 24, 2022

9:30 a.m.

Virtual

Present:

Dr. Sulaimon Giwa, Co-Chair - Anti-racism
Joby Fleming, Co-Chair - Empower NL
Councillor Debbie Hanlon, Council Representative
Duane Morgan, CNIB
Nancy Emberley, NLAD
Trevor Freeborn, Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
Renata Lang, Association for New Canadians
Paul Walsh, Autism Society
Jane Simmons, Physical and Neurological Disabilities
Alyse Stuart, Women's Issues
Ashley Bonnell, CHHA-NL
Natalie Godden, Manager of Healthy City & Inclusion
Trisha Rose, Facilitator, Accessibility & Inclusion
Paula Soper, Inclusion Coordinator
Jennifer Squires, Legislative Assistant

Regrets:

Carolyn Mills, Metrobus/GoBus, Manager of Accessible Transit Service
Kim Pratt Baker, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Heidi Edgar, Mental Health
TJ Jones, 2SLGBTQIA+

Others:

Mary Beth Delaney, Supervisor, Parking Services
Bill MacDonald, Supervisor, Traffic Signals
Mel Cyr, Interpreter
Sean Power, Interpreter

1. **BlindSquare Event Wayfinding Pilot Project Recommendations**

The Accessibility & Inclusion Facilitator provided the Inclusion Advisory Committee (IAC) with an overview of the City's use of the BlindSquare Event Wayfinding and Navigation tool as an accessibility feature at Downtown Pedestrian Mall Events. In 2022, the pilot program was officially launched, and a public engagement process was initiated to evaluate the project. The feedback provided through the public engagement webpage, survey and stakeholder meetings indicated that respondents found BlindSquare to be easy to use and successfully helped users to navigate the pedestrian mall. It was further noted by the IAC that BlindSquare could be used of benefit to many visitors to the pedestrian mall, not just those with vision loss. Cruise ship visitors and other individuals may find the app to be helpful when navigating the area.

There were concerns raised that BlindSquare is not available for Android devices at this time. BlindSquare have indicated that an android version is in development but have yet to confirm an official release date. It is anticipated that the android version will be available for 2023 Downtown Pedestrian Mall. CNIB local have confirmed that they have the capacity to continue to provide full assistance service and amendments ongoing upon approval.

IAC members agreed that the continued use of BlindSquare should be contingent upon the release of an Android version along with improvements to the iOS app.

It was asked if members were recommending that the app no longer be used until an Android solution was available. Members clarified that the City should continue to offer BlindSquare as a wayfinding tool. It was asked if there were other navigation apps that were available for all devices that could be used in place of BlindSquare. Other tools exist but they do not allow customized location signals. BlindSquare can identify event specific amenities such as parklets, entrances and seating areas which is not offered in other navigational tools.

Recommendation

Moved By Duane Morgan

Seconded By Joby Fleming

That Council approve continued use of the BlindSquare technology as a wayfinding and navigation tool at the 2023 Downtown Pedestrian Mall pending the anticipated release of an android version.

MOTION CARRIED

CO-CHAIRS, JOBY FLEMING AND DR. SULAIMON GIWA