Municipal public engagement of people with disabilities: advisory committees as a case study

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge I am located on the traditional Lands of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

OUTLINE

- Background
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Next steps
- Questions

PROJECT OVERVIEW

What is the MAP Project?

A partnership for improving Mobility, Access and Participation (MAP) among people with disabilities.

The goal of the project is to support community organizations and municipalities to develop, evaluate, and implement evidence-based interventions to contribute to the development of barrier-free communities.

What is the MAP Project?

This partnership focuses on three streams:

01

NAVIGATION AND PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT ACCESSIBILITY

02

TRANSPORTATION ACCESSIBILITY

03

SOCIAL ACCESSIBILITY (SOCIAL FACTORS)

What is the MAP

MAP

NAVIGATION AND PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT ACCCESSIBILITY

Focuses on pedestrian infrastructure and the development of tools to support navigation in public spaces, including wayfinding, civic practice, and policy changes.

TRANSPORTATION ACCCESSIBILITY

Focuses on public transport services and policies, including public transportation, taxis, ride-share options, and community initiatives for people with mobility issues (e.g., adapted transportation, accessible bus stops).

SOCIAL ACCCESSIBILITY

Focuses on attitudinal and social factors, a critical component of inclusive communities that can either reduce or facilitate mobility, access, and social participation of people with disabilities.

Our Study

Understanding the experiences of accessibility committee members and the role of these committees within the municipalities.

Purpose

to explore how accessibility advisory committees function and what their role is in the municipal policy making from the perspectives of people serving on these committees and the city staff

BACKGROUND

- Most of the existing research focuses on national level disability advocacy efforts
- Historically, people with disabilities have been excluded from political decision-making
- Increased interest in understanding how lived experience informs or can inform policy
- Public engagement is an important component of local governments' operations

GOALS OF PROJECT FINDINGS

Understand municipal policymaking relating to accessibility, and the role of the advisory committees

Identify the best practices and models of the accessibility advisory committees in different municipalities

Identify the areas of improvement for municipal accessibility policymaking and the advisory committees

Increase an understanding about the civic participation of people with disabilities.

DATA COLLECTION

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

with staff and advisory committee members from various municipalities

OBSERVATIONS

at advisory committee meetings, recording field notes of proceedings

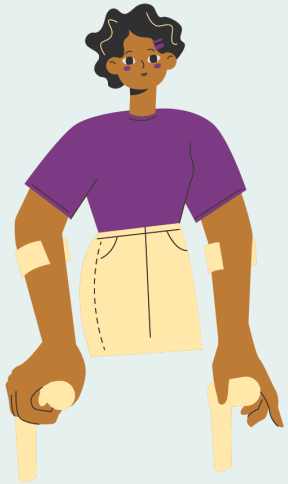
FINDINGS

Types of accessibility advisory committee

- 11 committees
- Mandate
- Membership/composition
- Chairing responsibility
- Meeting frequency
- Term

Theme 1: Finding voice on the committee

Representation



It feels like ideally there's both good representation of lived experience and some people who have kind of a deeper background on accessibility research or planning… So, I think both of those things are important (P24).

Theme 1: Finding voice on the committee

Advising vs. Advocacy

No matter what you do, advocating and advising kind of go hand in hand, you can't advise without advocation, and you can't advocate for something without advisement (P14).

Theme 2: Grappling with the challenges of the committees

- A lack of coordinated and consistent approach from different levels of staff
- A poor communication feedback loop
- A general slow pace of change
- The process of applying is often not accessible
- There is a lack of clarity of what will be expected from the committee when people join (they don’t always realize what level of involvement will be expected of them)

3. Viewing accessibility as a complex issue

- Accessibility cuts across jurisdictional boundaries
- Some skepticism about the potential of strategies and legislation
    - Legislation is just a first step
    - Legislation is not a universal truth
- Accessibility as part of a larger network of issues that municipalities are facing today (e.g., equity, diversity and inclusion, reconciliation, climate emergency, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recruitment
- Conditions for sharing feedback
- Connections with other committees across the province
- Institutional memory
- Communications
- Committee structure
- Honorarium

NEXT STEPS

Next steps

Accessible BC Act

- *Accessibility Committees*
- *Accessibility Plan*
- *Public Feedback Tool*

Capacity building and resource development

- Podcast series
- Engagement sessions to identify the needs (e-learning module)

QUESTIONS

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THANK YOU!
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https://inclusivemap.ca/