



**MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE**

**To / Destinataire** OPLB Trustees

**cc:** Library Senior Management Team (LSMT)

**From / Expéditeur** Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian / CEO  
Myra Skaronski, Division Manager, Branch Services

**Subject / Objet** Bookmobile Temporary Modifications      **Date:** July 14, 2023  
July 2022 – June 2023

The purpose of this memo is to advise trustees regarding recent trends and contributing factors in Bookmobile temporary stop modifications, including reduced hours, re-location, or cancellation, to illustrate the rate and distribution of these disruptions in service, and to respond to recent questions from trustees and from councillors thus affected.

Context

At a strategic level, Bookmobile services at OPL are governed by the Board-approved Alternative Services Delivery Framework 2016-2020 (OPLB-2015-0071), currently being updated (and named the Mobile Framework). OPL Board Policy 002, Delegation of Authority (“the DOA Policy”) outlines the decision-making authorities of the Board and CEO; the authority to temporarily modify bookmobile stops is delegated to the CEO.

In May 2023 (“2022 Policy Compliance and Delegation of Authority Annual Reporting,” OPLB-2023-0509-10.5), staff reported on temporary modifications to the Bookmobile service in the 2022 calendar year, indicating that 95 planned stops were temporarily modified. The current note focuses on the most recent 12 months, i.e., July 1, 2022, through to June 30, 2023, and shows a similar rate with 26 temporary reductions/relocations and 71 temporary cancellations, for a total of 97 temporary modifications. Temporary modifications are generally due to one of three reasons: staffing issues, mechanical issues, or weather events.

**Staffing issues:** The Bookmobile team currently employs 3 full-time Mobile Services Assistants (MSAs) dedicated to the two Bookmobiles and a 0.5 FTE MSA dedicated to Kiosk services. MSAs drive the bookmobiles and provide client service. An Ontario DZ license or its equivalent is required to operate the two large Bookmobile vehicles; an Ontario G license or its equivalent is required to operate the mini bookmobile. In the interest of operational flexibility, the MSA job description requires all MSAs to possess a DZ license, strong client-centric service skills, and to be bilingual. The department typically also employs two to four casual MSAs (also with DZ license requirement) at any given time, who cover additional shifts for outreach and events, and replacement shifts for planned or unplanned absences.

The staffing issues affecting Bookmobile scheduling include shortages due to recruitment / retention, and difficulties scheduling for unplanned absences. Demand for DZ drivers is high within Ottawa: although OPL offers an average of 150 extra hours per month distributed among both permanent and casual MSAs, many casual MSAs pick up shifts elsewhere in OPL departments and branches, or at other jobs that offer more regular schedules. The scarcity of qualified drivers is a longstanding staffing challenge and has become more pronounced since the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent industry trends and economic inflation have also negatively affected the employment market for casual and entry-level positions, especially regarding retention of those in entry-level roles.<sup>1</sup> OPL typically recruits casual MSAs via an inventory one to two times each year; inventories can take up to four to five months between the job advertisement and an MSA's first working shift.

**Mechanical issues:** OPL has two large vehicles: a school-bus style vehicle acquired in 2016 and a coach style vehicle acquired in 2020. A 2014 Sprinter van (the mini bookmobile) is used for outreach, special events, and as a back-up vehicle when another vehicle requires maintenance. The expected lifecycle of a bookmobile is approximately ten to twelve years, custom-built vehicles often require more maintenance and upkeep than other vehicles, and parts may also be more difficult to source and require additional delivery time.

**Weather events:** While temporary modifications due to extreme weather events such as the derecho, flooding, tornadoes, and snowstorms are comparatively rare, they have become more common in recent years. Ice storms can make the operation of heavy vehicles dangerous, and heavy snow can impede visibility and render parking spots inaccessible. Decisions about weather-related modifications are made based on local extreme weather warnings, and in consultation with City colleagues.

#### Bookmobile Temporary Modifications July 2022 – June 2023

In the interest of minimizing impacts to service, reducing stop hours temporarily (by 20 minutes or more), or re-locating a stop to a stop along the same neighbourhood route, is preferred over temporarily cancelling a stop. A cancellation occurs when service is unable to be delivered at the original location nor combined with a nearby stop. Notices of all temporary modifications are shared with trustees, local councillors, and members of the public.

Detail regarding temporary stop modifications in the last 12 months is provided in Table 1: July 2022 – June 2023 Bookmobile stop modifications. There were 71 stop cancellations during this period, and 26 reductions in hours or relocations, for a total of 97 modifications. These tables indicate that the most frequently affected stops in the last 12 months are Bayview (19) Carson Grove (11), and Vars (10). These stops are in three different neighbourhoods and wards across the City.

Importantly, within the period reviewed, River Ward, which is home to 8 of 21 stops (38% of Bookmobile services by number of stops), experienced a commensurate rate of schedule modifications: 13 stop reductions or relocations, and 28 cancellations, which represents 42% of total temporary modifications.

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<sup>1</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada projects: "For transport truck drivers, over the period 2022-2031, new job openings (arising from expansion demand and replacement demand) are expected to total 161,700, while 144,400 new job seekers (arising from school leavers, immigration and mobility) are expected to be available to fill them. The labour shortage conditions seen in recent years is expected to persist into the 2022-2031 period." [Transport Driver in Canada | Job prospects - Job Bank](#)

**Table 1: July 2022 – June 2023 Bookmobile stop modifications**

Stop	Ward	Partnership	Reduced hours/ Relocation	Cancellation	Total modifications	Staffing (%)	Mechanical (%)	Weather (%)
Bayview	River	No	9	10	19	42	53	5
Carson Grove <sup>2</sup>	Rideau - Rockcliffe	Yes	0	11	11	82	9	0
Vars	Osgoode	Yes	6	4	10	27	73	0
Rideauview	Riverside South - Findlay Creek	Yes	6	1	7	86	0	14
Overbrook <sup>3</sup>	Rideau - Rockcliffe	Yes	0	6	6	66	17	0
Sarsfield	Orléans South - Navan	Yes	1	5	6	50	50	0
Hunt Club	River	Yes	0	5	5	60	20	20
Carlington	River	Yes	0	4	4	50	25	25
Hog's Back <sup>4</sup>	River	No	3	1	4	0	25	0
Caldwell	River	Yes	0	3	3	100	0	0
Ledbury Banff	River	Yes	0	3	3	67	0	33
Lincoln Heights	Bay	Yes	0	3	3	67	0	33
Van Lang	Kitchissippi	Yes	0	3	3	67	0	33
Bridlewood	Kanata South	Yes	0	2	2	50	0	50
Cambridge	Somerset	No	0	2	2	50	0	50
Carleton Heights	River	Yes	0	2	2	50	50	0
Farley Mowat	Barrhaven East	No	0	2	2	100	0	0
Strathcona	Rideau - Vanier	Yes	0	2	2	100	0	0
Barrhaven South	Barrhaven West	Yes	0	1	1	0	100	0
Bayshore	Bay	Yes	0	1	1	0	100	0
Riverside Mall	River	No	1	0	1	0	100	0

<sup>2</sup> 9% of temporary modifications at Carson Grove were due to parking issues.

<sup>3</sup> 17% of temporary modifications at Overbrook were due to parking issues.

<sup>4</sup> 75% of temporary modifications at Hog's Back were due to parking or snow clearing issues; note this stop was discontinued in July 2023.

## Criteria Considered When Temporarily Modifying Stops<sup>5</sup>

- **Client service priorities:** With limited resources, service is redirected to the stops known to have higher use. For example, Bayview and Carson Grove (more frequently modified) are scheduled concurrently with stops currently known to have higher use.
- **Availability of resources:** The top two impacted stops are evening stops when both vehicles and staff teams are on the road at the same time (scheduled concurrently), meaning that all resources are allocated, and no back-ups may be available.
- **Route efficiencies:** Lastly, the route-based nature of the Bookmobile also plays a part in modifications and cancellations: Bayview service can be redirected and delivered at the nearby Hunt Club stop (1KM away) with a lesser impact on the community than cancelling a stop with no nearby alternatives. While relocation still has an impact on the community, the intention is to optimize operational effectiveness, route efficiencies and nearby neighbourhood access, providing a client-centric, environmentally conscious, and fiscally responsible option.

## Next steps

- **Increased, sustained, and creative recruitment efforts:** Bookmobile typically posts one to two external competitions for casual Mobile Services Assistants each year. Staff have begun posting ongoing open inventories to allow more candidates to apply. A typical competition is posted for two weeks, while an inventory can remain open for up to six months, allowing candidates to apply and be considered on an ongoing basis
- **Ongoing monitoring of fleet risks:** The lifecycle and fleet replacement schedule varies by vehicle, and considers factors such as mileage, rising costs of repair, and the expected lifecycle of similar vehicles. While the lifecycle of custom-built bookmobiles can be difficult to predict, Fleet Procurement estimates a lifecycle of 12 years. The current fleet is seasoned (2014, 2016, and 2020).
- **Revision of the Alternative Services Framework:** With the input and guidance of the Service Framework Ad hoc Committee, staff will develop the Mobile Framework for tabling at the Board, and public consultations, before returning for Board approval. This includes contemplation of different service models, including but not limited to vehicle type and related license requirements, though this would introduce other service impacts and would require very careful consideration.
- **Exploration of partnerships:** Continue exploring partnership opportunities, as they arise, at existing stops to reduce temporary stop modifications.
- **Review of scheduling practices:** Explore scheduling practices designed to identify and prioritize redeploying qualified branch staff when unplanned absences occur.

Please feel free to contact Myra Skaronski at [Myra.Skaronski@BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca](mailto:Myra.Skaronski@BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca) for any additional questions.

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<sup>5</sup> The Alternative Services Delivery Framework 2016-2020 does not include criteria for prioritizing temporary modifications. These details will be reviewed and potentially incorporated into the Mobile Service Framework.