

## Wheelchair accessibility in the 90s Experimental wheelchair lift fitted to 2846

(From Transit Vancouver newsgroup on yahoo groups)

> Interesting to note as well that at one time, 2846 was fitted with a wheelchair lift as an experiment to see how difficult it would be to fit lifts in the trolleybus fleet. The lift was fitted to the rear doors... resulting in a 3 seat- bench being placed opposite the rear exit. To make up for the lost seats, some of the left side single seats were replaced with doubles. The doors were replaced with "slide glide" doors (as on NFIs), but it was found they didn't work too well, and the bi-folds were put back on and the lift removed.

Oh, yeah. Thanks for bringing this one up. I had thought I'd done a pretty good job repressing this unhappy memory.

The bus was done to see how difficult it would be to convert the trolleys, seeing as they formed the backbone of service in Vancouver itself.

Flyer supplied a kit of parts for the project, including the doors, which were in a rather familiar orange/red paint scheme - they simply took two off of a MUNI D902 and sent them along with the door hardware.

Putting the thing together was not that bad. The bus was removed from the revenue fleet and assigned to the Training section and while it did see some revenue service, it was not used on any regular run. This is when the issue of "street furniture" first came up. It was found that the majority of bus stops simply could not be used as there was insufficient clearance to the rear exit lift from the sidewalk due to paper boxes, mailboxes (which Canada Post eventually took care of by removing most of them) bus benches, garbage cans, fire hydrants, and so on.....

I forget her name, but one of the local handicapped group members volunteered to be the test subject one day and Broadway (!) was chosen because of the approximation to peak hour loads.

The bus was run over to Boundary Loop and sent out just ahead of a regular run, who must have thought he'd died and gone to bus heaven ....until both reached Kingsway. This was where our "wheelchair patron" was waiting.

Loading required the driver to stop the bus, clear all of the people out of the area around the fold up seats, clear those seats and flip them up, and

then run the lift out, pick up the wheelchair, and load it, then stow the lift.

It took eleven minutes.

The fellow behind the bus was no longer in heaven. He was late, and so was the guy behind him. When the bus reached Hospital Row, the wheelchair wanted off.

It was at that point the test was aborted by pulling the poles and letting the two buses trapped behind it to carry on, as it took another seven minutes of moving the bus before the lift could be properly deployed. This test was repeated on several occasions and the results were similar - it just could not be used on any route that was busy (and practically all the major ones were, leaving Nanaimo/Dunbar, Cordova, and 41st (which was still a trolley run in those days)).

It was also determined that you simply could not pull up to a stop in the usual fashion because of the street furniture. In the end, the process ended up being stopped well back of the proper stop, with the bus almost at the intersection, in order to provide sufficient clearance in many spots.

There was some consideration of trying to fit the lift in the front door, but Flyer stated quite emphatically that the frame was not strong enough to support the weight of the 900 lb lift in the front right corner. Another option was proposed.

This option turned out to be the rebuilding of 2700, the prototype, which had been sitting in a field since its' return to Winnipeg. Flyer proposed that they would rebuild the front section of the bus to allow the lift to be installed in the front door (they were stuck with this demo and nobody, not even Toronto, had expressed interest in it. Flyer had started doing a few minor things to convert the bus to Toronto specs, but abandoned the idea when zero interest was expressed by the TTC)

I'm not sure what exactly happened to this idea but a photo that someone took of 2700 years later shows that they had cut into the body around the front area and they had removed some of the seats over the front wheelwells. In the end the work was never completed and after 2846 was converted back to stock the idea was forgotten, but of course the new trolleys will have to be accessible.

If the new trolleys do indeed deliver by 2005, and TransLink orders another 100 D40LFs by 2008 to replace the 1989 MCI Classics, they will have beat BCT's 2010 date by two years, making Vancouver the largest major North American multimodal system to go 100% accessible.

(Note when I say this that some major U.S. cities have rapid transit lines that are not 100% accessible, but have bus fleets that are, and few of the accessible all-bus systems have the coverage of TransLink. There are obviously some all-bus transit systems that are 100% accessible, but none of them have rapid transit, commuter train service or SeaBus.

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