

Métro elevator plans stall

City falls far behind on 2008 promise of installations in three stations a year

BY ANNE SUTHERLAND, MONTREAL GAZETTE DECEMBER 15, 2010



Laurence Parent leaves Montreal city council chambers yesterday after asking questions about improving handicapped access to the métro system.

Photograph by: Pierre Obendrauf, The Gazette

At the very least, Laurence Parent would like the city of Montreal to respect its own transit plan.

At best, she'd like an elevator in every subway station.

Parent was on hand yesterday, after the Société de transport de Montréal budget was adopted, to hold the city to a promise it made in 2008 to install elevators in three métro stations every year.

This marks the third time she has made the trek on her electric wheelchair to city hall to push for more accessible transit for the disabled.

Parent spoke up during question period after the budget was announced.

The new budget makes provisions for the completion of work on an elevator at Côte Vertu station in 2011 and another at Champ de Mars in 2013, well below the goals promised two years ago.

"This elevator project (they touted) is just a case of self-image," Parent said. "It's not complicated. They made a transit plan. I vote for my councillor, I pay taxes, and this does not represent me."

STM vice-chairman Marvin Rotrand noted: "When the métro system was built, primarily in the '60s, there were no provisions for elevators. Now we have to correct that."

Unfortunately, he added, there are a lot of urgent needs in the transit system that take precedence.

"We need to replace buses, train cars, and there is work to be done in the métro tunnels that engineers tell us is crucial," Rotrand said.

"Putting in elevators costs \$15 million per station. If we were to divert all the money necessary to make all stations accessible, it would hurt everyone who uses the system."

In the meantime, he pointed out, 156 of 209 bus routes have buses with ramps that can accommodate wheelchairs and there are elevators in all three Laval stations, as well as at Lionel Groulx, Berri-UQÀM, Henri Bourassa and Bonaventure. Plans are in the works for elevators at Angrignon and Place d'Armes next.

Parent isn't impressed.

"I think they should look for the busiest stations and fix those to be helpful to the most amount of people," she said.

"There's already an elevator at Berri. Why one two stops away at Place d'Armes? Consider the distance between the stops that are accessible.

“I’ve travelled a lot and seen other places where accessible transit is possible,” she said, citing New York and Toronto.

asutherland@montrealgazette.com

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