2024-2026
OC Transpo Accessibility Plan

Ottawa

OC Transpo

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Message from the General Manager of Transit Services, Renée Amilcar

At OC Transpo, we are deeply proud of the work we do to ensure that everyone, regardless of their individual needs, has the opportunity to travel with dignity and ease. As General Manager, I take this opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering commitment, through this Plan to providing accessible transit services to the entire City of Ottawa.

Our dedication to accessibility is at the core of everything we do. We understand the essential role that public transit plays in ensuring that everyone can participate fully in community life. That commitment begins even before a customer leaves their house, with clear and accessible information to help them plan their trip. It continues with barrier free access to stations, bus stops and platforms, incorporating tactile wayfinding, next-stop announcements. Every vehicle in our fleet is fully accessible, including trains, buses and minibuses. We know that success in this regard involves partnerships with our customers and with stakeholders and we receive and regularly incorporate valuable feedback into our operations through consultations, working groups, surveys, and online channels.

Our staff and, in particular, our Para Transpo operators approach their roles with a profound sense of purpose, treating each passenger with the utmost respect and care. This service plays a crucial role in our commitment to accessibility, and it's clear that our Para Transpo staff bring not just skill, but a genuine passion for their work and for our Para Transpo customers.

We are proud of our OC Transpo team and the integral role it plays in ensuring our commitment to bringing accessible transit to our communities. As such, we remain committed to ensuring every transit project is approached with a strong focus on accessibility by all our staff. We look forward to continuing to be champions of transit services that are accessible, reliable, and inclusive for all.

Introduction

This is the first Accessibility Plan for OC Transpo, which falls within the City of Ottawa's Transit Services Department, to fulfil our obligations under the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA, 2019). As some OC Transpo bus routes cross Provincial borders, our services are regulated under federal law.

Though the ACA is relatively new, OC Transpo has been designing and providing services for many years in compliance with the City of Ottawa's accessibility standards, now documented as the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP), and guided by provincial standards, currently documented in the Province of Ontario's *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA, 2005). This includes compliance reporting as part of the City's AODA Compliance Report, and adherence to all requirements of the AODA and its *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR). All City departments, including OC Transpo, contribute to the multi-year plan and annual COMAP update to City Council.

Reflective of its unique position as a federally-regulated department within a provincially-regulated municipal government, OC Transpo will continue to provide updates through both the annual COMAP reporting process, and annual progress reports on his Plan and we anticipate that there will be significant overlap between the initiatives described in both plans. In addition, as mandated under the ACA, this Plan will be updated every three years. OC Transpo
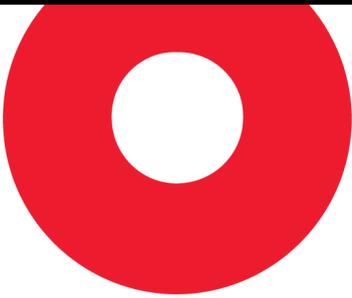
will also continue to be guided by the standards set out in the AODA and its regulations, including compliance reporting with the City, in addition to meeting the new requirements under the ACA. We believe that this expansive approach best serves the public interest in ensuring that Ottawa's public transit system is informed by, and in conversation with, the broadest set of regulatory guidance structures.
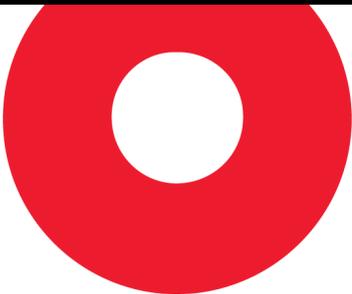
General

Statement of Commitment

As expressed through its Accessibility Policy, the City of Ottawa is committed to providing equal treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of City services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public. This commitment extends to residents, visitors, and employees with visible or non-visible, permanent or temporary disabilities.

Further, as per OC Transpo's Accessible Customer Service Policy, the City's Transit Services Department is committed to providing public transit services that are customer-focused, safe, reliable and accessible to all persons.

To develop this plan, an examination of the accessibility of OC Transpo's services was conducted. Existing barriers were identified through extensive engagement with persons with disabilities, organizations, the public, and consultations with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee. Additional consultations with Public members of the City's Transit Advisory Working Group will be conducted and their feedback will be incorporated into this Plan before the first revision in 2026. These groups will continue to be consulted as this plan progresses.

This plan includes ways in which OC Transpo will work to reduce or eliminate these barriers over time. OC Transpo is committed to making continuous changes and to expanding the initiatives in this plan as feedback is received, innovative practices emerge, or new standards are developed.
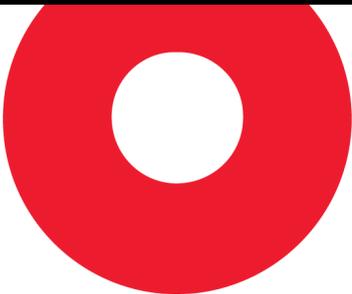
Description of OC Transpo and Operating Environment

OC Transpo, which falls within the City's Transit Services Department, is the public transit provider for Canada's National Capital. With a population of over one million inhabitants and covering an area of more than 2,790 square kilometres, Ottawa is one of the largest cities in Canada, as well as one of the coldest capitals in the world. OC Transpo provides transit service throughout Ottawa as well as service to parts of Gatineau, Québec. The City's transportation network is designed to provide options for all residents, including rural residents. Serving nearly 340,000 riders per day, our conventional bus fleet has over 700 vehicles in addition to 82 Para Transpo minibuses. The service operates 365 days a year.

Public transit has operated in Ottawa for over 150 years, under a succession of organizational structures and names. The name OC Transpo was adopted in 1973 with the establishment of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and was continued in 2001 when the area municipalities that made up the former region were amalgamated as the current City of Ottawa. In the early 1980s, the region addressed increasing ridership and population growth by introducing a bus rapid transit system named the Transitway. The Transitway system served Ottawa well for decades, but with increasing population and employment levels and denser traffic in the core, the City converted the central parts of the Transitway to a grade-separated high-capacity light rail line. In 2001, the City implemented the north-south O-Train project, which was expanded in 2015.

The east-west O-Train Line 1 opened in 2019 and provides frequent light rail service that runs underground through the downtown core. Construction is underway to further expand the rail system, with extensions to the south, east and west set to open in the coming years. Once the planned extensions are complete, rail service will extend over a total of 44 kilometres of rail line, serving
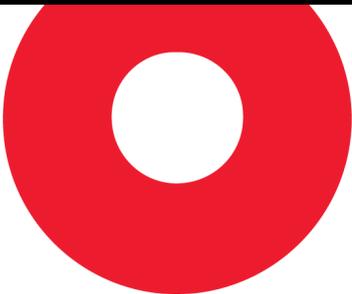
24 stations and bringing 77 per cent of Ottawa residents within five kilometres of reliable, frequent rail service.

Contact Information and Feedback Process

Feedback about how OC Transpo services are delivered to people with disabilities will always be welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and as it will encourage continuous service improvement. This feedback will be forwarded to the appropriate personnel, responded to, documented, and tracked.

Feedback from members of the public may be provided to a customer service representative by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format or through other means, including:

- Phone or Video Relay Service to Customer Service: **613-560-5000** (TTY 613-741-5280)
- On-line form
- **accessibility@octranspo.com**
- Mail - Customer Service, City of Ottawa Transit Services Department, 925 Belfast Rd., Ottawa ON, K1G 0Z4
- In person at the OC Transpo Customer Service Centre

Alternative Formats and feedback

Alternative formats of this plan and a description of our feedback process are available by request, by contacting:

- Phone or Video Relay Service to Customer Service: **613-560-5000** (TTY 613-741-5280)
- On-line form
- **accessibility@octranspo.com**
- Mail - Customer Service, City of Ottawa Transit Services Department, 925 Belfast Rd., Ottawa ON, K1G 0Z4
- In person at the OC Transpo Customer Service Centre
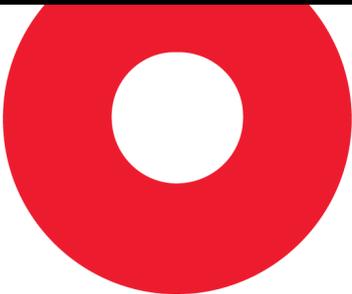
The City's Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure assists staff in determining how to best meet the information and communication requests of the community.

Consultations

OC Transpo continuously seeks opportunities to engage and learn from people with disabilities. This section will outline the ways in which we consulted with people with disabilities to develop this plan.

A consultation plan was developed and received by City Council as part of the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) consultations. People with disabilities, agencies that support people with disabilities, their caregivers, friends, family members and the general public were invited to provide disability-related feedback.

The purpose of these consultations was:

- To record experiences with City programs, services, and facilities, and
- To inform the City about gaps and barriers that currently exist for people with disabilities and provide ideas on how to reduce and/or eliminate them.
  o Note: A barrier to accessibility is anything that limits or prevents a person from being able to receive and access information, services and goods, and access space or activities.

As the accessibility consultations served the purpose of collecting information related to accessibility across the City, including transit services, the questions were broadly drafted so as to capture the greatest amount of feedback.

There were four methods to provide feedback for these accessibility consultations. These methods included:

- In-person consultations
- Virtual consultations
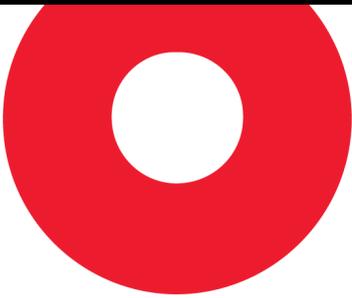
- An online survey through Engage Ottawa, and
- A community toolkit, for groups/organizations wishing to host their own consultation without City staff present. This included a proposed process for hosting the consultation discussion, the consultation questions, and a method for submitting feedback.

Three in-person public consultation sessions were held across the city, including central, west end and east end locations, and three virtual consultations were held over Zoom. Consultations were held at various times of the day, including afternoon and evening, to increase the opportunity for participation. Additionally, providing opportunities to consult virtually brought new ways to engage in a convenient and accessible way with residents across the City, including rural residents.

Additional City staff from across the organization also supported the Accessibility Office (AO) during these consultations by actively listening and soliciting meaningful feedback from participants. Information was shared with the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee, to encourage participation in any of the public consultations and/or to complete the online survey. Information packages were also prepared for over 300 clients of the Ottawa Public Library's Homebound Services program. These clients were provided the option to attend a public consultation session, complete the online survey, or submit their feedback in writing and mail their responses back to the AO. In addition, the French Language Services Advisory Committee (FLSAC) provided feedback following a presentation regarding the consultations from the AO.

A total of 259 residents participated in the consultations. Of these, 170 participated in either an in-person or virtual consultation. Eight hard copy surveys were completed, at the participants' request. Though demographic information was not collected at the in-person consultations, a wide variety of ages participated, and a diverse range of disability was represented through the facilitated conversation, including physical/mobility, sensory, learning/developmental, and non-visible.

The Accessibility Office also hosted three targeted consultations with various disability groups, including persons who are blind or
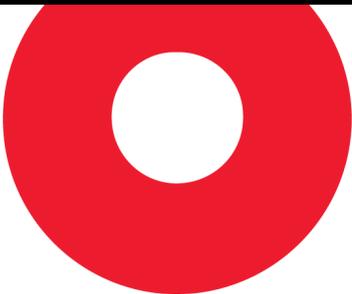
have low vision, the D/deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing community, and the Ottawa Disability Coalition. Those that attended the session for persons who are blind or have low vision included representatives from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), the Canadian Council for the Blind (CCB), and the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC). Those that attended the session for the D/deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing community included representatives from the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) and the National Capital Association of the Deaf (NCAD). The Ottawa Disability Coalition includes 19 organizations and individual advocates. Written feedback was also submitted by a representative from DeafBlind Ontario Services.

A total of 81 residents completed the online survey and there were nearly 1,900 visits to the consultation webpage on the Engage Ottawa platform, on both the English and French pages.

Soliciting diverse perspectives was critical to the consultation process and a plan to engage all persons with disabilities was included in the consultation plan previously mentioned Participants that provided feedback through the online survey were asked to register with the platform, though this was not mandatory, and most did complete it anonymously. As such, we do not have enough specific data to indicate how many completed the survey who identified as members of various diversity groups. However, of those that did register through the platform and indicate their diversity and demographic information, participants included Indigenous Peoples, Francophones, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, persons living in poverty, youth under 29 years old, and persons with disabilities were all captured. It should also be noted that participants had the option to select more than one category under the diversity field.

Two community toolkits were sent upon request, with both groups submitting feedback.

Accessibility supports were actively offered and provided, including but not limited to, sign language interpretation in both American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ), captioning, ensuring the accessibility of any in-person venues, and the use of Personal Support Workers. All presentation materials were provided in alternate formats upon request.
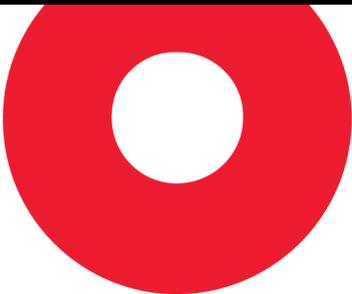
Opportunities to provide feedback were shared through the City's social media channels, Engage Ottawa, through the Accessibility Spotlight e-newsletter, and by leveraging the relationships that the AO has established with community partners, including a list of community organizations. Additionally, information was shared with rural organizations and Councillors to solicit feedback from rural residents.

Staff were also given the opportunity to participate. The consultations were widely promoted to staff through internal communications. To ensure diversity of respondents, the consultation information was also shared with all the City's Affinity Groups, including but not limited to the Employees with Disabilities Affinity Group, women.net, the Rainbow Employees Network, the First Nations, Inuit, Métis (FNIM) Affinity Group, and the Asian Heritage Affinity Group.

Throughout these methods of consultations, participants provided a great deal of both positive and constructive feedback, which included the identification of barriers still encountered with the City's current public transportation options. This includes, but not limited to, lack of enforcement of priority seating on buses and trains, lack of flexibility in booking Para Transpo rides, inconsistent scheduling and delays with both convention and Para Transpo bus schedules, and the desire to include more Braille on station signage. A full engagement report can be found in the 2025-2029 COMAP Consultation Report on ottawa.ca.

It should be noted that for the purpose of this plan, OC Transpo uses person-first language when referring to persons with disabilities. However, language is continually evolving and there is increasing discussion and preference around using disability-first language. While staff are trained to follow the lead and preferences of individuals, use of person-first language in this plan is consistent with the language used in the ACA and the advice of the AAC. The City remains responsive to the preferences of the community of persons with disabilities, and this will be assessed and discussed with the AAC on an ongoing basis.

Implementation strategy

The City supports the goals of the ACA to make our country accessible by the year 2024. As such, the City Clerk will bring a recommendation to Council to ask that they formally approve the approach and supports outlined in this Plan to provide the necessary direction and delegated authority to City staff to fulfill the City's requirements under the ACA.

Leadership

City Council has supported accessible transit services to help improve inclusion to benefit all residents, visitors, and employees. Through the creation of standard reporting processes and templates, City staff regularly report on the identification, prevention and or potential creation of barriers as part of all reports tabled before Ottawa City Council and its standing committees.

In July 2023, City Council approved its 2022-2026 Term of Council priorities that were structured around the long-term goals (10+ years) and strategic priorities. This Plan has been developed to align with Council's long-term goals which include that the City will be a place where residents experience a good quality of life and live in neighbourhoods that are diverse, inclusive, safe, connected, accessible and affordable and where residents benefit from a healthy, sustainable and equitable built environment that supports the City's efforts to address climate change.

This report was also developed to align with the Council-approved strategic priorities including: a city that is more connected with reliable, safe and accessible mobility options, and a city that is green and resilient.

Structure and governance

Pursuant to the City's *Delegation of Authority By-law* (No. 2024-265), Council has explicitly delegated to the City Clerk the authority to execute and file with the designated Federal authority all
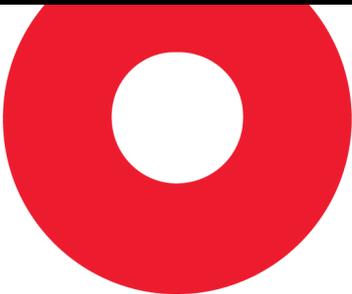
accessibility reports and other information required under the *Accessible Canada Act*.

The overall responsibility for reporting on this Plan will rest with the Office of the City Clerk. This ensures that the decisions regarding accessibility are made in concurrence with the City's Strategic Plan as well as other accessibility legislation. Accountability for implementation of the plan is a shared responsibility between OC Transpo and the Office of the City Clerk. These shared responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the development of the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, supporting the legislative consultation process, reviewing the feedback process, and reporting on progress to senior management, the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Council on an annual basis.
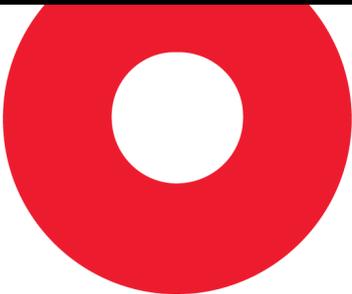
Areas Described under Section 5 of the ACA

Organization-wide Initiatives

Overview

With the implementation of the *Accessible Canada Act* in 2019, the Government of Canada has committed to the principle of, "Nothing without us." For years, the disability community has called for disability inclusion, emphasizing that disability is an integral part of Canada's diversity. As per the 2025-2029 COMAP, the engagement of persons with disabilities in decision making, planning and design is a critical priority for OC Transpo. This commitment is fully incorporated into this Plan, as we continue to listen to and learn from people with disabilities.

The Accessibility Office and OC Transpo will continue to connect and consult with people with disabilities. This includes the continuation of the e-newsletter, Accessibility Spotlight, as well as consulting regularly with the disability community through informal consultations, regularly scheduled meetings; as well as specific project-specific meetings to engage in continuous feedback, and improve existing programs, services, and facilities.

In accordance with the City's Equity and Inclusion Lens, the City and OC Transpo consider the design of programs, services and facilities in light of a person's intersectional identities and social factors that may intersect with disability and effect their experiences with those same programs services and facilities.. These factors include, but are by no means limited to, gender, age, language, sexuality, race, and culture. An intersectional view on disability creates opportunities to consider a spectrum of individual experiences, rather than viewing disability and the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities as a universal experience.
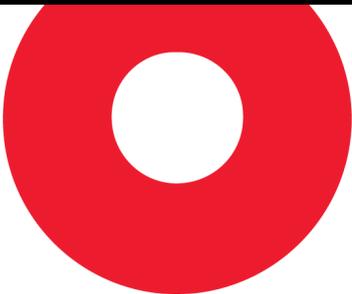
All City staff, including part-time, seasonal, and occasional staff, receive accessibility training. This includes, but is not limited to:

- AODA: Accessibility for All
- Accessible Procurement Workshop
- AODA management compliance (mandatory for managers and supervisors)
- Accessibility Impact Statement Workshop, and
- Individualized Workplace Emergency Information.

Planned and Long-term Goals

When the ACA was enacted in 2019, it set-out the goal of a fully accessible Canada by the year 2040. As such, the City, through OC Transpo, has assessed the impacts of this legislation to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities.

OC Transpo has identified two primary goals of this accessibility plan, including:

- To determine the status of accessibility and/or existing barriers within its current services and facilities, as well as address strategic priorities as outlined in this new plan.
- To assess how OC Transpo is working towards a "Canada without barriers, on or before January 1, 2040, particularly by the identification and removal of barriers, and the prevention of new barriers."

The implementation of the ACA is a priority for City Council, as well as OC Transpo's senior leadership and employees across the department. As such, they will continue to work collaboratively with the Government of Canada, the City's AO and AAC and the community to implement and monitor the legislation and identify and remove barriers to transit services and facilities.
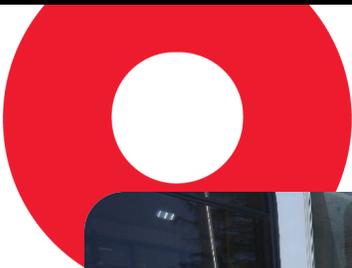
The Built Environment

Overview

The City's Accessibility Design Standards (ADS), which apply to OC Transpo, aim to make all City-owned or leased spaces, buildings, infrastructure and elements accessible to Ottawa residents, employees and visitors, as part of any new construction or redevelopment activities.

The intent is for the City to clearly identify the accessibility criteria and features included in the procurement of its facilities and to demonstrate proactive steps towards making all facilities and sites accessible. The City recognizes that addressing accessibility issues as early as possible in the planning and design phases of new construction and redevelopment projects is the most practical and cost-effective way to ensure accessible and inclusive environments.

These accessibility design standards are:

- Mandatory for all new construction and redevelopment of existing spaces and facilities, owned, leased or operated by the City of Ottawa;
- Intended to be applied to the greatest extent possible for retrofit, alterations or additions to existing spaces and facilities owned, leased or operated by the City of Ottawa;
- Encouraged to be implemented by other sectors and organizations within Ottawa; and,
- Recognized as addressing the needs of diverse users, with or without disabilities, to ensure inclusive environments for all.

The Standards include legislative requirements, including, but not limited to, the Ontario Building Code, the AODA, and the Canadian Standards Association's "Accessible Design for the Built Environment" (CSA B651-12).
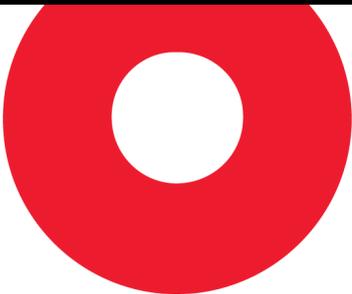
Existing Built Environment Accessibility Features of OC Transpo stations

O-Train stations include the following accessibility features:

- Tactile wayfinding tiles in the floor to trace the route through fare-gates, to elevators, platforms and exits
- Transecure waiting areas on train platforms include benches and tactile/braille signs indicating the direction of service
- Elevators and a backup accessible path at all stations
- Escalators at nine stations
- Tactile warning strips and inter-car barriers
- Accessible fare gates with card readers at two different heights, as well as visual and audio feedback indicating a successful card read

Various pedestrian connections, including pedestrian bridges and multi-use pathways, have also been completed to provide access to new O-Train stations, which adhere to the City's ADS.

Transitway stations include the following accessibility features:

- Elevators or ramps at all stations
- Escalators at some stations
- Textured surfaces at most stations to indicate when a user is close to the platform edge
- Firm and slip-resistant floors
- Benches
- Information phones with one-button access to connect to live customer service support
- Video chat option through Ticket Vending Machines
- Accessible parking spaces at Park and Ride lots

The City's ADS ensure that all City owned and operated spaces and facilities are inclusive and accessible to everyone. This commitment extends to residents, visitors, and employees with visible or non-visible disabilities and is mandatory and applicable to both new construction and rehabilitation projects. Section 6.20.2 addresses specific requirements for on-street bus stops and shelters. Key bus stop elements include the following:
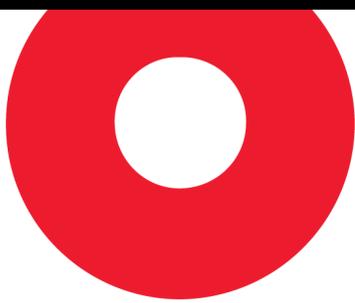
- Firm, stable and slip-resistant surface, with a grade no steeper than 2 per cent, adjacent to all bus doors
- Unobstructed loading zones adjacent to the curb or vehicular route
- Clear and unobstructed accessible route to and from the loading zone
- The bus stop sign or "bus stop flag" must be located beside the accessible route
- The bus stop flag is typically the point of reference for the accessible loading zone
- When a bus stops, the front of the bus aligns with the bus stop flagpole, ensuring that the bus ramp deploys into the accessible loading zone
- Bus shelters are typically installed upstream of the accessible loading zone to ensure that clear space is provided to accommodate customers using the bus ramp
- Standard drawings ensure that bus stops are constructed consistently to meet accessibility requirements

There are currently just over 5,600 on-street bus stops across the OC Transpo network. Many bus stops have been upgraded to meet the current accessibility standards, but some bus stops were constructed prior to the establishment of the current accessibility standards and will require future upgrades to comply with current standards.

Approximately 3,800 or 68 per cent of the existing bus stops in the network are compliant with current accessibility guidelines and standards. OC Transpo is working to incrementally upgrade the remaining 1,800 bus stops to meet current accessibility guidelines and standards.

Additional improvements to public spaces at Park and Ride lots also continue to be made, including constructing new exterior ramps, stair rehabilitation, improvements to paths of travel and additional bench installations.

Additionally, the OC Transpo Customer Service Centre at the Rideau Centre has an audio loop system in place for customers who use hearing aids or cochlear implants to communicate easily with the customer service agent.
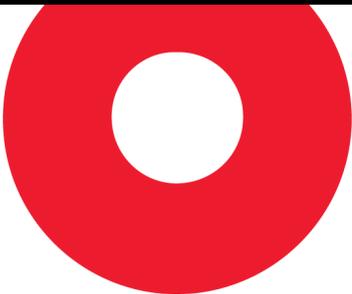
Existing Built Environment Accessibility Features on OC Transpo Buses and Trains

OC Transpo buses include the following accessibility features:

- Low floors, for step-free access
- "Kneeling" bus access for lowered curb boarding
- Slip-resistant ramps with raised edges, to be deployed when customers need them
- Slip-resistant, low-glare floors
- Cooperative (priority) seating near the front of the bus
- Two spaces for persons with assistive devices, including stability belts which customers can use to secure the device
- Lights at the entrances and inside the bus
- High-contrast handholds and grab bars

Para Transpo buses include the following accessibility features:

- Low-floor and kneeling access when boarding
- Two ramps (side and rear) with raised edges and high-contrast strips when boarding with an assistive device
- Wider rear ramp and rear entrance for larger mobility devices
- Spaces for persons using an assistive device, including a stability belt for operators to use to secure the device
- Lighting at the entrance and ramps
- Slip-resistant, low-glare floor and ramps
- High contrast grab-bars and handles at each seat and inside each entrance

Trains include the following accessibility features:

- Low-floor platform-level entrances
- Cooperative (priority and multipurpose) seating near train entrances
- Slip-resistant, low-glare floors
- Lights at the entrance and inside the train
- High-contrast handholds and grab bars
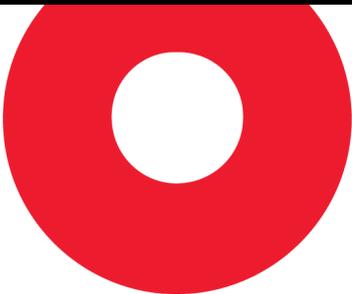
Goal(s)

Starting in Q4 2024, the City will begin the process to update the City's ADS, to include updates to the legislation and best practice information.

Additionally, significant improvements have been made to existing and new stations serving Lines 2 and 4 as part of the Stage 2 expansion. Accessibility features including longer station platforms, larger trains to allow for 60 per cent more riders, upgrades to existing stations and more multi-use pathway connections to stations to provide both pedestrians and cyclists with additional active transportation options.

Employment

Overview

In alignment with the City's Workplace Accommodation Policy and Equity and Diversity Policy, OC Transpo is committed to fostering an inclusive workplace where all employees are treated with respect and dignity, and provides a workplace that ensures equal opportunity, free from discrimination based on age, race and related ground, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic characteristics, record of offences, marital status, family status and disability.

As part of its Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Plan, the City collects information about its workforce through an employee self-identification questionnaire called Count ME In! All staff, including new hires, are encouraged to complete and update this, as required.

All employees were encouraged to participate in consultations to develop this plan through internal communications.

OC Transpo employs over 3,000 individuals and as of June 30, 2024, based on data from Count ME In!, nearly 18 per cent of staff identify as a person with a disability.

Existing Employment Policies, Procedures and Practices

- All accessible employment requirements as per the City's Accessibility Policy including:
    - Availability of accommodations during the recruitment process
    - Available employee supports
    - Accessible formats and communication supports for employees
    - Workplace emergency response information
    - Documented individual accommodation plans for current employees
    - Return to work process
    - Accessibility needs and accommodation considerations for employees during performance management, career development and redeployment processes
- Managers and supervisors must attend mandatory accessibility-related training to clarify their specific roles and responsibilities.
    - This training encourages managers and supervisors to embrace accessibility, understand accommodations for staff with disabilities, and ensure they and their staff meet all legislated accessibility requirements.
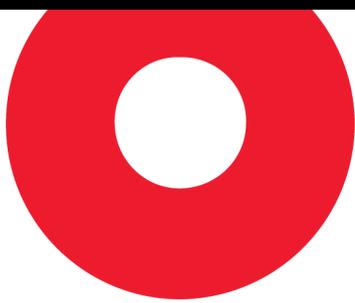
- All new bus operators receive specific accessibility-related training as part of the New Bus Operator Training Program. The curriculum includes:
  - Training on the AODA Standards
  - How to interact with persons with various types of disabilities
  - Safe use of accessibility equipment
  - Emergency preparedness and response procedures
  - In partnership with the Dementia Society, all new Para Transpo Operators also receive Dementia Awareness Training

Planned and Long-Term Requirements related to Employment

OC Transpo performs outreach activities, both internally for staff and externally with the public.

Internal Outreach Opportunities

- Interview preparation information sessions: The recruitment team schedules and facilitates sessions, that provide information and tips on how to successfully prepare and execute an interview. Sessions are held quarterly.
- Rail Operator Info and SIMformation sessions: Offered in conjunction with available Rail Operator position competitions, this series of information sessions are offered to acquaint interested applicants with details about the Electric Rail Operator and Diesel Rail Operator positions. Both Rail Operations and recruitment staff attend to provide the necessary support. SIMformation sessions are also held to provide an orientation of the Alstom Light Rail Vehicle Simulator.
- Information sessions for transit supervisors and dispatchers: This series of information sessions, offered in conjunction with open competitions, provides insights about the available positions and allows interested candidates the opportunity to ask questions to support them with their application.
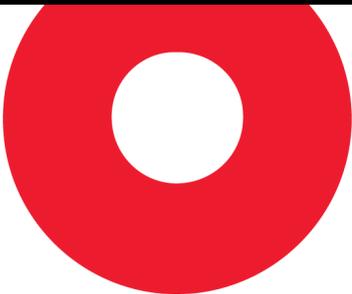
External Outreach Opportunities

- OC Transpo's recruitment team participates in multiple outreach events that not only garner interest in available positions, but also inform job seekers about the variety of possible positions within OC Transpo.
- The recruitment team has forged outreach partnerships with the major post-secondary institutions in Ottawa, including the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, Algonquin College and Collège La Cité, participating in their annual combined Grad Career Fair. OC Transpo continues to attend major job fairs in Ottawa, including those organized by Career Fairs Canada and the World Skills Organization.
- The recruitment team also maintains relationships with numerous community employment services centres including the YMCA Employment Services Centre, the Youth Services Bureau and the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership. The recruitment team attends Welcome Ottawa Week and the YMCA and YSB Job Fairs.
- Additional community organization partnerships include the Societé Économique de l'Ontario, La Cité des Affaires and Connexions Francophones, and the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition.
- Finally, the recruitment team connects with hundreds of potential applicants at our its own Transit Services Job Fair. This event includes staff from all positions to speak directly to the public, and the recruitment team is also available at the Job Fair to connect with interested candidates about current job openings, as week as provide interview tips and information about online applications.

OC Transpo works closely with these community agencies and organizations to provide work experience and professional development to persons with disabilities. This includes Ottawa Life Skills and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to provide supervised job placements in a variety of OC Transpo workspaces for both youth and adults with disabilities. This work will continue throughout the duration of this plan.

As progress with the O-Train expansion continues and new staff are onboarded, all accessibility-related training, including the
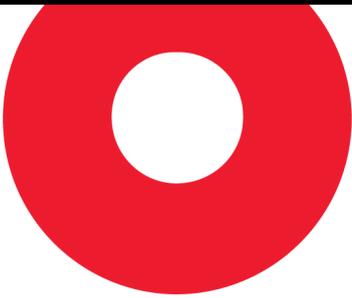
Dementia awareness training, will continue to be offered to all new staff, which will also include Rail Supervisors, Rail Superintendents and Transit Supervisors.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Overview

The City is proud to be recognized as a leader in web accessibility in Ontario. The City's Web Accessibility Policy, which applies to OC Transpo, was created in 2014 and updated in 2023. The Policy provides corporate direction and requires that the City's web assets conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA, unless not practicable to do so. Where compliance is not practicable, the Policy requires the City to meet as many success criteria as is practicable.

Existing Accessibility Features and Projects Related to ICT

The City's Web Accessibility Policy requires that all public-facing websites, web applications and web content procured, acquired, owned, or controlled directly by the City, or through a contractual relationship, conform to WCAG to a level that meets or exceeds those stipulated by the AODA and its IASR.

The City has implemented all the recommended elements contained in the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative Strategy toward web/digital accessibility. These include:

- Creating a policy
- Defining roles and responsibilities
- Determination of budget and resources
- Identification and review of website assets
- Having a monitoring framework in place

- Engaging collaborators
- Building skills and expertise
- Integrating goals into policies and procedures
- Assigning tasks to support delivery
- Evaluations, early and often
- Prioritization of issues
- Creating a tracking process

Additionally, the City has introduced a user centred design process that is applied to new or refreshed web assets and will be discussed in further detail later in this update. In this process, accessibility is considered in all phases.

The City's ServiceOttawa branch works closely with the Quality Assurance (QA) team to ensure that new or updated features to all websites, both internally and externally facing, exceed legislated requirements. Across the corporation, we are now testing against WCAG 2.2 AA levels. Additionally, ServiceOttawa, Information Technology Services (ITS) and the Procurement branch have been working on developing procurement processes which reduce the risk of launching a new service with a non-compliant third-party solution.

During the Request for Proposal (RFP) and pre-RFP stages, the City is working to better articulate accessibility needs to vendors, assisting with eliminating or reducing risk to projects, and post signing of contracts and Statements of Work. The QA team consistently collaborates with client groups to incorporate accessibility considerations throughout the product lifecycle. The QA team conducts accessibility reviews and provides consultations on specific accessibility requirements for vendor solutions, well before the RFP process begins. Additionally, the QA team contributes to the accessibility-related wording and content of RFPs, prior to their posting. Once the RFP closes, the QA team tests and validates that vendor solutions meet their stated compliance levels.

Before implementing third-party solutions, the QA team works with clients to ensure vendors fulfill their contractual obligations relating to accessibility compliance. The QA team frequently meets with vendors and clients to recommend tools and process improvements
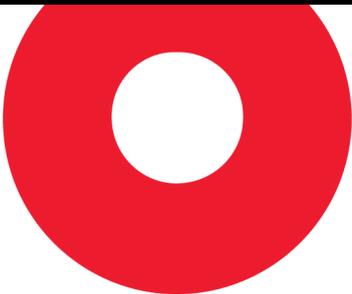
to ensure compliance, both before and after the go-live of their web assets.

For in-house developed applications, the QA team collaborates directly with project teams from the project kick-off to ensure accessibility features are considered and integrated into the final product.

With respect to software platforms that are not fully compliant, (e.g., Microsoft applications) the QA team works directly with vendors to identify and track accessibility concerns and re-test those platforms once fixes are provided. This ensures software applications are more accessible for the City and benefits the vendor's other clients.

By adopting the approach described above, the QA team ensures solutions provide full functionality for residents on both desktop and mobile devices, exceeding current AODA requirements and enhancing usability for a broader audience.

The City's compliance plan agreement with the Province highlights the resources the City has committed as a leader in web accessibility, and the steps the City continues to take towards this goal. The plan addresses the challenges the City has encountered since 2015 with compliance to Section 14(4) of the IASR, which includes standards for web sites and web content. The plan was updated in December 2020, with the most recent update on its progress submitted in June 2024. Significant effort, time, and resources continue to be invested to comply with this standard.

OC Transpo has eight website applications. On January 1, 2021, the last requirement under the IASR of the AODA came into effect, requiring organizations such as the City, to ensure all websites and web content comply with WCAG 2.0 Level AA. Prior to this deadline, all web applications were audited for WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliance, and all issues remediated where possible. All website applications developed since that time have included accessibility as a core requirement, with accessibility built into the website from the early stages of development. Before making these websites available to the public, accessibility audits are completed to assess compliance and ensure proper remediation of issues. This same process applies to all updates on existing web applications.

OC Transpo's main website poses distinctive challenges to compliance. Octranspo.com has over 500 web pages, dozens of content contributors and constantly changing content. With these variables, it is very difficult to maintain 100 per cent compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA. However, OC Transpo's web team remains engaged with internal experts and an external website audit service provider to regularly identity issues and remediate them.

During the consultations conducted in the summer of 2024, many participants noted the improved level of service provided by the "My Para Transpo" website, allowing users to conveniently book and cancel trips and track their vehicle prior to arrival. Participants who use screen readers also provided positive feedback on the application's easy to use interface.

Additionally, all staff who work with OC Transpo web services have completed the "Introduction to Web Accessibility" online training, which was created by the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative and provides an overview of web accessibility, standards, and guidelines. It also proposes resources, tools, techniques, and approaches for implementing and maintaining a high level of online accessibility. This training will continue to be offered to all new employees who join the web services team to provide additional opportunities to enhance the team's knowledge of web accessibility.

Future and long-term Accessibility Features and Projects Related to ICT

There is a project currently underway to replace the current OC Transpo Travel Planner site, which currently does not meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA. Accessibility will be one of the core requirements as part of the replacement tool. A new accessible Travel Planner has been identified as a high priority within the improvement strategy of OC Transpo Customer Information Systems.

Communications, other than ICT

Overview

Communications for persons with disabilities extends across a broad variety of formats including both digital and analogue, braille, large print, telephone services, print displays and materials as well as the use of plain language. OC Transpo is committed to ensuring passengers with disabilities can find important information quickly and efficiently in accessible formats.

Existing Communications Features of OC Transpo stations
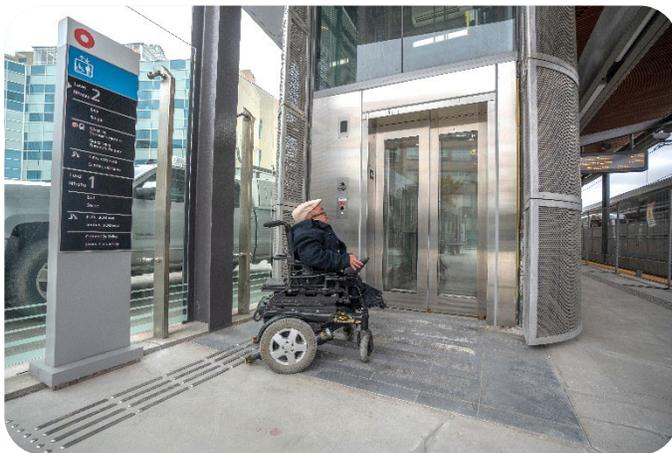
O-Train stations include the following communications accessibility features:

- Transecure waiting areas on train platforms include benches and tactile/braille signs indicating the direction of service
- High-contrast black and white directional signs throughout the station
- Maps and signs using high contrast and legible colours and symbols
- Back-lit signs stretching the length of the platform providing the station name
- Digital signs along the platform providing real-time departure times for each train
- Audio announcements of the train's arrival
- Service alerts posted on the platform's info screens and announced on the public-address system
- Ticket machines with a video and audio interface and back-lit controls, including a video-chat option connected to live customer service support. The instruction panel is also provided in raised text and Braille
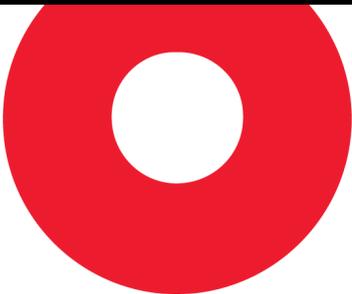
Transitway stations include the following communications accessibility features:

- Yellow emergency call boxes to request assistance if stranded or concerned about safety
- Info phones with one-button access to connect to live customer service support
- Emergency phones
- Service alerts posted on platform info screens, which are being incrementally added to stations

Existing Communications Accessibility Features on OC Transpo Busses and O-trains

OC Transpo buses include the following accessibility features:

- Spaces reserved for assistive devices include a stop-request button with a dual tone, confirming the request to the customer and letting the driver know that the ramp will be needed to exit
- Automatic audio announcement of next stops over the speaker system inside the bus
- Audio exterior announcements of the route and destination of the arriving bus
- Visual display of the next bus stop, bus route, destination and time inside the bus
- Warning light and audio alarm when the bus or ramp are raised or lowered

Trains include the following accessibility features:

- Audio and video messages of next stops and repeating the station name as it pulls into the platform
- Visual display of the next stop and time inside the train
- Audio tones signal as the doors open or close

Information and documents on OC Transpo services, policies, and programs are available upon request in an accessible format, which could include braille, HTML, or plain text, among others, or with any communication support. Additionally, OC Transpo offers TTY service as well as Canada Video Relay Service (VRS) for anyone
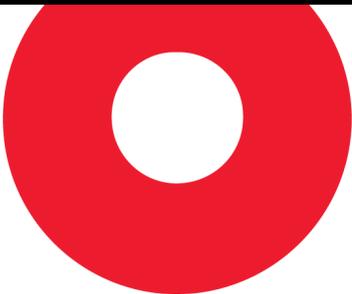
who wishes to communicate to a customer service agent using these methods.

Additionally, OC Transpo issues construction notices and bulletins with thousands of residents through e-newsletter updates, provided information on impacts due to Stage 2 O-train construction. Each of these publications includes a statement underlining the critical importance of maintaining accessibility during construction, and requesting persons with disabilities to contact staff if they require disability-related accommodations.

OC Transpo also includes a monthly article in the Accessibility Office's e-newsletter "Accessibility Spotlight," which highlights changes or new programs and services about Para Transpo. This e-newsletter is sent to thousands of subscribers every month in both English and French.

Various presentations about Stage 2 are conducted with community collaborators and groups, which includes information on pedestrian connectivity, parking, station and vehicle accessibility features, and construction impacts.

Planned and Long-Term Non-ICT Features

The Stage 2 O-Train communications team will continue to engage collaborators regarding the accessibility of proposed stations and vehicles. Presentations and consultations will be provided at the community's request, and feedback will be considered and implemented where possible.

Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Overview

All City departments, including OC Transpo, are required to consider accessibility during all stages of the procurement process, regardless of dollar value.
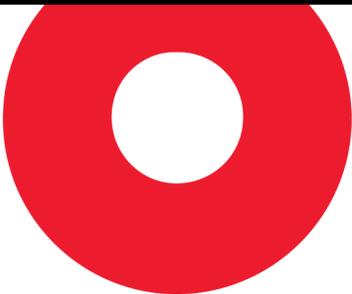
As per the City's Accessibility Policy, "when procuring goods, services, self-service kiosks or facilities, the City shall incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features, unless it is not feasible (practicable). If not practicable, the City shall provide an explanation, upon request."

The City uses six steps for considering accessibility during procurement. Training is provided upon request to staff. OC Transpo tracks procurement through monthly reminders to staff to fill out and submit Accessible Procurement Tracking Forms and files the submitted forms as official business records. Submissions are monitored for issues and trends and lists of staff with signing and purchasing authority from the Financial Services Unit is managed on a semi-annual basis. The City also maintains a list of goods and services with no accessible features/requirements (not practicable).

Existing Accessibility Requirements related to Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

- OC Transpo is in the process of transitioning its commercial bus fleet from diesel to battery-electric zero-emission buses. The benefits to zero-emission buses include no greenhouse gas emissions or pollution, reduced operating costs and lower noise pollution on city streets. Accessibility has been integral to the procurement process for zero-emission vehicles, including reviewing feedback provided by collaborators about the low levels of noise produced by electric vehicles and the increased risk this poses to pedestrians, particularly those who are blind or partially sighted. Staff mitigated this risk by outfitting the City's first four pilot battery-electric buses with an Acoustic Vehicle Alerting System (AVAS). Orientation sessions were provided to engaged collaborators to familiarize them with the AVAS.
  - OC Transpo continues to monitor new developments in legislation, regulations and emerging AVAS technology, and to monitor and respond to feedback from accessibility collaborators and customers with disabilities.

- With the engagement of both conventional transit riders as well as Para Transpo customers and collaborators, OC Transpo has also begun replacing both conventional transit buses and Para Transpo minibuses that reach the end of their life cycle with a new fleet of accessible vehicles.
- In collaboration with Ottawa Fire Services, OC Transpo has procured emergency evacuation carts for O-train Lines 2 and 4, which enable first responders to transfer customers with mobility devices from the train to the nearest station platform or safe location along the rail guideway.

Planned and Long-Term Requirements related to the Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

- OC Transpo has initiated the procure process to acquire additional zero-emission buses. These vehicles will include the same on-board accessibility features as those already in operation including the AVAS.
- Seven new Stadler FLIRT trains will were procured as part of Line 2 service, which will include increased co-operative seating areas to provide additional space for those with mobility devices.

Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Overview

OC Transpo's Accessible Customer Service Policy provides guidelines for the delivery of accessible customer service to persons with disabilities using public transit services, programs and goods including, but not limited to, conventional fixed-route bus, rail, and Para Transpo service. This policy also guides customer service requirements for new vehicles and facilities as older, non-accessible vehicles and facilities are refurbished or replaced.
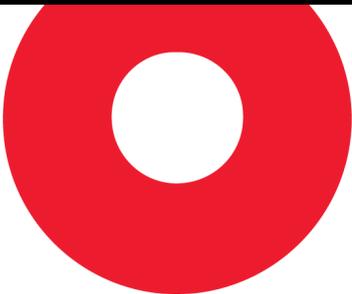
OC Transpo services are provided to people with disabilities in a manner that:

- Accommodates disability related needs, where accommodate is defined as the reasonable modification of the delivery of OC Transpo services where possible to make them more accessible to persons with disabilities
- Reflects the principles of dignity and independence
- Seeks to provide integrated services

The policy includes information on how assistive devices are accommodated, service animals, support persons, communication, notice of service disruption, training, feedback, and documentation.

Existing Accessibility Requirements for Delivery of Programs and Services

- Providing Para Transpo customers with the ability to pay their fare using Presto cards, as well as regular day fare using credit or debit cards, Apple Pay or Google wallet.

- The travel training program teaches people with disabilities and seniors to use public transit safely and independently. This program is delivered by school boards, hospitals, day programs and other agencies that support persons with disabilities.
- OC Transpo also partners with long-term care facilities and retirement residences to provide replica bus stops for those living in memory care facilities. Research indicates that replica bus stops provide a valuable tool in memory care residents. OC Transpo also provides outreach sessions with various agencies to promote public transportation options to persons with disabilities and seniors.
- Familiarization sessions have also been arranged for agencies that train service animals, including the Canadian Guide Dogs, Ability Dogs and the CNIB Guide Dogs.
- Other individual familiarization sessions are arranged upon request for customers and their occupational therapist or travel trainer, allowing them to practise boarding and positioning themselves on either a conventional or Para Transpo bus in their own time.
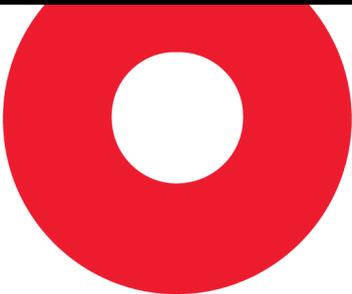
Transportation

Overview

As previously mentioned, while the provisions of the AODA and its Transportation Standards do not apply to OC Transpo as the service is federally regulated. Nevertheless, OC Transpo uses the provisions of the Provincial legislation as generally accepted community best practices.

Various transportation options exist for older adults and persons with disabilities living in rural Ottawa, including:

- Transportation provided through partnerships with rural community support services agencies
- Para Transpo, between rural and urban destinations in the City of Ottawa
- Discounted Taxi Coupon Program for registered Para Transpo customers
- Weekly shopper bus routes, which provide service from rural communities to urban shopping destinations

Existing Accessibility Features

- Regular maintenance, renovations and/or replacement of bus stop facilities following all requirements of the City's ADS
- Provide funding to community agencies that provide transportation services to persons with disabilities and older adults who live in rural areas
- Provide Para Transpo customers access to taxi coupons, which provide discounted taxi fares, as an alternative method of transportation
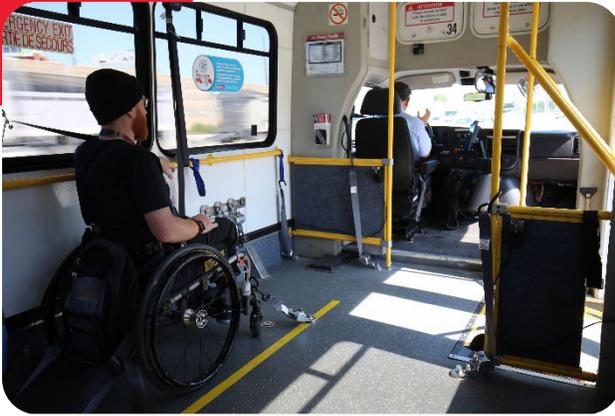
- Provide accessible financial supports for transit customers including discounted fare programs for Community pass holders, Ontario Disability Support Program recipients, EquiPass holders (for those with low-income), and Access Pass (for Para Transpo customers who also use conventional bus and train service)
- Provide free transit for children ages 12 and under for all bus, train and Para Transpo services

- Provide free transit for 6 months to refugees and persons receiving Emergency Shelter services.

- Conduct emergency evacuation exercises regularly at various stations and locations across the city, which include persons with disabilities, to help prepare first responders in the event of an actual emergency

Planned and Long-Term Accessibility Features related to Transportation

- As noted above, the Stage 2 O-Train extensions to the south, east and west, will both retrofit existing rail stations and build new stations all featuring barrier free access and accessible features including tactile wayfinding, in station audio announcements, accessible buttons and signage and longer platforms.
- Based on feedback and assessments from a demonstration pilot project, OC Transpo will look to offer fully accessible on-demand service in select low-ridership areas of Ottawa
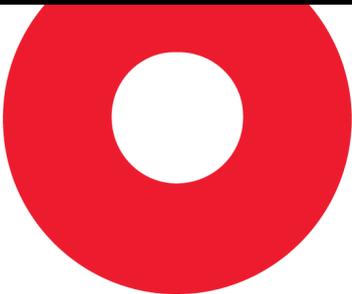
Conclusion

While this is OC Transpo's first accessibility plan under the *Accessible Canada Act*, our organization has had a longstanding commitment to continuous improvement around the lowering or elimination of barriers to accessing public transit. While much has been accomplished, we also recognize that there is still much work to be done to improve services and technologies and to work collaboratively with stakeholders and the public to realise the vision of true equality for all members of our various communities. OC Transpo remains committed to continuing to find new and innovative ways to improve accessibility moving forward, in consultation and collaboration with people with disabilities.
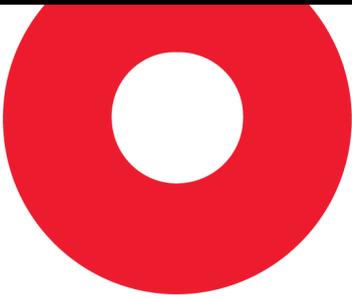
Appendix A

Definitions

The following definitions, as stated in the ACA, apply throughout this plan:

Disability: means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. (*note for French translation, *handicap within the Act*)

Barrier: means anything — including anything physical, architectural, technological, or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.