

Subject: 2025 Update to Provincial and Federal Accessibility Plans

File Number: ACS2025-OCC-GEN-0004

Report to Finance and Corporate Services Committee on 6 May 2025

and Council 14 May 2025

Submitted on April 25, 2025 by Tyler Cox, Manager, Legislative Services

Contact Person: Megan Richards, Program Manager, Accessibility

613 580-2424 x12752, Megan.Richards@ottawa.ca

Ward: Citywide

Objet : Mise à jour 2025 des plans d'accessibilité provinciale et fédérale

Numéro de dossier : ACS2025-OCC-GEN-0004

Rapport présenté au Comité des finances et des services organisationnels

Rapport soumis le 6 mai 2025

et au Conseil le 14 mai 2025

Soumis le 2025-04-25 par Tyler Cox, Gestionnaire, Services législatifs Personne

**Personne-ressource: Megan Richards, Gestionnaire de programme,
Accessibilité**

613 580-2424 x12752, Megan.Richards@ottawa.ca

Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Finance and Corporate Services Committee recommend that Council:

1. Receive the 2025 Update to the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan
2. Receive the 2025 Update to the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan
3. Receive information related to the non-compliance with the Information and Communication Standard, as detailed in this report.
4. Receive information related to the non-compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard and deviations to the City of Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards, as detailed in this report.

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des finances et des services organisationnels recommande au Conseil municipal de prendre connaissance :

1. de la Mise à jour 2025 du Plan d'accessibilité municipal de la Ville d'Ottawa;
2. de la Mise à jour 2025 du Plan d'accessibilité d'OC Transpo;
3. de l'information se rapportant à la non conformité des Normes pour l'information et les communications, selon les modalités précisées dans ce rapport;
4. de l'information se rapportant à la non conformité des Normes pour la conception des espaces publics (NCEP) et aux dérogations aux Normes de conception accessible de la Ville d'Ottawa, selon les modalités précisées dans ce rapport.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) (IASR) of the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) (AODA), designated public sector organizations, such as the City of Ottawa, are required to, establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to meet its legislated obligations and prevent and remove accessibility barriers in its services, programs, communications and public spaces.

Additionally, under section 69 (1) of the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA), OC Transpo, under the Transit Services Department, is a "regulated entity" and is required to "prepare and publish [...] an accessibility plan respecting [...] its policies, programs, practices and services in relation to the identification and removal of barriers, and the prevention of new barriers".

The recommendations of this report advance the provisions of accessibility, as required under both Provincial and Federal requirements in City services, programs, facilities, information, and communications. They also ensure that all staff receive the appropriate accessibility-related training appropriate to their duties. This report also provides an overview of the developments with respect to the legislative framework that governs accessibility in Ontario and in Canada. Furthermore, it reflects the content of feedback the Corporate Accessibility Office (AO) receives through many channels to learn about the experiences and barriers faced by Ottawa’s residents, visitors, and employees with disabilities.

Additionally, in response to [Council’s motion](#) (Motion No. FCSC2024-19-01) of November 13, 2024, staff have provided a summary of findings and potential direction for the public information on accessibility features in City parks project, including a summary of the data collected as part of the survey conducted in the winter. Please see Document 1 (pages 4-8) for staff’s response.

With accessible transit, due to the success of the OC Transpo On-Demand Transit Pilot Project offering riders on-demand transit services with same day booking by phone or through a dedicated mobile application, Council directed staff in Transit services to investigate options to leverage the software, or source new/existing software, to enhance booking options for Para Transpo, including same-day bookings. Please see Document 2 for staff’s response.

In July 2023, City Council approved its Term of Council priorities that were structured around the long-term goals (10+ years) and strategic priorities. This report is developed to align with the Council-approved 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 is also developed to align with the Council-approved strategic priorities including: a city that has affordable housing and is more livable for all, a city that is more connected with reliable, safe, and accessible mobility options, and a city that is green and resilient. In setting the 2023–2026 City Strategic Plan, the City prioritized meaningful reconciliation and collaboration with the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation and Urban Indigenous communities.

As part of the new COMAP, the AO has developed a plan to engage with the Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation branch at the City, with the goal of learning from community organizations to understand and support emerging and systemic accessibility issues and needs.

The AO recognizes that this report to Council may include technical language. For a condensed, plain language version of the COMAP update report, see Provincial and Federal Accessibility Plans 2025 Update (Resident Facing Report - Document 3).

BACKGROUND

The 2025-2029 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) was recently approved by Council on November 13, 2024. The AODA requires large public organizations, such as the City, to, “establish, review and update their accessibility plans in consultation with persons with disabilities and if they have an established Accessibility Advisory Committee, they shall consult with the Committee.” The 2025-2029 COMAP is the City’s fourth multi-year accessibility plan and 24th annual update since the AODA requirement came into effect.

As this is a transition period between the previous 2020-2024 COMAP and the new plan, which officially launched January 1, 2025, this update (see Document 1) will provide an update on initiatives that carried over between plans. A more substantive update regarding all initiatives as part of the new plan will be provided next year. A full listing of the 2024 accessibility initiative updates is available in Document 4.

The first OC Transpo Accessibility Plan was also approved by Council in November 2024. Under this federal legislation, OC Transpo is required to provide an annual status update report on the progress of its first multi-year plan (see Document 2). A more detailed update of Transit Services’ 2024 initiatives is also included in Document 4. These initiatives are also highlighted in the 2025 COMAP Annual Update Report.

OC Transpo continues to contribute to both the COMAP report and compliance reporting as part of the City of Ottawa’s AODA Compliance Report, which includes adherence with all requirements under the AODA and the IASR. OC Transpo has also demonstrated its commitment to accessibility and meeting the “spirit and intent” of the AODA since the legislation came into effect.

To develop the 2025-2029 COMAP and 2024-2026 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, the AO consulted widely with persons with disabilities, caregivers, organizations, the Accessibility Advisory Committee and members of the public.

This annual update report was also shared with the Committee for their feedback, which is included in the Accessibility Impacts section of this report.

While OC Transpo provides annual accessibility updates through the COMAP report and has committed to meeting the “spirit and intent” of the AODA, the provisions under the legislation, and specifically its standards pertaining to transportation services, do not

apply to OC Transpo as it is federally and independently regulated. However, Transit Services does lead numerous initiatives towards that objective, as outlined in the lengthy list of initiatives in Document 4, and OC Transpo has also participated in COMAP, a legislated requirement under the AODA, since the requirement came into effect. This includes providing information in both the multi-year plan and the annual update report to Council.

OC Transpo will continue to provide updates through the annual COMAP update report in addition to the update reports for its new accessibility plan, mandated under the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*. It should also be noted that there will be an overlap of initiatives under these two accessibility plans. OC Transpo's first annual update of its Accessibility Plan is due to the Office of the Accessibility Commissioner by June 1, 2025, as required under the legislation.

The Ottawa Public Library (OPL) and Ottawa Public Health (OPH), although governed by separate boards, report on AODA compliance with the City. Similarly, the Committee of Adjustment (CoA) is an independent, autonomous tribunal appointed by City Council, which also reports on AODA compliance with the City. Ottawa Police Services (OPS) is considered a separate "large organization" and as such, reports separately.

The City of Ottawa remains committed to providing accessible and equitable services, programs and facilities to persons with disabilities that not only meets all legislated requirements under both the AODA and the ACA, but also goes above and beyond by responding and adapting our offerings through ever evolving industry best practises, as well as the valuable feedback provided by our residents, visitors and employees. Staff continue to advance accessibility across the City through the initiatives included in both Provincial and Federal accessibility plans and will equally continue to provide truthful and transparent updates regarding challenges with legislated compliance through the previously mentioned compliance plan agreements and correspondents with government officials.

DISCUSSION

As identified in both accessibility plan update reports, the City remains committed to ensuring the accessibility of all programs, services, goods and facilities. Under the Office of the City Clerk, the AO continues to work closely with staff across the organization to provide expertise regarding legislated accessibility requirements, and to ensure an accessibility lens is incorporated into all City services, programs and facilities.

See Document 1 for the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan 2025 annual update, including a more detailed compliance overview and information on deviations to

the City's Accessibility Design Standards. See Document 4 for a full listing of the 2024 updates for all accessibility initiatives contained in the 2025-2029 COMAP. See Document 2 for the first OC Transpo Accessibility Plan 2025 annual update. As stated above, the updates for all initiatives under the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan are also found in Document 4, with the other City initiatives.

Additionally, the initiatives featured within the 2025-2029 COMAP includes those that are both legislated and non-legislated to ensure the City meets all requirements under the IASR, while also going above and beyond by responding to the community's needs through their feedback.

The City continues to report non-compliance with the AODA under the Information and Communications Standard. Since 2015, the City has reported non-compliance with Section 14 (4) of the IASR to the Province, which includes standards for web sites and web content. The City updated its compliance plan agreement with the Province in December 2020 and an update on its progress was submitted to the Province upon their request in June 2024 (see Document 5 for the City's 2024 Compliance Plan Agreement Update). This agreement plan update highlights the tremendous resources and expertise the City has committed towards web accessibility, and the steps the City continues to take towards this goal.

While the City is a recognized leader in web accessibility, in early 2025 the Province requested that the City demonstrate full compliance with Section 14 (4) by the end of 2025.

Due to this increased emphasis from the Province to demonstrate compliance by the end of 2025, the City is currently updating its compliance agreement plan. This may include accelerating timelines, where feasible, and identifying where resources need to be adjusted or re-prioritized to ensure the City continues to demonstrate incremental progress and commitment to meeting the goals of the legislation.

Additionally, in 2023, the City reported non-compliance to the Province with the Design of Public Spaces Standard related to the requirements for exterior paths of travel, as per Section 80.5. The City continues to work towards full compliance and has provided an annual update on its progress to the Province, as requested, in December 2024 (see Document 6). In 2023, the City reported a total of 99 non-compliant locations, many of which have already been remediated (see Document 7). The remaining non-compliant locations will be remediated by or before 2029.

Further details about the City's remediation efforts towards reaching full compliance can be found in the COMAP Annual Update (Document 1). The City is required to submit an AODA Compliance Report to the Province every two years. The next Compliance Report is due to the Province by December 31, 2025. An update on the City's Compliance Agreement Plans is also due by this date.

Additionally, the Province has initiated an audit of certain City services under the IASR. In February 2025, the City Clerk received notification from the Province regarding a desk audit on the requirements within the Transportation Standard on Conventional and Specialized Transportation Service Providers. A response was provided by the City Clerk in March 2025 informing the Province that these sections of the Transportation Standard did not apply to the City of Ottawa or OC Transpo, for the reasons previously mentioned in this report. Discussion with the Province regarding this audit request is ongoing.

Through Delegated Authority (By-law No. 2025-69), the City Clerk will work with the Province on these legislated requirements and audits.

The City remains committed to meeting and/or exceeding legislated accessibility requirements. The AO will continue to provide transparent and accurate updates to the Province, Council, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and the general public on the status of the City's compliance with the AODA and the ACA, as well as the accessibility of its services, programs and facilities through its annual updates. Additionally, as noted above, the City Clerk will continue to work with the Province to ensure that compliance plans are updated, and audits are diligently completed in 2025.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to Committee and Council receiving this Report for information.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS

The AO consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on the annual update reports for both COMAP and the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan at a special meeting held on April 8, 2025. These meetings are also open to the public.

Overall, the Committee is pleased with the City's commitment to ensuring accessibility in its programs, facilities, goods and services. However, members continue to express concerns about serious accessibility barriers related to public transit, including lack of availability of Para Transpo mini buses and issues with booking trips, as well as lack of accessible features in City parks. Feedback from both Committee members and public delegates has also been received indicating the need for improved and reinforced sensitivity training for bus operators regarding better treatment of passengers with disabilities on all OC Transpo vehicles.

The AO provides an update on general accessibility matters at most regular AAC meetings. The AO remains committed to working with AAC members and City staff to address these ongoing concerns and develop effective mitigation solutions.

CONSULTATION

As mentioned above, the Accessibility Advisory Committee has been advised of contents of both accessibility plans' annual updates under the AODA and the ACA and has been consulted on the development of both plans in 2024. The Committee continues to provide feedback to staff on City initiatives on an ongoing basis.

Extensive consultation with persons with disabilities and the public was conducted to develop both accessibility plans in 2024. More information on these consultations can be found on this in the [Provincial and Federal Accessibility Plans report](#) from November 2024.

The AO also regularly consults with disability community partners on certain projects and initiatives contained in this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

This report satisfies the City's requirements under the AODA and ACA to remove or reduce barriers to accessibility. The numerous initiatives outlined in Document 4 all aim to reduce or remove barriers impacting diverse persons with disabilities, including visible and non-visible, temporary, and permanent disabilities.

The City continues to demonstrate its commitment to accessibility by consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, community partners and the public on City projects

that advance the accessibility agenda for City residents, visitors and employees in line with Council's Strategic Priorities.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Many of the initiatives in the COMAP report positively affect the City's built environment and apply the City's Comprehensive Asset Management Policy Guiding Principles. They are customer focused and better enable its assets to meet future challenges, including changing demographics and populations, customer expectations, legislative requirements, technological and environmental factors. The City's COMAP initiatives listed in Document 4 continually improve City assets and are innovative to meet the needs of the City's residents, visitors and employees with disabilities. Work undertaken follows the City of Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards.

Comprehensive Asset Management (CAM) is an integrated business approach involving planning, finance, engineering, maintenance and operations geared towards effectively managing existing and new infrastructure to maximize benefits, reduce risk and provide safe and reliable levels of service to community users. This is accomplished in a socially, culturally, environmentally and economically conscious manner.

The initiatives outlined in Document 4 are consistent with the City's CAM Program objectives. COMAP supports a forward-looking approach to meet future challenges, including changing demographics and populations, legislative and environmental factors.

CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

Accessibility considerations are reviewed for projects that can positively affect the climate. Various initiatives that support both accessibility and climate implications are outlined in Document 4.

Reviewing accessibility and environmental impacts in a coordinated way ensures a better, more inclusive and environmentally sound product and service to all residents.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

As per the Delegation of Authority By-law, the City Clerk is authorized to execute and file with the designated Provincial authority all accessibility reports and other information required under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Additionally, the City Clerk is authorized to execute and file with the designated Federal authority all accessibility reports and other information required under the *Accessible Canada Act*.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

There are no economic impacts associated with this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The AODA, which governs the Provincially mandated work outlined in this report, has specific and general exceptions in the Design of Public Spaces section of the regulation, which protects the environment as described below:

Clause 80.15 Exceptions, general:

Exceptions to the requirements that apply to recreational trails and beach access routes are permitted where obligated organizations can demonstrate one or more of the following:

1. The requirements, or some of them, would likely affect the cultural heritage value or interest of a property identified, designated or otherwise protected under the Ontario Heritage Act as being of cultural heritage value or interest
2. The requirements, or some of them, would affect the preservation of places set apart as National Historic Sites of Canada by the Minister of the Environment for Canada under the Canada National Parks Act (Canada)
3. The requirements, or some of them, would affect the national historic interest or significance of historic places marked or commemorated under the Historic Sites and Monuments Act (Canada)
4. The requirements, or some of them, might damage, directly or indirectly, the cultural heritage or natural heritage on a property included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's World Heritage List of sites under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.
5. There is a significant risk that the requirements, or some of them, would adversely affect water, fish, wildlife, plants, invertebrates, species at risk, ecological integrity or natural heritage values, whether the adverse effects are direct or indirect.
6. It is not practicable to comply with the requirements, or some of them, because existing physical or site constraints prohibit modification or addition of elements, spaces or features, such as where surrounding rocks bordering the recreational trail or beach access route impede

achieving the required clear width. O. Reg. 413/12, s. 6.

INDIGENOUS, GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

Indigenous Implications

Through discussion with the City's Indigenous Relations Branch, the AO has learned that their research shows that Indigenous peoples are disproportionately likely to experience disability, including mental health disability, in comparison to the general population. In our work to increase accessibility for all, the City strives to be mindful of Indigenous peoples, and work to build relationships to ensure the full inclusion of Indigenous persons with disabilities. This is reflected in the 2025-2029 COMAP as part of our commitment to an inclusive accessibility plan.

In developing the new COMAP and OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, staff included Indigenous organizations in its outreach. To promote sharing information and communications with Indigenous organizations, the AO has also sought advice from staff in the City's Indigenous Relations branch on how to develop relationships with organizations and communities that support Indigenous persons with disabilities. These efforts will continue.

Gender and Equity Implications

In developing the new COMAP and OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, staff included organizations that support gender diverse persons and other members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in its outreach.

Additionally, the AO participates on the cross-departmental Equity and Inclusion Interdepartmental Team, to ensure that women and gender diverse persons with disabilities are represented in the Women and Gender Equity Strategy. The AO also continues to work closely with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, which includes diverse gender representation amongst members, to inform our work.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Risk implications with this report are associated with non-compliance with the ACA, the AODA, the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, or the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

Under the ACA, the Commissioner may conduct inspections, make a production order, a compliance order and impose administrative monetary penalties in accordance with the Regulation. Schedule 1 of the Regulation outlines whether an offence under the Act or Regulation is minor, serious, or very serious. Based on the contravention,

administrative monetary penalties can range from \$1 thousand for minor, first violations, to \$250 thousand for very serious, fourth or subsequent violations.

The AODA states that if it is found that a person or organization has contravened a provision of an accessibility standard or of any other regulation, the director may, by order, require the person or organization to do either or both of the following:

1. Comply with the accessibility standard or other regulation within the time specified in the order.
2. Subject to subsection (6), pay an administrative penalty in accordance with the regulations.

If a person or organization fails to comply with an order and no appeal of the order is made within the time specified, a director may, make an order requiring the person or organization to pay an administrative penalty in accordance with the regulations.

Every person who is guilty of an offence under the AODA is liable on conviction,

- a) to a fine of not more than \$50 thousand for each day or part of a day on which the offence occurs or continues to occur, or
- b) if the person is a corporation, to a fine of not more than \$100 thousand for each day or part of a day on which the offence occurs or continues to occur.

As stated above, the City has reported non-compliance to the Province with respect to Section 14, Websites and Web Content, of the IASR in 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021 and 2023. The WCAG Compliance Plan Agreement Update was provided to the Province in 2024 (Document 4). The agreement outlines the measures that the City is taking to meet the legislated requirement.

Additionally, in 2023, the City also reported non-compliance with Section 80.5 of the IASR and submitted another Compliance Plan Agreement related to the Design of Public Spaces (Document 6), which also outlines the measures the City is taking to meet the legislated requirements and fix the non-compliant locations (Document 7).

All General Managers have been made aware of these risks.

Furthermore, disability is a protected ground of discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act and Ontario Human Rights Code. If a person believes they have experienced discrimination on the basis of their disability, they can file an application with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal or the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. Under Provincial law, such applications under the Code are more common than enforcement under the AODA.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

Both the **COMAP** and the **OC Transpo Accessibility Plan** were developed in consultation with members of the public, which included those living in rural areas.

Many initiatives contained in these plans also benefit rural residents. **As outlined in the listed COMAP initiatives, (Document 4) rural facilities are included in the City's Retrofits program which allows for upgrades to accessibility features. The OC Transpo Accessibility Plan also includes initiatives which benefit transit for persons with disabilities living in rural areas.**

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

As described in the many of the Information and Communication initiatives contained in Document 4, technology plays a significant role in providing the City with the ability to meet the AODA accessible websites and web content clauses. The dedicated resources of the Technology Branch and the Web Services Branch are invaluable to the corporation in meeting and maintaining compliance with the IASR.

The City has also implemented all recommended elements contained in the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative Strategy, the governing body of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). This includes the incorporation of various web/digital accessibility initiatives including, but not limited to, creating a Web Accessibility Policy, updated in 2023, defining roles and responsibilities, having a monitoring framework in place, engaging stakeholders, consulting the disability community and the Accessibility Advisory Committee, evaluating early and often, and creating a tracking process.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The City of Ottawa's accessibility initiatives outlined in Document 4 directly impact and support Council's Strategic Priorities. All departmental initiatives are designed to advance equity and inclusion for the city's diverse population through continuous planning and execution of barrier removal in all City programs, services, and facilities. Intersectionality also is considered in accessibility plans ensuring alignment with other City efforts included but not limited to the efforts of the Women and Gender Equity Strategy, the Anti-Racism Strategy and the Reconciliation Action Plan.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1: City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan – Annual Update (2025)

Document 2: OC Transpo Accessibility Plan – Annual Update (2025)

Document 3: City of Ottawa Provincial and Federal Accessibility Plans 2025 Update (Resident Facing Report)

Document 4: 2025-2029 COMAP Department Initiatives

Document 5: City of Ottawa 2024 WCAG Compliance Plan Agreement Update

Document 6: 2024 City of Ottawa Design of Public Spaces Compliance Plan Agreement Update

Document 7: 2024 Annual Update Tracking of Traffic Control Compliance to AODA

DISPOSITION

Efforts to meet AODA compliance requirements throughout the corporation are coordinated through the AO. Specific initiatives, goals and programs outlined in the five-year plan have been assigned to operational departments and progress is monitored by the Office of the City Clerk. All City departments are responsible for the implementation of the City's COMAP plan and for compliance with the AODA and the IASR.

The Office of the City Clerk, in collaboration with Transit Services and OC Transpo, will submit updates on an annual basis as required. A new plan will be due by June 1, 2026. Any new requirements under the ACA will be monitored and implemented, as applicable.