

# OC Transpo Accessibility Plan – Annual Update (2025)

## General

This is the first annual update for the 2024-2026 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, which fulfills the City of Ottawa's Transit Services Department's obligations of the *Accessible Canada Act (ACA)*.

Though the ACA was enacted in 2019, OC Transpo has been designing and providing services for many years in compliance with the City of Ottawa's Accessibility Design Standards and guided by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. This includes compliance reporting as part of the City's AODA Compliance Report, and adherence to the spirit and intent of the AODA and its *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)*. All City departments, including OC Transpo, contribute to annual updates of the City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan (COMAP) tabled before City Council.

As some OC Transpo bus routes cross provincial borders into Quebec, the Department's services are regulated under federal law. Reflective of its unusual 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 this Plan. It is to be expected 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, with the new Plan to be published by June 1, 2026. Consultation will take place to develop the new Plan in 2026. 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.

## Contact Information and Feedback Process

As reflected in the [OC Transpo Accessible Customer Service Policy](#), feedback about how OC Transpo services are delivered to people with disabilities is essential as a means of identifying barriers, as well as encouraging continuous service improvement. This feedback is 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](mailto: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 OC Transpo's 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](mailto: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.

## **Areas Described under Section 5 of the ACA**

### **Consultations**

Throughout 2024, OC Transpo hosted a series of customer engagement events called Para Transpo Talk that were open to all Para Transpo customers, their families, companions, and support persons. OC Transpo and Para Transpo staff provided updates about Para Transpo service and initiatives, and received questions, concerns, and comments from the public. Staff also assisted customers to set up the My Para

Transpo online tool that allows customers to book, cancel and track trips and brought one of the new minibuses for customers to see in person.

On November 28, 2024, the Transit Advisory Working Group (TAWG) held a meeting to review and receive feedback on Para Transpo service and operations. The TAWG was established through the City's 2022-2026 Governance Review to provide user-experience-based advice on public transit matters, including Para Transpo, conventional bus service, and the O-Train. Composed of members of the public. Including at least one active Para Transpo user, the TAWG serves as a forum for feedback on OC Transpo's work plan, operational changes, and policy recommendations. The group meets several times a year to discuss key transit issues and potential improvements. During the November 28 meeting, discussions focused on service quality, communication, scheduling challenges, and accessibility.

On the rail construction side, the Stage 2 O-Train stakeholder relations and communications team continued to engage community partners regarding the accessibility of proposed stations and vehicles. Presentations and consultations were provided at the community's request, and feedback was considered and implemented, where possible.

On December 18 and 19, 2024, OC Transpo organized familiarization sessions for Lines 2 and 4, offering members from various disability community organizations the opportunity to visit and familiarize themselves with the new stations and vehicles before they were open to the public. Eight people were in attendance, representing various agencies and disability community groups. These sessions were facilitated by OC Transpo Accessibility and Customer Service teams and introduced members to the new O-Train vehicles, as well as several stations along Lines 2 and 4. In addition, each session, which lasted approximately four hours, provided community members with valuable information and hands-on experience with these vehicles and stations. While the primary focus of the sessions was orientation to the new system, all feedback provided by attendees received during the sessions was documented. This initiative will continue for the future O-Train East extension, and the later West extension.

OC Transpo will continue to engage the public in consultations throughout 2025, with plans to bring Bus stops and 'Off-Road' Cycling facilities – Interaction Zone Design Guidelines to the Accessibility Advisory Committee this spring.

## **The Built Environment**

OC Transpo continues to adhere to the work outlined in the built environment section of the 2024-2026 Accessibility Plan. This includes maintaining compliance with the City's

Accessibility Design Standards for new construction and redevelopment projects, ensuring inclusive environments. For this update, this section includes updates on the initiatives, as outlined in the Built Environment section of the 2024-2026 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan.

## Ongoing Built Environment Initiatives

The Stage 2 O-Train extensions both retrofit existing rail stations and build new stations to ensure barrier-free access and accessibility features.

Some of the accessibility features of the stations and vehicles include the following:

- Station features
  - Dual elevators at stations with elevator service
  - Stations without elevators have ramps and multi-use pathways for access
  - Tactile warning strips and inter-car barriers
  - Black and white directional signs throughout the station
- O-Train features
  - Cooperative seating areas
  - Level boarding
  - Spacious interior for easy circulation
  - High visibility colours for grab bars, handholds, and stanchions

O-Train Lines 2 and 4 opened in January 2025 and further details regarding their launch will be included in the new plan in 2026.

As part of ongoing on-street bus stop accessibility improvements, OC Transpo continues to enhance universal access of on-street bus stops and facilities through new construction or renovation and maintenance of existing stops. This initiative includes identifying on-street bus stops for improvement through regular OC Transpo initiatives and by coordinating work with other City projects. New bus stop installations in anticipation of the forthcoming “New Ways to Bus” network changes, as well as stop improvements at existing stop locations as part of the 2025 Bus Stop Improvement Program will be completed in 2025. OC Transpo staff are working closely with Ward Councillors and staff in Infrastructure and Water Services to confirm the locations for new and improved bus stops; implementation of the changes will be coordinated through the Spring and Summer/Fall of 2025.

In addition, staff continue to work on improving universal access improvements to transit stations and Park & Rides for the benefit of all customers, including customers with disabilities.

## **Employment**

As per the City's Workplace Accommodation Policy and the 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.

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 their identification information, as required.

OC Transpo employs over three thousand individuals and as of December 31, 2024, based on data from Count ME In, 18 per cent per cent of staff identify as a person with a disability.

## **Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

In 2024, OC Transpo continued to enhance digital accessibility and communication tools for transit users. The O-Train X website, which originally launched in 2023, provides a one-stop shop for information about upcoming O-Train network expansion that complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards. The website was continually updated throughout 2024, including all new information ahead of the January 2025 launch of the two new O-Train lines.

To expand the current offerings of Para Transpo online services, trip reminder notifications were introduced in March 2025. More details on this initiative will be provided in the 2026 update, and OC Transpo will continue engaging with Para Transpo customers to further improve service.

## **Communications, other than ICT**

OC Transpo is committed to ensuring customers with disabilities can find important information quickly and efficiently across a broad variety of accessible formats, including both digital and analogue, braille, large print, telephone services, print displays and materials. As well, OC Transpo promotes the use of plain language in its communications, wherever possible.

As discussed above, both retrofitted and new stations on the Stage 2 O-Train extensions were designed using an accessibility lens. Some of the communication

features, other than ICT, of the stations and vehicles on the newly opened Lines 2 and 4 include the following:

- Station features
  - Braille signs indicating direction of service
  - Audio announcements on platforms
  - Tactile wayfinding tiles tracing a route on the floor
- O-Train features
  - Onboard information including bilingual audio and visual announcements
  - Audible tones and visual indicators that the train doors are opening and closing

## **Ongoing and Long-Term Non-ICT Features and Initiatives**

The Stage 2 O-Train communications team continues to engage community partners 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.

As part of the review of cooperative seating signage, staff are aiming to improve the visibility and effectiveness of on-board signage identifying the cooperative seating area of the bus and both O-Train lines. This includes re-evaluating the status of the initiative in collaboration with internal community partners and determine next steps. If internal resources and capacity are available, OC Transpo also plans to engage external community partners on the existing cooperative seating signage and to determine whether any enhancements are needed to improve its effectiveness.

To improve navigation for customers, OC Transpo will investigate additional wayfinding to improve navigation inside and around transit stations for persons who are blind or partially sighted. In collaboration with internal staff and accessibility community partners, staff will re-evaluate the status of current initiatives, to determine what gaps remain and any next steps.

OC Transpo will continue to improve Transitway signage and wayfinding to be consistent with Light Rail Transit standards. These improvements include implementing braille and compliance with the City of Ottawa's Accessibility Design Standards. Further, an accessible wayfinding application pilot called "GoodMaps" will also be launched at Tremblay Station and Rideau Station.

## **Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities**

In 2024, OC Transpo began the process of replacing the Para Transpo minibus fleet with new, accessible buses. The first new minibus arrived in September 2024. OC Transpo has actively engaged with Para Transpo customers throughout this process. The first seven-metre bus is scheduled for delivery in early 2025, with additional deliveries expected throughout the year and into early 2026.

Additionally, OC Transpo has also begun the process of replacing their conventional transit buses that reach the end of their lifecycle with zero-emission buses (ZEB's). The first conventional ZEB entered service in January 2025, and an additional 25 will be delivered in Q2 2025. Ultimately, over 200 ZEBs are planned to enter service by 2026. OC Transpo will engage and monitor feedback from customers with disabilities and accessibility community partners to ensure any accessibility-related concerns about these new ZEB's are monitored and no new barriers are created.

In 2024, OC Transpo launched the On-Demand Transit Pilot Project, offering riders on-demand transit services with same day booking by phone or through a dedicated mobile application. The On-Demand Transit Pilot Project was deemed successful and received positive customer feedback. In November 2024, 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. Staff were also directed to report back to the Transit Committee with a projection of whether increased funding would be required to provide additional capacity for same-day bookings.

OC Transpo is in the process of issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) in early 2025 for a longer-term vendor to provide an accessible on-demand software solution. As mentioned above, staff are also procuring ten minibuses specifically for on-demand transit, which will meet current accessibility standards. The project's objectives include increased customer satisfaction and ridership, improved service reliability and on-time performance, lower emissions, shorter wait and travel times, fewer transfers, expanded coverage, and decreased walking distances. As the On Demand Transit project progresses, staff will evaluate if the procured software can be leveraged for an improved Para Transpo booking experience.

## **Design and Delivery of Programs and Services**

OC Transpo will continue to design and deliver programs and services that meet the needs of residents, through engagement and consultation. To achieve this, efforts

continue to be made to foster partnerships and open communication through direct and ongoing engagement with a variety of community groups and partners. For example, the New Ways to Bus network adjustments, expected to be implemented in spring 2025, were developed as a direct result of the Bus Route Review. The Route Review included a comprehensive outreach and consultation process conducted in 2023 to gather feedback from customers, residents, and community groups. This process helped identify how people use transit and how the network could be improved to better meet their needs. Similarly, the Travel Training program was created to support seniors and people with disabilities in using transit safely and independently. Delivered by partner agencies, including school boards and hospitals, OC Transpo supports these organizations by providing Travel Training passes to assist in delivering the program.

## **Transportation**

To meet the transportation needs of residents with disabilities, OC Transpo offers various accessible travel options, including conventional buses, Para Transpo, and the O-Train. Additionally, the Taxi Coupon Program provides discounted taxi fares to Para Transpo customers as an alternative to Para Transpo. The program enables customers to book their own trip from participating Ottawa taxi companies and save 55 per cent off the regular fare. In 2024, funding totalling \$600,235 was allocated to support taxi coupons, reducing their cost, and increasing funding for rural transportation. OC Transpo is exploring ways to further improve the customer experience with the Taxi Coupon Program in 2025. Further details will be shared in the 2026 update.

## **Conclusion**

While this is the first annual update to OC Transpo's first accessibility plan under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the 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 reduce barriers. OC Transpo remains committed to continuing to find new and innovative ways to improve accessibility, in consultation and collaboration with people with disabilities.