



# OC Transpo Accessibility Consultation Report

In preparation for the 2026-2029 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan

April 2026

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# OC Transpo Accessibility Plan

As outlined in 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, facilities and information. In keeping with the obligations of the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA), in the winter of 2026, City staff consulted with people with disabilities to support the development of the 2026-2029 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan.

The new plan will outline the ways in which OC Transpo will work to reduce or eliminate barriers for people with disabilities that they face within OC Transpo's programs, services and facilities over time. 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 OC Transpo's 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

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.

## How we engaged and consulted with people with disabilities in Ottawa

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.

Prior to consultations, a consultation plan was developed as part of the preparation ahead of the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan consultations. People with disabilities, agencies that work with and provide support people with disabilities, caregivers, friends, family members and the general public were invited to provide accessibility-related feedback.

As the consultations served the purpose of collecting information related to accessibility across all public transit services, programs and facilities, the questions were broadly drafted to capture the greatest amount of feedback.

There were four methods to provide feedback for these consultations, which included:

- An in-person consultation
- 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.

Four public consultations took place including one in-person consultation at City Hall, the most central location to many public transit users, and three virtual consultations held over Zoom. In addition to the public consultations, we also held two one-on-one sessions with individuals upon request. Each consultation was held at different times of the day, including in the evening, to increase the opportunity for participation. Additionally, providing opportunities to consult virtually meant engagement occurred in a convenient and accessible way with residents across the City during the winter, including rural residents.

Three additional targeted consultations took place with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), the Transit Advisory Working Group (TAWG), as well as with various community organizations, including representatives from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), the Canadian Council for the Blind (CCB), the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD), the Ottawa Disability Coalition, the Council on Aging of Ottawa, as well as individual advocates.

A total of 184 residents provided feedback about the accessibility of OC Transpo's services, programs and facilities. Of these, 60 participated in either an in-person or virtual consultation. 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, visual, hearing, sensory, learning/developmental, and non-visible.

A total of 115 residents completed the online survey and there were over 600 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
- Racialized persons
- Immigrants
- Rural residents
- Older adults 65 years or older
- Youth under 29 years old
- Rural residents
- Persons with disabilities

It should also be noted that participants had the option to select more than one category under the diversity field, and most participants that chose to provide demographic information selected more than one intersectional identifier.

Five community toolkits were sent upon request, with two groups submitting feedback.

In addition, two community toolkits were sent to an internal City department and a federal department who were looking to improve the way they conduct consultations.

Accessibility supports were actively offered and provided, including but not limited to, sign language interpretation, captioning, ensuring the accessibility of both the in-person and the online platform used, and the use of a Personal Support Worker. All presentation materials were provided in alternate formats, upon request.

Ultimately, over 650 lines of recorded feedback were collected and shared with Transit Services who are exploring the feasibility of actionable items.

## Outreach

A communication plan was developed to ensure wide promotion of the consultation. The consultations were promoted through the City's Public Information and Media Relations (PIMR) team as well as the OC Transpo Communications team via social media.

Engagement opportunities were promoted through the "Engage Ottawa" e-newsletter, which was sent to over 29,900 subscribers in both English and French. The Accessibility Office (AO) also promoted consultation opportunities through its own "Accessibility Spotlight" e-newsletter, which was sent to over 5,668 residents in both English and French, and by leveraging the relationships that the AO has established with community

partners, including a list of nearly 200 community organizations. Additionally, information was shared ahead of time with all Councillors, many of whom shared information about consultation opportunities through their own social media and other communication channels.

## Accommodations

Accommodations were actively offered through the registration page for all consultations on Engage Ottawa, as well as advertised through our various promotional channels. Accommodations that were actively offered included:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Langue des Signes Québécois (LSQ)
- Captioning
- Braille
- Portable FM Loop Listening Device
- Personal Support Worker (PSW)
- Other (to be specified by participant)

ASL interpretation was provided at the consultation session with members from disability community organizations, captioning was provided at one of the virtual public consultations, and a PSW was provided upon request at the in-person consultation. Other requests included providing materials ahead of time, ensuring access for wheelchairs and other mobility devices, and ensuring the consultation meeting space was scent free for those with environmental sensitivities. All requests for accommodations and supports were met.

## Feedback

The following sections provide an overview of what we heard from the community throughout all consultation and survey feedback. Some of the feedback received relates to accessibility initiatives that are currently planned or underway, confirming that these priorities are responsive to the priorities of the community. As such, these will be incorporated into the new plan.

To inform the development of the 2026-2029 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, the following will be included:

- Feedback received through the consultation process
- An analysis of transit-related accessibility feedback from the public collected on an ongoing basis at the City and,

- A short literature review of transportation-related barriers faced by Indigenous people accessing public transportation, and,
- Best practice research (including feedback from the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals, Accessibility Standards Canada, and the Chief Accessibility Officer of Canada)

The consultation data was grouped together by the Areas described in the Accessible Canada Act. These include: Organization-wide initiatives, the built environment, employment, information and communication technologies (ICT), communications other than ICT, procurement, design and delivery of programs and services, and transportation.

The data below does not represent all individualized feedback received but rather demonstrates many of the recurrent themes that emerged throughout the consultations.

## **Organization-wide initiatives**

- Greater coordination of snow clearing and winter maintenance in priority areas
- Improved accessibility of pedestrian pathways and other infrastructure that connects to bus stop infrastructure
- Increased coordination between bus stop infrastructure and larger City planning projects

## **Built Environment**

- Improved public education regarding the use of priority seating areas
- Improved maintenance, including snow removal and other winter maintenance, leading to and at bus stops and shelters, as well as at and around LRT stations
- Removal of construction-related barriers to access bus stops and stations
- Improved maintenance of accessible features at LRT stations such as automatic door openers, elevators and washrooms
- Increased rest areas at bus and LRT stations

## **Employment**

- Increased representation of persons with disabilities working for OC Transpo
- Recommendation of Para Transpo and OC Transpo supervisors being required to have experience providing the direct service to residents
- The opportunity for management to ride-along on Para Transpo to better understand issues being faced by residents

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

- Improved online booking system: better coordination between booking and dispatch schedule; improving the accessibility of the interface, particularly for screen reader users; and giving notice of service disruptions when the person is booking.
- VRI and other communication supports that are accessible to D/deaf people.
- Improved Para Transpo booking reminders by including information about the vehicle type, driver and time of the booking.
- There are technological gaps for clients who need to be notified of bus cancellations but do not have access to a phone or data.
- Provide different customer service phone lines for cancellations, booking and recurring bookings.
- Improved reliability of GPS tracking of Para buses

## **Communications other than ICT**

- Increased communications around LRT stations regarding service alerts and maintenance impacts, including alerts about other stations to allow riders to prepare accordingly
- Improved real time updates regarding service disruptions through a variety of communication tools to more riders
- Increased communications provided through other mediums and additional social media platforms to reach a wider audience
- Improved wayfinding and navigational signage at LRT stations

## **Procurement**

- Procurement of six-meter busses for Para Transpo creates barriers due to limited flexibility of seating options
- Seatbelt extenders are not available on Para Transpo vehicles
- Recommendation of installing GPS/ phone mounts in Para vehicles as currently drivers are placing them too low and having to take their eyes off the road
- Purchasing of vehicles strictly for the use of Para Transpo
- Taking proactive approach to replacing aging vehicles rather than allowing for gaps to form

## **Design and delivery of programs and services**

- Customer service at OC Transpo is becoming more responsive.
- Clients need a better understanding of Para Transpo's mandate, through tools like the user guide.
- Drivers need accessibility and disability specific training and awareness, particularly about invisible disabilities.
- Limited transportation options also limit the ability to acquire and sustain employment.
- Without the ability to access Para Transpo on demand, especially outside regular hours, users face reduced freedom and independence.
- Being unable to access safe and accessible transportation is a safety barrier.
- Unreliable transportation is a barrier to accessing health services.
- Evaluate and report on reliability through the lens of accessibility
- More transparency and frequent updates about service disruptions, so that people can plan their travel
- Implement programs and services to bring greater awareness to individuals with invisible disabilities.
- There remain challenges for people with service animals with using transit systems

## **Transportation**

- Improved transit options to those living in rural areas or beyond current boundaries, including pay parity
- Review policy regarding identifying Para Transpo customers "bus only" and how residents may be able to advocate for this designation
- Review of high priority areas that may have an increased representation of individuals with disabilities to ensure adequate planned routes and services
- Taking a whole system approach in reviewing services. How do bus stations and routes connect with the LRT and Para systems, addressing whole system barriers rather than individual occurrences

## **Evaluation**

An evaluation was sent to participants following each consultation session. The feedback received was positive based on the three following questions:

- I was able to voice my opinions today

- I feel that my feedback was valued
- I am confident the City will consider my recommendations

Participants who completed the survey indicated that they were either neutral, satisfied or very satisfied in these three areas. One participant noted “I felt like my feedback is going to be heard and taken seriously” and another expressed “the facilitators created a very open space that invited engagement and sharing of ideas.” While most comments received were positive, one participant felt that their questions were not responded to and that the facilitator did not seem optimistic about change happening. Given the aim of the sessions was to receive unfiltered feedback from members of the public, staff maintained an unbiased approach and did not comment on the feasibility of any solutions. Following the consultation sessions, staff in AO connected with staff in OC Transpo who recommended that Para Talks may be beneficial to clients wishing to learn more about this particular service.

During consultation sessions, participants expressed that they would like the City to continue consulting with the public regarding accessibility on a more regular basis. Anecdotal data and survey response confirmed that many participants felt comfortable expressing their feedback to facilitators and thus felt confident staff would consider their recommendations. The AO and OC Transpo staff will continue to look for ways to improve its engagement with persons with disabilities.

## Conclusion

Findings from these community consultations play an important role in the development of accessibility initiatives in the 2026-2029 OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, which aims to reduce barriers for persons with disabilities within OC Transpo’s programs, services and facilities. Specific concerns and priorities from equity-denied groups and those with diverse disabilities, as presented in this report, will continue to be included in the development and implementation of the plan.

The Accessibility Office and OC Transpo staff would like to thank all those that participated in or supported these consultations.

For more information on this report or the OC Transpo Accessibility Plan, please contact [accessibilityoffice@ottawa.ca](mailto:accessibilityoffice@ottawa.ca) or visit [octranspo.com](http://octranspo.com).