

COMAP 2022 Annual Update Report – Public Facing Outline

Introduction

The 2020-2024 City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan was approved by Council in November 2020. This is the City's second update report on the 2020-2024 Plan. The plan includes our actions to improve accessibility at the City of Ottawa, under the five Standards of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (2005, AODA): Customer Service, Information and Communications, Employment, Design of Public Spaces, and Transportation. The City is committed to meeting the requirements of the AODA and making improvements in other areas of accessibility. These improvements support the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in Ottawa, including residents, employees and visitors.

While 2021 was another irregular business year, the City continues to recognize that its services, programs and facilities have an impact on the daily lives of all residents, including residents with disabilities. In 2021, priorities included the development of plans and processes to ensure people with disabilities had equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, the continued provision of sign language interpretation for all emergency-related communications, and engagement with the community and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).

This report highlights our work in 2021.

AODA Compliance

The City is required to submit an AODA Compliance Report to the Province every two years. This report was submitted to the Province in December 2021. In this report, the City reported that it is fully compliant with all applicable requirements under the AODA, with one exception. Since 2015, and continued in 2021, the City has reported non-compliance with section 14 (4) of the IASR which include 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 in 2021. This agreement highlights the tremendous amount of work and resources the City has committed towards web accessibility, and the steps the City continues to take towards this goal.

The City continues to invest a great amount of time and resources into making its websites, web contents and applications more accessible for all residents, including those with disabilities.

2022 Accessibility Highlights

Impacts of COVID-19

COVID-19 continued to significantly effect City business in 2021. This included additional lockdowns, mask mandates, outbreaks, and many other impacts on people's day-to-day lives. However, this presented continued opportunities for the City and Ottawa Public Health (OPH) to implement innovative solutions to ensure that people with disabilities continued to be prioritized in the City's emergency response.

In late 2020, the Federal government began distributing vaccines to the provinces for distribution. The Provincial government created a phased vaccination plan to ensure vulnerable persons received early and timely access to the vaccines. Some of the City's initiatives to support people with disabilities throughout this vaccine implementation were:

- Cross-departmental collaboration, engagement with the AAC and community organizations to implement innovative approaches to creating an accessible vaccination plan;
- Ensuring City vaccine sites were accessible, which included using the [City's Accessibility Design Standards \(ADS\)](#); and
- Introducing a process for requesting and responding to disability-related accommodation requests for vaccine appointments.

When the pandemic was declared in March of 2020, the City of Ottawa's Human Needs Task Force was established with community partners to support the emergency response efforts in addressing urgent community needs, including opening physical distancing, isolation and respite centres for residents in need. Services such as respite centres were put in place as temporary strategies, with the goal of shifting these services back to community agencies as the emergency situation stabilizes and recovery efforts begin. These respite centres supported many residents in 2021, averaging over 2000 visits per month.

American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) interpretation continued to be provided for all COVID-19 related media availabilities, town halls, and other virtual events. Videos on the OPH website were added in ASL and

LSQ, to ensure the Deaf community had access to updated emergency health and safety information related to COVID-19.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) held eight meetings in 2021, which were conducted over Zoom. This volunteer group provided feedback on 44 different city projects, including:

- Para Transpo Customer Experience
- Anti-Racism Secretariat's Initiatives
- Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan
- Affordable Housing Capital Plan 2021
- Pedestrian Wayfinding System
- Low-Speed Vehicles Pilot Project
- Accessible Taxicab – On Demand Study

The City also consulted on hundreds of projects in the built environment at the annual Duty to Consult meeting. Further, the AAC remained involved in the City's Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Program and held two special meetings to discuss the accessibility concerns related to this project.

The City would like to recognize the AAC for their dedication, countless hours of volunteer work and their invaluable expertise.

Public Engagement and Partnerships

Throughout 2021, the City engaged external stakeholders and community organizations on various projects and initiatives.

In 2021, City staff continued to meet with representatives from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), the Canadian Council for the Blind (CCB), the Alliance for Equality for Blind Canadians (AEBC) and the Ottawa Disability Coalition (ODC). During these meetings, City staff answered questions, addressed concerns and received feedback from the community regarding City infrastructure, programs and services.

The City and Ottawa Public Health also held vaccine forums in the Spring with the Ottawa Disability Coalition (ODC) and the National Capital Association for the Deaf. Staff provided information on the City's vaccination plan and answered questions from many participants.

Community stakeholders were also engaged in discussions about the safety and accessibility concerns with the City's 2021 Electric Kick Scooter (e-scooter) pilot. The primary concerns were sidewalk riding and mis-parking of e-scooters. While staff and the e-scooter companies worked together to problem solve these issues, concerns from the community remained throughout the season.

The City would like to thank these community stakeholders and organizations for their time and continued efforts to ensuring our City is accessible for all residents.

The City continues to actively participate in the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), Carleton University's Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN), and the International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP). The City also shared information and resources with staff at the Federal government.

Events

The City celebrated two key events virtually in 2021: AccessAbility Day on May 27 and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 2.

The theme of AccessAbility Day was, "Barriers and Benefits to Participation in a Virtual World". The Mayor announced the City's participation in the Canadian Accessibility Network and presented the proclamation to the Network. The event also featured a community panel discussion about the experiences of people with disabilities during the pandemic. Over a hundred people attended the event.

The theme of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities event was, "Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world", and had over 130 people in attendance. The event included a proclamation from Deputy Mayor Laura Dudas, and two speakers, including a representative from the Canadian Human Rights Commission, who provided an update on the Accessible Canada Act, as well as a representative from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, who spoke about the impacts of COVID-19 on people with disabilities and Human Rights in our province.

Accessibility supports were provided during both events including ASL, LSQ, continuous real-time captioning in English and French, and simultaneous French translation. Other accommodations were actively offered.

Customer Service

The City's Accessibility Office continued to publish a monthly Accessibility Spotlight newsletter about accessibility initiatives. [Sign-up](#) to receive the newsletter.

The City's [Accessibility Policy](#) was recently updated. You can provide feedback on our programs, services, and facilities by [email](#) or through 3-1-1, 613-580-2400 for Video Relay Service, or 613-580-2401 for TTY.

Information & Communications

Throughout 2021, staff continued to make improvements to the City's main website, [ottawa.ca](#), to become fully accessible. As of March 1, 2022, over 96 per cent of an inventory of 7,300 PDF files were fully accessible.

The City is proud to note that as a result of its continuing efforts to increase web accessibility, the home page of [ottawa.ca](#) retains a position in the top five per cent of WebAIM's accessibility rankings. This is the highest known ranking among major municipalities in Ontario. [OCtranspo.com](#) also ranks in the top five per cent.

Design of Public Spaces

- The Standards Unit continued to assess the accessibility of construction sites during the 2021 construction season to review on-site accessibility features, confirm contract requirements, as well as raise awareness regarding accommodations of pedestrians with disabilities.
- Council approved \$2.5 million for the Accessibility Barrier Removal Program, which was used to enhance accessibility features at City Facilities. Additional funding from the Older Adult Plan Advisory Committee further removes barriers at City Facilities.
- The Street Furniture Program, implemented to improve the design and function of street furniture in public spaces, continued in 2021, resulting in the installation of 202 new accessible benches across the city.
- The Public Works Department consulted the public as part of their Winter Maintenance Quality Standards review. An accessibility lens was applied to both this review as well as the development of new Maintenance Quality Standards. Additionally, this department also launched a staff awareness campaign last year, highlighting the impacts of winter maintenance on the mobility, safety and independence of persons with disabilities in our city.

Transportation

By-law and Regulatory Services continued their financial support to Transit Services to provide accessible transportation improvements. This included providing \$74,085 for

taxi coupons, \$47,814 for discounted taxi coupons, and \$150,000 for rural transportation funding.

In addition to this funding, Transit Services also provided Community and Social Services agencies with \$856,000 in funding for the delivery of transportation services to rural seniors and persons with disabilities.

The final design review of Stage 2 LRT stations also took place in 2021. These stations will be fully accessible, meeting or exceeding the requirements of the AODA, the Ontario Building Code and the City's ADS. Designs for new stations include accessible features in the Stage 1 stations, including tactile directional wayfinding, dual elevators serving station platforms, tactile signage, as well as fully accessible public washrooms at Trim, Place d'Orléans, Moodie, Baseline, Lincoln Fields and Limebank stations. The trains will also be fully accessible.

A Para Transpo Customer Service Working Group was established last year. The purpose of this group is to provide feedback on proposed service improvements and to increase customer engagement. The working group initially consisted of 12 members of the public who were or represented registered Para Transpo customers, including a representative of the Accessibility Advisory Committee. In 2022, staff will continue to engage the Para Transpo Customer Service Working Group in discussions on Para Transpo programs and services.

Conclusion

As the City continued to be in a state of emergency for the majority of 2021, we remained responsive and flexible in ensuring residents and staff were supported. We continue to recognize the effects that the pandemic has had on people with disabilities and older adults. Programs, services and supports, which are essential to persons with disabilities and older adults, have continued to be impacted, resulting in physical, social, mental and emotional impacts. The Accessibility Office will undoubtedly need to remain in its supportive stance for years to come in order to support these continued effects on vulnerable residents. We continue to envision and work towards a City that is fully inclusive for all residents, especially during this time of recovery and healing.