

Innovations in Transportation: Accessibility Plans

This resource highlights innovative strategies, ideas and programs to improve accessibility of public transportation services that have either been recommended or that are being implemented in communities across the province.

This resource is not a comprehensive listing of all such practices, but only those that were found by a review of plans that were either forwarded to the Accessibility Directorate, or located through the Internet using the search terms "Accessibility Plan" Transit.

If you would like the ideas and programs in your plan to be shared with other organizations, please forward your plans to:

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[Requirements for Transportation Providers under the ODA](#)

The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* ("ODA") requires public transportation organizations to prepare accessibility plans each year, consult with people with

disabilities in preparing the plans, and make the plans available to the public ([Section 14](#)).

There is an opportunity for municipalities, transit providers, and transportation service providers contracted to do work for municipalities to prepare joint plans ([Section 17](#)). Joint plans must meet certain requirements under the *Act*. In addition to consulting with the public and making the joint plan public, each organization included is required to specifically address in their joint plan:

- a report on the measures each organization has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;
- the measures in place to ensure that each organization assesses its proposals for by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- a list of the by-laws, programs, practices and services that each organization will review in the coming year in order to identify barriers to persons with disabilities;
- the measures that each organization intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

In the Ontario Human Rights Commission's April 2002 consultation report *Human Rights and Public Transit Services in Ontario* recommended the preparation of plans by transportation providers. See the full report at:

www.ohrc.on.ca/english/consultations/transit-consultation-report.shtml

Transit Accessibility Innovations

Publishing a customer-centred plan consistent with Ontario *Human Rights Code* principles and the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

GO Transit

GO Transit's plan is written for the customer in mind, as it is easy to follow and understand, and walks the reader through the various accessibility features of its operation and the identification of barriers that still remain. Its philosophy is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code principles and the purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, which is increasing the independence and full participation of people with disabilities in the life of the province of Ontario.

The following is an excerpt from the plan, which emphasises its philosophy and human rights principles:

- "GO Transit's overall direction in planning an accessible service has been developed to provide the same level of service to both disabled and ambulatory passengers in an integrated environment to the greatest degree possible. The approach is to offer enhanced equipment and station features, as well as policies and staff training, that will enable passengers who have mobility disabilities (for example, people who use a Wheeled Mobility Aid, such as a wheelchair or scooter) to use GO services on a "self-serve" basis, either independently or with the assistance of a travelling companion.

The 'self-serve' approach is designed to allow passengers with disabilities to be self-reliant and able to use the system at their own convenience with independence and dignity, an approach that is consistent with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*". (GO Transit Accessibility Plan – 2004, (Released September 2003) pg. 2).

Co-ordinating Planning Amongst Different Sectors/Departments

Co-ordination amongst various sectors and organizations in the community is crucial to ensure effective accessibility planning. The following are public transportation organizations that have taken co-ordination into consideration when planning:

Region of Waterloo

Co-ordinated Consultation

- The Region of Waterloo is working with the three existing Accessibility Advisory Committees in the area. The Region has appointed the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) to meet its requirements under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*. In addition, the Region has identified the Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Wilmot Township Accessibility Advisory Committee as bodies that will provide input and advice into its accessibility planning process. All three of these committees will provide advice on the plan and process to ensure that the Region has consultation from all of its geographic stakeholders.

The executive of the K-W (Kitchener-Waterloo) Barrier-Free Committee has been appointed to the GRAAC by the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo on an interim basis. Its task is to develop the terms of reference for a joint Accessibility Advisory Committee made up of local municipalities and public sector organizations with responsibilities under the *Act*.

As a result, Waterloo Region District School Board, the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, St. Mary's Hospital, Grand River Hospital, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, University of Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University and Conestoga College are all participating on this committee to receive consultation on their planning processes. The Region will work with this committee to seek advice on its accessibility plan, to receive input into its planning process and to coordinate areas of joint effort with the other organizations participating on the committee.

Co-ordinated Planning

- The Region of Waterloo notes that many areas of the Region have already been working toward removing barriers for people with disabilities; this will be the first time that a formalized Region-wide effort will be undertaken.

All Regional departments and divisions will work towards a common understanding of disability barriers and their removal. Over the next year, as part of the planning process at the Region, formal policy will be developed which will ensure that accessibility is considered when new initiatives, policies, by-laws, programs, practices and services are proposed, and when goods and services are purchased. As part of this policy, accessibility standards will be created which will be used to identify existing barriers and to help prevent future barriers.

The goal of the planning process will be to work towards achieving a barrier-free Region of Waterloo. The principles of the process are as follows:

- The plan will be representative of all programs, services, divisions and departments of the Region where appropriate.
 - The plan will encompass all of the identified barrier types (physical, architectural, information, communicational, attitudinal, technological and, policy/practice related).
 - The plan will be based on available resources: human, capital and financial.
 - The plan will follow consistent standards across the divisions and departments of the Region, where possible.
 - The plan will be created in consideration of the common interests of area municipalities where appropriate.
 - The plan will take into consideration advice received from Region Staff and Accessibility Advisory Committees. Regional Council will consider the plan for approval.

Regional Municipality of Niagara

- Members of the accessibility advisory committee recommended carrying out discussions with relevant stakeholders (e.g. Niagara Health System; other Accessibility Advisory committees) and considering the hiring of a Special Treatment Coordinator to coordinate information with the Niagara Health System (Land Ambulance transfers) to ensure efficiency and promote lower costs for specialized transit.

York Region

- York Region addressed barriers to accessibility of its public transit system by amalgamating municipal transit services in January 2001 into York Region Transit (YRT).
- A major barrier was that specialized transit customers were required to make transfers for inter-municipal trips within the Region. The Region introduced a no transfer policy for inter-municipal trips in York Region. As a result, customers can travel seamlessly across York Region, and across municipal boundaries without having to transfer.
- It introduced a fare zone system at a reasonable cost to allow customers to travel throughout the Region. Designated pick-up/drop-off points have been identified for all major trip origins and destinations (i.e. hospitals and malls) for specialized transit.

City of Thunder Bay

- The city takes a holistic view in improving accessibility in transportation for people with disabilities. This involves working with the following departments/organizations:

The Thunder Bay Police Service Board which licenses taxis

- The Police Board has approved twelve (12) non-transferable licenses for accessible taxicabs to cab companies. These special licences fall outside of the quota of regular taxi licenses. Local cab companies can apply to the Police Board for approval should they wish to increase their fleet with accessible taxis.

Parking Enforcement at bus stops, etc.

- The difficulty in providing enforcement in bus stops and designated disabled parking spaces is that the problem is site and time specific. Parking Authority enforcement staff who provide parking enforcement could provide the most immediate response to a problem. In cases where parking problems are created after regular office hours, the Thunder Bay Police are requested to provide assistance. The Parking Authority has the ability to provide enforcement on evenings/weekends to target specific problems.

Community Services Department – Recreation Division

- For any future plans for the location of new facilities, whether it is for recreation centres, pavilions, community centres or seniors' centres, the existing and possible future transit routes are taken into consideration.

Transportation & Works Department – Roads Division

- Priority sidewalk snow clearing routes include all sidewalks on Transit routes.

Transportation and Works – Engineering Division

- In the area of traffic signals, Engineering Division is attempting to phase in audible signals at some select intersections using input from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). Also in traffic signals, there is an increase in the number of mid-block pedestrian activated traffic signals. This has been developed in response to public concerns at some locations across busier arterial roads.
- A liaison review process has been established with the local PUSH Committee when major capital projects are being considered that effect pedestrian movement and access. All non-standard designs are reviewed with the local PUSH Committee on an individual basis.

Development Department – Planning Division

- The Official Plan also includes a Public Transportation policy section that promotes the use of public transit by encouraging higher density development in the vicinity of established urban transit routes; making provisions for people with disabilities to have the fullest access possible to the transit system; and encouraging that adequate provision for people with disabilities be made through related transportation systems.
- Other policies support the use of public transportation to improve public access to community services and facilities and require the residential development be appropriately served by public transit. The Plan also contains criteria that are used to evaluate proposals for new development. When

considering locations for new commercial uses, minor institutional uses and recreational uses such as variety stores, churches, schools, libraries, community centres and neighbourhood parks, the availability of existing or planned public transit services and the adequacy of the transportation system to accommodate any increased transit needs is evaluated.

- Currently, all plans of subdivisions and condominiums are circulated to the Transit Division for comment with respect to routing and the provision of potential transit stops. The location of pedestrian walkways, sidewalks, etc., is reviewed to enhance the placement of transit stops. The Transit Division also reviews various development applications and comments on the provision of transit service to major commercial facilities, such as shopping centres and large residential developments such as retirement homes.

York Region Transit, St. Catharines Transit, and the Toronto Transit Commission also identified the development applications process as a barrier to accessible transit:

- In **York region** there was a lack of a co-ordinated process to provide comments on development applications. The barrier was addressed through a site plan review process which includes conditions to provide access to transit services and facilities. It ensures that transit supportive comments are incorporated in the development review process.
- **St. Catharines Transit** identified as a barrier the fact that municipal planning for residential, commercial, and retail developments often do not take into account the needs of public transit and the requirements of its customers.
- If there are proposals for a private development direct connection to a **Toronto Transit Commission** (TTC) station or linking a TTC station to a major development adjacent to a station, TTC policy requires that TTC accessibility requirements must be met by the private developer. The areas around TTC stations are attractive to many types of development, and links between the stations and private sector development add significantly to the convenience of those traveling to and from the development. In this way, the private sector developers who will benefit from an accessible link to a TTC accessible link to a TTC accessible station contribute to the required access features and help the TTC achieve its accessibility objectives.

Roads

The following barriers were identified in **York Region**:

- One barrier involved the road design practice relating to pedestrians. Through the local municipality and community groups, the special needs of pedestrians will start to be identified in the planning, design stages, and construction of roads.
- Winter road maintenance practice relating to intersections. Will identify concerns and communicate with local municipalities regarding the winter maintenance of intersections.

Health and Social Services

York Region Transit

- Found a lack of co-ordinated transportation needs among health, and social service agencies and York Region Transit. It plans to improve co-ordination of transportation to programs. Establish partnerships with health and social service agencies and communicate needs and resources.

Sudbury Handi-Transit

- Found that its service hours do not meet the needs of Dialysis patients who are scheduled for three Dialysis shifts across 6 days of the week. Meetings have been held with the hospital's Dialysis unit to explain the scheduling difficulties for Handi-Transit passengers. The hospital will endeavour to schedule patients within the Handi-Transit service hours.

Recreation

Town of Ajax, The City of Pickering, Region of Durham, and the Ajax Pickering Transit Authority

- A transit partnership was developed for youth between transit and the Ajax and Pickering Recreation Departments. Through the teamwork of Transit staff and municipal Recreation staffs, safety for youngsters attending summer camps in municipal parks and Recreation Centres has been enhanced through the use of Recreation staff counsellors riding the camp service buses each day. Youngsters are tracked, attendance taken, safe bus travel practices are reviewed at the beginning of each camp group, and transit operators review special needs of specific children in each group. Youngsters using wheelchairs are now integrated with their peers on low-floor, accessible buses where in previous years they has been segregated through use of Specialized Services vehicles to transfer them to camps.
- The Ajax-Pickering Transit Authority has found that this "inclusive approach has proven to be a valued morale booster and enhances the camping transit experience for the children generally."

Airports

- The City of Hamilton consulted with the Hamilton Airport regarding the difficulties experienced by people embarking and disembarking from Hamilton International Airport, or passengers boarding from the tarmac with no lifts.
- There were also difficulties identified for passengers to obtain accessible taxis at the airport.

Working with neighbouring transit systems

- York Region Transit identified the lack of access to TTC subway stations as a barrier. York Region Transit is working on improving access to Toronto.
- It also identified inconsistent hours of operation between its Mobility Plus Service and conventional transit and will work to have improved access to transit services and more convenient hours of service.

- Oakville Transit sent written communications to neighbouring transit systems: Burlington Transit, GO Transit, Mississauga Transit and Peel TransHelp. Oakville Transit asked these transit systems to help identify any barriers to people with disabilities that arise when transferring between their service and Oakville Transit.
- It also established an integrated fare with Go Transit for patrons who wish to use the Oakville care-A-van to link with accessible GO Transit service.
- Oakville Transit is planning to review its bus schedules in relation to GO Transit bus and train schedules; identify connection times; determine if passengers who use a wheelchair or walk with difficulty have adequate time to make their connection to and from GO buses or trains and Oakville Transit.

Removing Barriers Affecting People with Visual Disabilities

The City of Welland

- Noted the need to install audio enunciators at the bus depot to help persons with low vision identify incoming buses.
- Cited the need for transit schedules to be available in a variety of formats, i.e. large print, Braille, and the availability of these different formats should be widely publicized.
- Found that some bus stops are located on uneven ground. An uneven surface is a hazard for people with low vision or mobility difficulties. The bus stop should have the same elevation as the sidewalk or walkway.

York Region Transit

- A barrier identified was traffic control signals that can accommodate people with disabilities to cross the street safely. The Region coordinated with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) so that certain intersections are equipped with audible traffic control signals to assist people with visual disabilities to cross intersections safely.
- The Region identified the font size of street name signs as a barrier. Larger signs with reader friendly fonts provide easier recognition of information.

St. Catharines Transit

- Identified appropriate signage as a barrier. The signs at the central bus depot may not be easily read by visually impaired persons, due to smaller print, insufficient contrast, and/or signs being located too high to be read from a sitting position, as in a wheelchair.
- Where curb cuts exist, they may be too low to provide a cue to a visually impaired person that he or she is about to step into the street.

City of Sault Ste. Marie

- Bus Stop signage was either missing, faded or not visible at night. Action taken was to replace all 700+ bus stop signs. Highly visible colours were used for visual recognition at night by Transit operators. Proactive annual review of

stop poles and signage at destinations used by low vision users will be ongoing.

Greater Sudbury Transit

- The city found that it is sometimes difficult for passengers with visual impairments to transfer between buses and move through crowds at the Transit Centre. As part of the 2003 training, a protocol was developed. Passengers may identify to the operator that they will require assistance at the Transit Centre and the operator will radio ahead and either a supervisor or the security staff will meet the bus and escort the passenger to his/her next platform. If Transit Centre staff is not available, the operator will assist the passenger.

Ajax Pickering Transit Authority

- The Authority plans to add Info-post Schedule boxes to more of its key transfer point locations. Schedules posted at these new locations are available to infrequent users or newcomers to the community, to better acquaint them to the transit system and the schedules are protected from the elements under glass cover. The Authority says that seniors in particular find these useful to assist their daily transit plans.

Removing Barriers Affecting People with Physical Mobility Disabilities

York Region Transit

- Countdown signals were installed that indicate the time left before the signal changes. The Region will conduct a Traffic control signal timing design practice. It will review complaints regularly regarding signal duration for pedestrians to complete the walk across intersections.

St. Catharines Transit

- St. Catharines Transit operates on a radial system. Therefore, all buses (except for one route) pass through the Transit Hub every trip to allow customers to make connections to other buses in the system. On an average weekday, St. Catharines Transit would accommodate 15,000 trips – the majority of which would pass through the Hub. Thus, it is very important to ensure this facility is accessible to people with disabilities.
- Areas identified as barriers at the Transit Hub include:
 - Connecting time: The time available for a connecting passenger to travel between buses may not be sufficient for some people with disabilities.
- Curb Cuts: The walking and wheeling path to and from bus stops does not always have curb cuts at corners.

Thunder Bay Transit

- Where possible, disabled parking spots will be located next to Transit bus stops.

- A strategy has been developed to deploy low floor buses on routes based on population density of seniors and people with a disability.

City of Cambridge

- Sidewalks – Transportation/Public Works Department has an ongoing program where the municipality provides ramp access at intersections when undertaking reconstruction or repairs. Ramp access has also been undertaken on a complaint basis, within approved budgets.
- Prepared an inventory of access ramps still required on municipal sidewalks.

City of Welland

- Identified the need for fold down armrests that would benefit people with balance difficulties.

City of St. Thomas

- Daily clearing of snow, etc. from disabled parking spaces was a recommendation from the AAC to City Council.

Corporation of the City of Guelph

- Development of curb ramp standards and consultation with the G-W Barrier Free Advisory committee.

Go Transit

- In the case of using GO rail service, upon arrival at the station, a barrier-free path to the station and platform is provided with directional signage. Barrier-free features have been added to stations, such as curb cuts, automatic door-openers, elevators, accessible ticket counters, pay phones, accessible washrooms, etc. Station attendants are available on a daily basis at all GO stations and bus terminals to sell tickets, provide service information and answer questions. Passengers are encouraged to contact GO Transit when planning trips and to confirm the hours of station attendant availability, since staffing times vary by location.

In the middle of the rail platform, a raised mini-platform is provided at a location that lines up with the accessible railcar (fifth railcar from the locomotive). When the train arrives and the doors open, a train crew member puts a portable bridge across the gap between the accessible railcar and the min-platform. The bridge is put down at every accessible station and is available for use by any passenger waiting to board or deboard the train.

Removing Physical Barriers

York Region Transit

- It will define what an accessible bus stop is and prepare an inventory of accessible and non-accessible bus stops in York Region. It will identify a process for improving on-street infrastructure including access to facilities.
- It will specify in construction contracts the need to use hard surfaces as temporary pedestrian paths until the new sidewalk is in place.

St. Catharines Transit

- The city identified the lack of bus shelters as a barrier. A passenger may have to wait for a bus as long as a half hour or more. During inclement weather, the absence of a shelter at the bus stop can be a barrier to using St. Catharines Transit and the Community Bus. Only 15 percent of the bus stops have shelters (150 out of 1,000).

City of Brockville

- By-law 95-93 – Sidewalks Care & Use of Sidewalks – it was recommended that section 3.4 be enforced and careful consideration be given when authorizing placement of material or goods on City sidewalks.

City of Oshawa

- Approximately 1,500 path-of-travel complaints (sidewalk misalignments, snow windows) are received annually and are dealt with on a 24-hour turnaround basis.
- City of Oshawa Patrol Technicians are self-described as the “eyes and the ears of the taxpayer” and provide responsive and individualized service to ensure safe, barrier-free travel for all citizens.

City of Welland

- One barrier identified is that some bus stops are located on uneven ground. An uneven surface is a hazard for persons with low vision or mobility difficulties. The bus stop should have the same elevation as the sidewalk or walkway.
- One recommendation was that each bus stop should have a sidewalk leading up to it on both sides, a curb cut within 10 m, and where necessary a curb cut should be provided directly opposite on the opposite side of the street.

Removing Barriers for People with Hearing Disabilities

City of Welland

- Identified that the Transit office should be equipped with a TTY system so that hard of hearing persons can obtain information about routes, schedules, etc.

Sarnia Transit

- Is exploring TTY options in the Care-a-Van area and will include this initiative in the 2004 operating budget for consideration. This will reduce or eliminate some communication barriers for customers when booking rides on the system for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, for people that are without speech, and for people who have difficulty communicating (i.e. after a stroke).

Greater Sudbury Transit

- Passengers who are Deaf, deafened, or hard-of-hearing do not realize that the bus operator is making an announcement. In the event of an emergency when buses are stopped or re-routed, individuals who have hearing or

cognitive disabilities may be at risk. As part of the 2003 training, a protocol was developed. Operators will stand-up, turn around and face passengers when making an announcement, particularly if the announcement is related to service delays or safety. In the case where service is re-routed or stopped, the operators will exit all passengers through the front door and verify that they are aware of the situation and have a transportation alternative. When necessary, the supervisor will be contacted to assist passengers with alternate transportation arrangements.

Removing Barriers for People with Cognitive Disabilities

Greater Sudbury Transit

- Passengers with cognitive disabilities as well as visual disabilities have difficulty knowing where the vehicle is en route. Greater Sudbury Transit operators ensure that passengers disembark at the appropriate stop whenever the passenger requests assistance in identifying their destination.
- Fareboxes now automatically count and display the fares paid as coins are deposited in the farebox. This assists passengers with cognitive disabilities who may have trouble paying their fares correctly.

Providing Greater Access to Citizen Participation in Elections

The City of Welland

- Extended Handi-Trans service during municipal elections.

Sarnia Transit

- Staff planned to increase the accessibility to municipal elections by providing one additional Care-a-Van vehicle specifically for the purpose of traveling to and from the polls on Election Day.
- To provide free conventional and specialized transit services on Election Day, in order to improve access for all people with disabilities wanting to travel to and from the polls.

City of Hamilton

- Barrier identified is additional transportation being required for persons with disabilities to attend regular polls on Election Day. City is investigating and organizing additional transportation required for people with disabilities to attend regular polls on Election Day.

Kingston Access Services

- Offered free transportation to and from the polls for the Municipal Elections on November 10, 2003.

Improving Planning Through Consultation

Public transportation organizations are required to consult with people with disabilities in preparing their accessibility plans. The following organizations have established unique methods of consulting to improve identification and thus removal of barriers:

City of Orillia (Transit)

- Regular driver's meetings to discuss service improvements, customer complaints and accessibility issues.

Sarnia Transit

- Consulting with people with disabilities to further identify barriers and solutions to removing the transit related barriers to and within the community. This may include consulting on barriers by assessing the service from "start of journey" to "end of journey" ie. Transit information, bus shelters/stops standards, terminals/amenities, buses, policies etc.

Halton Region

- The region is incorporating the concept of accessibility/diversity/ inclusiveness into its recently established Public Consultation Guiding Principles. The principle related to accessibility states, in part, that "barriers to involvement in consultation processes will be removed by providing common information, using plain language, choosing locations and scheduling activities so they are accessible, having consideration for special needs audiences and employing multiple traditional and innovative communications tools, formats and media."
- Development of a training course on public consultation that includes dealing with accessibility issues.

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

- The TTC has an extensive procedure in place for consulting with members of the public about the accessibility of its services and facilities. The TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT) is a fifteen-member volunteer committee, appointed by the Toronto Transit Commission. The terms of reference for ACAT require the committee members to be seniors, people with a range of disabilities, and people who have knowledge of accessible public transit issues. ACAT meets monthly and members of the public are welcome to attend and address the committee. ACAT meeting minutes and resolutions are provided to TTC Commissioners and to TTC senior management.

Subcommittees

ACAT has established a number of subcommittees and panels that meet to address specific standards or other projects. The subcommittees may call on the expertise of others from the community if they and staff determine specialized knowledge or training is required to fully assess some accessibility initiative. For example, the Design Review Subcommittee obtained the assistance of sight-impaired and blind people and mobility trainers in assessing the application of tactile, way-finding tiles at a station with a unique design, and signage with easily-identified pictograms to supplement text messages.

Agency and Advocates "Open Forum"

The TTC initiated an "Open Forum" for agencies and advocates involved with services for people with disabilities. Through this forum, agencies, and ACAT members are invited to exchange information and opinions with TTC staff, and identify ways of

improving accessible public transit in the City of Toronto. In 2002, there were 75 agencies, institutions, associations, ACAT members, and other advocates on the invitation list for the Open Forum.

Public Meetings and Outreach Efforts

Public meetings are held periodically to inform residents of significant service changes. The meetings are also used as an opportunity to discuss all accessible services offered in Toronto, to answer questions on the Wheel-Trans registration requirements, fares, vehicles, and station accessibility, or any other matters pertaining to transit. Commission staff and often members of ACAT make presentations to community organizations and institutions serving seniors and people with disabilities. In 2002, there were approximately 40 outreach efforts.

Newsletters

The mailing addresses of all registrants for the TTC's specialized transit services are collected as part of the registration process. The addresses are then used to mail newsletters outlining proposed service improvements, advertise public meetings, and invite comments from the registrants. In 2002, there were over 27,000 residents of Toronto on the mailing list for the newsletters. In addition, mailings went to 39 hospitals and medical centres serving seniors and people with disabilities, 28 group homes, 61 nursing homes, 9 adult development facilities, and 17 other institutions whose clients may have need of the TTC's accessible transit services.

London Transit

- Beginning in 1998, and repeated every two years, the registrants of the London parallel transit service are surveyed to determine their overall satisfaction with various aspects of the service as well as service expectations. In addition to specific questions about service, respondents are given the opportunity to list aspects of the service they would like to see improved, as well as the aspects of the service they like the best. The surveys have resulted in several policy and procedural changes to the service. For example, the booking window was shortened from seven days to three days in 1999. Further, in the 2002 survey, respondents identified the following as being most important:
 - on-time reliability (50%)
 - trip availability (36%)
 - and length of time on vehicle (14%)

The information has been used when setting system parameters and determining where budget monies should be allocated (i.e. more service versus a more reliable service). The survey will continue to be completed on a bi-annual basis.

North Bay Transit

- North Bay Transit ensured that it consulted with a wide and diverse group of agencies and organizations with expertise about the full range of disabilities, including:
 - The Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

- North Bay Literacy Council
- NDSSAB - Nipissing District Social Services Administration Board
- Veterans Affairs Canada
- Workplace Safety Insurance Board
- Hearing Aid Centre
- Near North Hearing Care
- Dr. C.J. Ranger Mental Health Clinic
- Algonquin Child & Family Services
- Hospitals: N.B. General & Psychiatric
- Nipissing Association for Disabled Youth
- North Bay D.A.A.Y. Centre
- Ontario March of Dimes
- North Bay Community Housing Initiatives
- PHARA - Physically Handicapped Adults' Rehabilitation Association-Nipissing-Parry Sound
- Special Needs Resource Centre (Canadore College & Nipissing University)
- Near North District School Board
- Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board
- The Canadian Hearing Society
- Voice for Hearing Impaired Children
- AIDS Committee of North Bay & Area
- Alzheimer's Society
- North Bay Golden Age Club
- CNIB – Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- North Bay & District Association for Community Living
- Canadian Hearing Society
- The Canadian Mental Health Association
- Arthritis Society
- Cassellholme

- M.S. Society of Canada
- PEP – People for Equal Partnership in Mental Health

Improving Accessibility Through Audits

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

- Members of the TTC's Accessibility Advisory Committee have also helped staff by undertaking audits of Easier Access stations and assessments of accessible services. The audits help to determine if the accessible features at stations have been implemented as designed and are functioning as intended. The "Secret Shopper" assessments of existing accessible services help identify opportunities to improve the quality of service to TTC customers in general, but more specifically for seniors and people with disabilities. A new program is being established where ACT members will use incident reports, trip logs, and more-detailed surveys to document their observations on TTC accessible services. The completion of these survey forms will help ACT members advise on the performance of accessible services and areas where further improvement is required.

Improving Accessibility Through Training

Thunder Bay Transit

- Transit operators (conventional transit) participated in Easier Access Training and Operator Training for specialized transit systems. Sensitization training for Transit personnel is also part of the Easier Access Training. Transit Operators have also had Customer Service training and Diversity training.

HAGI Transit (Thunder Bay Parallel Transit)

- HAGI Transit drivers are required to hold either a B or E license. Training for new operators is done in house and constitutes a 4-day on-the-job training consisting of reviewing written documentation on the history and philosophy of the organization and a comprehensive review of various disabilities. The Manager then reviews operational policies and procedures and takes the individual on a sample route, having the person drive the vehicle and instructs the person on the safe operation of the lift, wheelchair handling and the Q-Strait tie-down system. Drivers are then assigned to a driver trainer who takes them on their regular routes letting the trainee observe and assist in the loading and unloading of passengers.

Kingston Access Services (KAS)

- All drivers receive five days of training prior to their job commencement, a half-day of which is an education session where they experience being in a wheelchair. Drivers also receive training in safety, courtesy, disability awareness, and first aid.

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

- The TTC provides both technical and sensitivity training to its staff in order to facilitate the TTC's move towards a high level of accessible transit service. The TTC certifies its employees and recertifies existing ones through its

training programs. Accessibility and sensitivity issues are built into the training curriculum, and training is systematically delivered and tracked. Approximately 3000 surface operators, 500 subway operators, 350 collectors, and 200 route supervisors receive both vehicle-specific training and broader sensitivity training. All new and transferring bus operators are required to take a course for each type of accessible bus operated out of the Division to which they are assigned. In addition, all new employees receive two days of training on Customer Service and Professional Communication that addresses people with disabilities. There is also a mandatory recertification process for all operators and collectors that includes similar material on accessibility issues. A new recertification cycle is being implemented for street car operators in 2004 and for bus operators in 2006.

Curricula for these programs are reviewed regularly and updated based on actual customer service reports to ensure that the training content accurately reflects real-life situations and customer needs.

In addition, to the extensive training provided to all TTC operators, employees operating buses from Wheel-Trans take a further 10-day training program. Accessible taxi drivers under contract to Wheel-Trans service will receive an additional day of training in addition to their basic training.

York Region Transit

- Will ensure that new operating contracts for conventional service include driver (sensitivity) training regarding customer service to passengers with disabilities (i.e. monitor effectiveness).

Removing Barriers for Transit Employees with Disabilities

London Transit

- London Transit has distinguished itself in its Accessibility Plan by comprehensively considering barriers to its employees and potential employees who have disabilities. The development of London Transit's accessibility plan included a review of London Transit's employment policies, procedures and practices to identify any barriers to people with disabilities. The review considered:
 - internal postings and processes for promotions;
 - external recruitment procedures and practices;
 - use of agencies to assist in recruitment efforts.

The components noted above were reviewed in light of the ODA, the Ontario Human Rights Code (including best practice information from the OHRC's website, and the input of identified employees with disabilities). As a result of the review, procedures and practices were updated and then reviewed by external legal counsel as an additional step.

York Region Transit

- Improved the working environment for employees with allergic reactions to scents. An air cleaner was installed in the office; and staff working in

proximity to the staff members was advised to eliminate the use of scented products.

- An employee had difficulty reading the colour test result because of colour blindness. An alternative test method was identified to solve the problem.

Increasing the Number of Accessible Taxicabs

Municipal Act, 2001: Section 150(8)(e)(v)

Section 150 of the [*Municipal Act, 2001*](#) allows municipalities if they choose, to impose conditions as a requirement of obtaining, continuing to hold or renewing a licence, including conditions, requiring the premises or part of the premises of the business to be accessible to persons with disabilities.

As an example, municipalities could require Taxicab companies with a fleet of cabs to require a certain number to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Thunder Bay Airport

- The Thunder Bay Airport offered a contract to one cab company to have the exclusive right to park at the airport to pick up passengers. In order to receive the contract, the airport stipulated that the successful company must have available one accessible cab to transport people with disabilities.

Improving Customer Service

HAGI Transit/City of Thunder Bay

- HAGI Transit utilizes accessible taxis to offset peak demand times and to provide a back up in emergency situations.
- In 1997, HAGI Transit started a program called Taxi Scrip. The Taxi Scrip program is for people who are eligible to use HAGI Transit, or are registered with another parallel transit service. Program users simply purchase Taxi Scrip coupons from the HAGI Transit office, book service directly with participating taxi companies, and pay with Taxi Scrip coupons.

Region of Waterloo

- In order to allow for more volume and spontaneity for Mobility Plus customers (parallel transit service) (traditionally trips must be booked several days in advance), customers will be provided with Taxi Scrips to provide them with a 50% subsidy for use for the commercial taxi services.

City of Welland

- It was recommended that when a passenger is returned home, the driver should wait until he/she observes that someone is there to meet the passenger or until the passenger is safely inside his/her home.

St. Catharines Transit

- In 2000, the Paratransit System introduced two Paravans, which are modified vans that will travel door-to-door to pick-up customers who are unable to board conventional buses, yet do not require any ambulatory aids.

City of Guelph

- Free parking pass for persons with a disability
- Subsidized bus passes for adults with a disability
- PAL (attendant) program on Guelph Transit

PAL stands for “Personal Assistant for Leisure Activities.” It is available to anyone who has a disability and requires assistance to attend City of Guelph recreation programs. The PAL card is issued to the person with the disability and allows him or her to be accompanied by a friend, relative, support worker, etc., at no additional cost. The PAL does not have to be the same person every time.

City of Mississauga

- Developed marketing plan for “Accessible Transit Rider’s Guide.”

City of Sault-Ste. Marie

- Para Bus Service is not available during labour disruptions. The accessibility plan recommends a policy change to deem Para Bus service as an essential service to be available during labour disruptions, and to communicate the change to the public in conjunction with the City’s Communication Officer in print and other means. A precedent has been set by other communities (e.g. Toronto).

City of Ottawa/London Transit

- Ottawa’s *Helping You Get on Board* service and London’s *Get on Board* program both offer free service for customers with disabilities who travel on the accessible, conventional transit service. Ottawa provides free service for those customers using a wheelchair, scooter or walker. London provides free service for all registrants of its specialized transit service when boarding accessible, conventional transit during non-peak hours of operation (9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to end of service every weekday, and all hours during weekends and statutory holidays).

Region of Waterloo

- As a method to encourage Mobility PLUS users to try the low floor buses, all registered users are able to ride the conventional transit buses at no cost.

City of Ottawa

- An optional-use retractable belt has been installed in low-floor transit buses to increase the comfort level and stability for customers using wheelchairs and scooters.
- An Accessible Transit Specialist has been hired to increase training, consultation, and planning work that Transit Services carries out for transit service for customers with disabilities.
- An Accessible Transit hotline has been established to help identify accessible routes and stops and help with trip planning.

- A direct line to book Para Transpo service at the City Hall Info desk.
- Expanding Para Transpo to rural areas.
- Making 25 Accessible Taxicab licenses available (with 13 accessible taxis now in service).

The Community Bus

St. Catharines Transit/Oakville Transit

- In 1991, both St. Catharines Transit and Oakville Transit introduced the Community Bus, which is a service designed especially for seniors and people with disabilities. Community Bus Service is provided using small, low floor, fully accessible buses. To minimize the need for walking, the routes come as close as possible to apartment buildings, senior residences, and medical buildings and shopping centres. The routes are designed to bring the bus close to the passenger, and to operate at a lower average speed than regular transit, to allow more time for slow moving passengers to board and alight, and to allow time for the driver to assist a passenger when necessary. St. Catharines Transit operates two Community Bus Routes in addition to its 30 regular transit routes, while Oakville Transit operates four Community Bus Routes in addition to its 30 regular transit routes.

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

- The TTC, through Wheel-Trans, services four Community Bus routes. The routes are operated on a fixed route and provide regularly-scheduled accessible service. They operate with regular TTC fares, and passengers have transfer privileges to other TTC services. The services differ from other TTC routes because they have been designed largely to serve the local needs of seniors and people with disabilities, and they use smaller Wheel-Trans buses. The small size of the buses allows them to enter the driveways of facilities, such as nursing homes, where it might not be possible for a full-size bus to operate.

Wheel-Trans registrants are able to use the Community Bus services without booking a trip in advance, allowing for opportunities for spontaneous travel and for more trips than passengers could make using Wheel-Trans services alone. Passengers may also travel with an unlimited number of attendants, friends or family members as they would on other TTC accessible conventional transit but cannot on regular WheelTrans service.

London Transit

- London Transit's accessibility achievements include development of a variety of service options for people with disabilities who use the parallel transit system. These include:
 - medical shuttles
 - workshop shuttles
 - trip planning

- o travel training

Some of the service options will assist Londoners with disabilities to more readily use accessible conventional transit. Others, such as expanding community bus, introducing flex routes and shuttles, are being studied for potential development to enhance service options for those who cannot avail themselves of accessible conventional transit, yet do not require lift equipped van transportation. These service options will mesh with a revised eligibility assessment for applicants for specialized transit service and the new focus on matching the individual's needs to the correct service option.

Brokerage System

London Transit

Paratransit costs approximately ten times per passenger to operate than conventional transit. Paratransit operators face increasing demand for services, with limited resources. London Transit has been able to save costs and provide better service through the operation of a brokerage system and customer surveys.

- In 1998, the London Transit Commission established a brokerage operation to implement its parallel transit service. The brokerage is responsible for call taking, customer service, scheduling and dispatching. Since 1998, under the brokerage operation, eligible passenger trips have increased from 122,000 to 146,000. In addition, other policy changes have been adopted, e.g. reducing booking window from 7 to 3 days, all of which provide a balance between more trips, service quality and resource availability.

Timmins Transit

- Timmins Transit seeks to utilize its current fleet of low floor buses in a way which best promotes accessibility. While none of its routes are designated as accessible, low floor buses are utilized as much as possible, providing the optimum service during the evening and weekend hours.

During all hours, customers are encouraged to contact the Transit office or Dispatcher by telephone approximately one hour in advance of their desired travel time. The Dispatcher on duty will ensure that a low floor bus is used on the requested route at the requested time. Generally, in cases where a transfer to another bus is required, the Dispatcher will arrange to provide a "one bus" trip, allowing the person using the mobility aid to complete his/her trip on the same vehicle. (The Timmins Transit conventional route network is geared on a timed transfer system where most buses meet at the midtown terminal every 30 or 60 minutes. Other routes that do not serve the terminal directly connect with a major trunk route that does.) In this manner, the system is able to provide nominal full accessibility to people using mobility aids.

Only staff and regular users of the system knew of this process of assigning low floor buses in conventional fixed route services. Otherwise, the arrival of a low floor bus was somewhat of a "hit or miss" proposition.

This "request bus" program was formalized by communicating this information to customers through direct personal contact and printed information.

Parallel Transit Services that Aim to Resemble as Closely as Possible the Service Provided by Conventional Transit

If your community offers both parallel and conventional transit, you may wish to ensure that the parallel system is providing comparable service to that which is provided by the conventional system. Comparable service means that people with disabilities have "equal opportunity" to benefit from services as do people who don't have disabilities.

For example:

- Comparable hours of service
- Comparable fares
- Comparable service to geographical areas
- Comparable waiting times
- Comparable levels of service

Communities that seek to achieve these goals include the following:

Kingston Access Services (Kingston Access Bus (KAB))

KAB has accomplished the following:

- Throughout its 36 years of operation, KAB has transported people with physical disabilities from door to door, without regard to trip purpose, on a first come first served basis.
- Harmonized specialized transit fares with the adult fare of Kingston Transit, by significantly decreasing the specialized transit fares.
- Similar hours of service as Kingston's Conventional Transit.
- Since 1998, it has serviced the rural areas of the City of Kingston to remove any geographical barriers to people with disabilities within city boundaries.
- KAB is committed to the maximization of investment in Kingston Transit's accessible transit initiatives to encourage a shift from KAB to Kingston Transit. The goal to eventually shift riders to conventional transit is consistent with human rights principles as the Ontario Human Rights Commission recommends that transit service providers set as a service goal full integration and accessibility of services, including both accessible conventional services, and if necessary, comparable, dignified parallel services.

City of Brockville

- The City of Brockville Accessibility Advisory Committee has recommended a ticket incentive program for Para Transit Riders, comparable to the program in place for Conventional Transit riders.

Making the Plan Available to the Public

Under the ODA, organizations are required to make their accessibility plans available to the public. North Bay Transit is committed to making the plan available through

multiple communications so that as many people will be able to access the plan as possible.

North Bay Transit

- As resources allow, North Bay Transit will release its accessibility plans to the public through the following methods:
 - Posting the Plan at the Transit Office, Public Works and at City Hall
 - Notices in the local newspaper
 - Flyers on our vehicles indicating that the Plan is available upon request
 - Copies of the Plan through the City of North Bay website
 - Copies of the Plan made available at Transit Office, City Hall and at our Information Centres

Links to Transit Planning Resources

OCTA Transit Accessibility Blue Print

This resource, prepared by the Ontario Community Transportation Association assists transit providers with preparing accessibility plans under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. To request a copy, contact OCTA at 1-877-762-6282 or at info@octa.on.ca.

Best Practice Manual: A Practical Guide to Bus Service Information

www.its.usyd.edu.au/bus_and_coach_themes/BestPractice.pdf

This publication, from Australia is a practical guide to benefit older people and people with disabilities, including other travelers who also experience difficulties in accessing or understanding the information needed to fully utilize public transport.

Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport

www.transport.nsw.gov.au/abouttrans/access-disability-standards.html

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport and accompanying Guidelines under Australia's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) were tabled in the House of Representatives on 19 August 2002. This web page provides access to the standard, technical guidelines, FAQs, regulation impact and background information.

Inclusive Mobility - A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure

www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_mobility/documents/page/dft_mobility_503282.hcsp

The "right of access" is included in recent British legislation outlining its commitment to the civil rights of people with disabilities. Since 1996, it has been unlawful for service providers to treat people with disabilities less favourably than other people for a reason related to their disability. These requirements apply to facilities and services in the pedestrian environment and in transport related infrastructure: bus stations and stops, airports and rail stations and are being phased in from 1996-2004.

Let's Plan on It! A Guide to Providing Transportation Services in Rural Areas for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

www.infratrans.gov.ab.ca/INFTRA_Content/docType55/Production/pol294.htm

This practical guide from Alberta, outlines how to make plans for transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities in their community. The topics include: analyzing existing services; making service decisions; staffing; selecting and maintaining vehicles; measuring performance; managing the service and more.

Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)

www.dptac.gov.uk/

This resource from the United Kingdom provides an overview of the role of DPTAC and the activities of its working groups. It focuses primarily on accessible transport modes, including air travel, buses, ferries, motoring, rail, taxis and walking and also includes a section on the built environment.

The site contains an extensive number of resources and guidelines.

Training Transit Operators and Supervisors on Calling Out Stops: Final Report and Training Modules

projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_Newsletter_mainwint_stopcall

An ADA Stop Announcement Program. This report is intended to serve as a guide for transit agencies and consumer groups on the critical elements needed for developing an effective program for achieving an ADA Stop Announcement Program Needs Assessment; the elements that are needed for developing and carrying out a model training program including the training curriculum for transit operators on calling out stops; and a Consumer Advocacy Guide for monitoring the program's effectiveness.

Removing Barriers - A City of Ottawa Snapshot

ottawa.ca/city_hall/snapshots/accessibility_en.html

Accessibility initiatives of the City of Ottawa are outlined.

Going Places

www.cnib.ca/eng/publications-resources/publications/accessibility/index.htm

The recommendations describe ways to improve terminal design and manage construction and renovation projects to ensure that transportation terminals are accessible and safe for travelers who are blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind. The resource provides a checklist of design principles and describes design features that are of importance to persons who are blind or visually impaired such as entrances, lighting, ticket counters, facilities, doors, halls, signage and information systems. Contains illustrations and bibliography.