

2022 Accessibility Status Report



Region of Waterloo

Region of Waterloo Accessibility Plan Status Update

In 2018, Regional Council approved the Region of Waterloo's Multi-Year Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion plan (2018-2022). The plan outlines the Region's strategy over five years to identify, prevent, and remove barriers in Regional programs and services for people with disabilities. This five-year plan was created in consultation with staff from across the Region, the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC), as well as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder group.

In this report, you will find updates on the actions taken in 2022 to meet the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), along with broader actions focused on diversity and inclusion. Under the AODA, there are specific planning requirements for transit organizations. The status report for Grand River Transit's multi-year accessibility plan, focused on fulfilling the AODA transportation requirements, is included in Appendix C of this document.

This is the final year of our current Multi-Year Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion plan (2018-2022). The new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP; 2023-2027) will focus on improving accessibility and addressing AODA requirements to remove barriers and improve Regional programs, services and facilities. The 2023-2027 MYAP will be available for Council approval early in the year in 2023. Diversity, equity and inclusion plans will be led by other program areas and departments at the Region.

Accessibility at the Region of Waterloo

The Region of Waterloo is committed to creating inclusive programs and services, served by a diverse workforce, that meet the needs of our growing and changing community. By removing barriers to Regional services and programs and in the workforce, we recognize the strength that comes with difference, embracing new ideas and perspectives.

This commitment to diversity and inclusion will be realized through processes that engage and support employees, and create enhanced customer experiences for the communities we serve. We do this because enhanced service experiences with the Region of Waterloo improves the quality of life for the members of our community, and helps to secure their trust and confidence in the work that we do. By identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in the accessibility of our services, the Region is achieving our commitment to service excellence.

The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee

Public participation and consultation is an important feature of the work we do at the Region of Waterloo. Regional staff rely on feedback and input from the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) to ensure we are working towards our vision of inclusive services. A key role of GRAAC is to advise Council and staff members on

the accessibility of Regional services, programs, and facilities. Members of GRAAC are appointed by Regional Council and by the Councils for the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, and the Townships of Wellesley, Woolwich, Wilmot and North Dumfries, all of whom seek the advice of GRAAC in matters of accessibility.

In 2022, the Region consulted with GRAAC on the following items:

- Affordable housing
- Accessible taxis
- Active Transportation Advisory Committee Terms of Reference
- The Region's new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP; 2023-2027)
- Digital transformation and digital services

In addition to the items above, representatives from GRAAC sit on other Regional committees and groups like the Accessibility Fees for Taxis Committee, and the Active Transportation Advisory Committee.

Accessibility Status Report

The 2022 Accessibility Status Report includes the Region of Waterloo's commitment to removing barriers to our programs and services and the progress we have made on actions to meet the AODA. The action plans are focused on four areas:

- Welcoming and accessible spaces
- Access to services
- Communication and engagement
- Inclusive workplace

Each of the four areas contains actions to meet our requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, as part of the AODA. More details are provided in the appendices:

- [Appendix A](#): Overview of Accessibility Actions in 2022, organized by the above 4 areas
- [Appendix B](#): 2021-2022 Grand River Transit Accessibility Plan
- [Appendix C](#): Design of Public Spaces Standard Compliance Summary

Reviewing and Monitoring the Plan

The Region of Waterloo Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is reviewed and updated at least once every five years. An annual status report is completed to document the progress and measures taken to implement the Region's plan and meet the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, a component of the AODA.

Feedback

We welcome feedback on the 2022 Accessibility Status Report, and on the accessibility and diversity of our programs, services, and facilities. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please contact us.

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The 2022 Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion Status Report is available online (www.regionofwaterloo.ca/accessibility) in accessible PDF. Alternate formats, including full-text Word and paper copies of the 2022 Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion Status Report are available upon request at no charge from:

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Appendix A: Overview of Accessibility Actions in 2022

Welcoming and Accessible Spaces

In progress / ongoing

Lead	Action	Notes
CAO's Office	Implement the Welcoming Spaces Assessment tool in the Region of Waterloo's public-facing buildings to ensure that the greatest proportion of people who need or want to use Regional services, can access those services in a respectful way.	Progress has been made with design and next steps are required to install signage across Region's public-facing buildings. Spaces will continue to be monitored, evaluated and updated by the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) team in Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC).
CAO's Office	<p>Train staff to support welcoming spaces: location of the barrier free washrooms, quiet rooms, signage.</p> <p>Get input on the Welcoming Spaces Assessment tool from the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder group.</p>	Training and support for staff is ongoing and will be maintained by the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) team in Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC).
CAO's Office	Post information about amenities in Regional facilities on the Region's website.	The Region's website will be reviewed as part of broader digital transformation initiatives across the organization, with accessibility built into the review to ensure information about our services is available to the community.
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Review the Region of Waterloo Accessible Design Standards and complete deferred sections.	Action to be included in the new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023-2027) as part of the broader strategy.
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Develop and deploy training on the Region of Waterloo Accessible Design Standards.	Action to be included in the new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023-2027) as part of the broader strategy.

Lead	Action	Notes
Facilities	Audit Regional facilities for accessibility, prioritizing facilities with the highest occupancy and public visitors.	<p>The following buildings have had onsite accessibility audits completed.</p> <p>2017 - 150 Frederick, 99 Regina, 150 Main, 20 Weber, Airport Terminal, GRT Ainslie, GRT Charles, Kinsmen Children’s Centre</p> <p>2018 - Edith Mac Children’s Centre, Cambridge Children’s Centre, Christopher Children’s Centre, WRES Admin Building, Airport Operations Centre, Sunnyside Home, Supportive Housing, Linwood Library, New Hamburg Library, Wellesley Library</p> <p>2021 – 20 Weber, Ayr Library, Baden Library, Bloomingdale Library, Elmira Library, Library HQ, Linwood Library, New Dundee Library, New Hamburg Library, St. Clements Library, St. Jacobs Library, Wellesley Library, Ken Seiling Museum, Schneider Haus, McDougall Cottage, Curatorial Centre, Doon Village, GRT (Strasburg, Chandler, Ainslie, Fairway, Conestoga, Cambridge Station), Waterloo Landfill (Administration Building, Education Centre, Recycling Centre, Glasgow Operations Centre), Cambridge Landfill (Administration Building),</p> <p>2022 – Gaol & Governor’s House, 99 Regina, 150 Frederick, Operations Centre, WRESTRC Administration Building, 150 Main, WRPS (North Division, Central Division, South Division, Reporting Centre, Headquarters), Safety Village (main building), WRH (74 Church, 50 Chalmers, 143 Concession, 339</p>

Lead	Action	Notes
		<p>Bishop, 168 Grand, 70 Mulberry, 778 Walter, 9 & 10 Westgate, 47 & 65 Holborn, 1115 Henry)</p> <p>2023 (Planned) – 150 Frederick, Paramedic Services (North & South HQ), Mannheim Water Treatment Plant, WRH (95 Concession, 119 College, 84 Wilson, 233 & 239 Franklin, 19 Snyder, 8 Wyatt, 210 Fourth, 518 Greenfield, 215 Lorraine, 145 Overlea, 65 Paulander, 335 Regina)</p>

Access to Services

In progress / ongoing

Lead	Action	Notes
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Complete implementation of the Region's interpreter and translation guidelines.	Interpreter and translation guidelines will be included as part of building a client experience framework to improve service delivery.
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Develop online training modules to coincide with the launch of Volunteer Guidelines, including reference to accessible customer service training for volunteers.	Volunteer Management Policy/Program includes reference to accessible customer service training for volunteers.

Communication and Engagement

In progress / ongoing

Lead	Action	Notes
CAO's Office	Develop processes to collect, store and share data about diversity.	Data collection on diversity and demographics is ongoing across the organization and guidelines are updated regularly to reflect best practices.
Creative Multimedia Services	Update Creative Services' intake process to make it easier for staff to request accessible videos.	Process will be reviewed as part of the Region's digital transformation that builds accessibility into the digital user experience.
Creative Multimedia Services	Deploy online training on creating accessible videos.	Action to be included in the new Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP; 2023-2027) to explore options for resourcing.
Corporate Communications	Review and implement changes to the Information and Communication standard upon enactment.	No changes to the standard in past 12 months; monitoring for future changes.
Corporate Communications	Ensure the Region's corporate websites are accessible and compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.	A third party AODA certified consultant was engaged to review and remediate issues to bring all sites into compliance. All primary ROW websites were remediated to achieve targets for compliance in 2022. Filed report for 2022 that stated compliance targets were met.

Lead	Action	Notes
Corporate Communications	Provide AODA training to Communications and Administrative staff with responsibilities for managing website content.	In addition to ongoing accessibility training offered online to all staff, a live, virtual AODA training for accessibility, including plain language and PDF remediation, was provided to all staff in 2022. A certified AODA consultant and trainer provided two days of training, followed by a supplementary session for follow up questions and support. A separate training session was arranged with the same consultant to provide training on the Region's Engage platform for staff with access to the platform.
Corporate Communications	Strengthen awareness and education of corporate accessible information and communication standards with an intranet support page and intranet promotions.	Intranet support page completed and refreshed, education and awareness is ongoing.
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Create an accessibility resource centre, where staff can access software to create accessible content, and assistive technologies to do user testing on digital content and websites.	The Region is exploring digital transformation for services that will build accessibility into the user experience.

Inclusive Workplace

Complete

Lead	Action	Notes
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Conduct a learning event on serving customers with invisible disabilities.	Completed and ongoing training will be offered through the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Team in HRC.

Lead	Action	Notes
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Determine approach to consult diverse employees on corporate Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.	Ongoing work will be maintained by the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Team in HRC.
Human Resources and Citizen Services (HRC)	Determine strategy to collect data about the diversity of the workforce and use the information to inform recruitment and retention processes and inclusion initiatives.	Ongoing work will be maintained by the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Team in HRC.
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Benchmark audit of disability management/return to work accommodation program to identify areas for improvement to inform a three-year plan.	A full needs assessment was conducted in July 2022 on the Disability Management, Work Accommodation and Benefits program. A report was provided to the Commissioner of Human Resources and Citizen Service and Disability Management is currently implementing many of the recommendations.

In progress / ongoing

Lead	Action	Notes
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Conduct a learning event to support the implementation of the interpreter and translation guidelines.	Included as part of evolving the Client Experience Framework occurring in 2023.
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Create a manual for managers which will consolidate all policies and procedures related to employment equity, accommodation, etc.	Consultant has been engaged to review all HRC policies to ensure they are reflective of best practices.

Lead	Action	Notes
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Launch “the Working Mind” across the organization to educate staff about mental health in the workplace.	Throughout 2021 and into 2022, GRT conventional bus operators participated in The Working Mind – employee module. The training is embedded in the Transit Professional Operator Training (TPOT) so all newly hired operators are trained as part of their onboarding. There is a plan to further expand the training to all staff.
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Keep staff updated on changing legislation (e.g. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act).	Ongoing
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Revise and refresh tools and resources related to inclusion available on the employee portal.	Ongoing work will be maintained by the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Team in HRC.
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Review and update interview and selection tools to incorporate best practices for recruiting and retaining skilled, diverse staff.	Ongoing
Human Resources and Citizen Service (HRC)	Develop cognitive demands analysis for identified high-risk jobs.	Completed for paramedics, bus operators, call center representatives.

Appendix B: 2021-2022 Grand River Transit Accessibility Plan

Section I - Executive Summary

The Grand River Transit (GRT) Accessibility Plan is normally developed through input from customers via the customer contact system and the Grand River Transit Business Plan and the MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Business Plan's public consultation meetings. Regional Council has approved the Business Plans. The Region's Grand River Accessible Advisory Committee (GRAAC) and the Specialized Transit Services Committee (STSC) are also consulted on related plans and initiatives.

Grand River Transit is committed to:

1. The continuous development of accessible public transit services;
2. Working toward ensuring its facilities are barrier free;
3. Working toward providing barrier free employment and employment opportunities; and
4. Establishing communication services that respect the abilities of all customers, employees and the public at large.

In June 2019 the Region of Waterloo launched a new light rail rapid transit service called ION, which has proven highly successful. The light rail line has 19 accessible stations which are served by 14 low floor accessible trains.

The accessibility activities undertaken in previous years are reflective of the continued progress in advancing to the goal of full accessibility in transit services. GRT's commitment is based on making balanced, measured and sustainable progress, consistent with its business planning process and financial and operational capacity. In 2020, GRT retained a consultant to conduct a comprehensive service review of MobilityPLUS to set a course for modernization and transformation in line with industry best practices and address the gaps, inefficiencies and challenges of the specialized service. The review has produced a number of recommendations that were implemented in 2021 and further changes pertaining to dialysis and overall prioritization of travel were introduced in 2022, now ensuring all booked travel is first come, first serve. These changes were intended for Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) alignment and operational efficiency.

In addition to providing an update on prior year's activity, the following report includes a work plan that addresses all regulatory requirements as established under the AODA. Linking the accessibility plan initiatives to the GRT business planning process provides the mechanism to chart progress in identifying and removing existing barriers, safeguarding against any new barriers being created and finally ensuring that accessibility gains are sustainable.

Neil Malcolm,
Acting Director, Transit Services
Region of Waterloo - Grand River Transit

Section II - Grand River Transit Services Profile

Grand River Transit provides three public transit services; namely, light rail transit, conventional transit and specialized transit services. Their respective profiles are as follows:

ION LRT Service – 2021 Profile

Type of Service: Light Rail

Service Area: Central Transit Corridor – Kitchener and Waterloo

Hours of Service: Generally same as conventional service.

ION LRT service commenced on June 21, 2019. ION light rail travels between Conestoga Station in Waterloo and Fairway Station in Kitchener, with a total of 19 stations along the route. At Fairway Station, ION light rail connects to ION bus (Route 302) and travels to the Ainslie Street Terminal in Cambridge.

Stage 2 ION will see ION bus converted to light rail, creating a seamless light rail route that stretches from Cambridge to Waterloo.

Conventional Transit Service –2021/2022 Service Profile

Item	Description
Type of Service	Fixed route – primarily a grid network within Kitchener-Waterloo and a modified radial service within Cambridge
Service Area	Primarily within the Region of Waterloo’s Urban Service Area boundaries. Limited service extends into two Townships
Hours of Service	Monday to Friday 6:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Saturday 6:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Sunday 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Statutory Holiday 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Promotional/seasonal extended service on various routes during the year.
Annual pass. trips -2021	In 2021, ridership was 9.7 million; 2022 ridership is anticipated to be about 17 million with COVID-19 subsiding.
Annual revenue service hours 2021	805,229 (837,440 total vehicle hours)
Annual revenue kilometers 2021	16,733,612 (17,798,866 total vehicle kilometres)
Number of routes 2021	50 conventional service routes in total, all of which are utilizing low floor buses; 5 BusPLUS routes (low floor vehicles) and 1 Light Rail Route; 55 identified as having bike racks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43 local bus routes • 7 express routes

Item	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Light Rail route • 5 BusPLUS routes: <p>BusPLUS services are provided in low demand areas such as new neighbourhoods, rural communities or low-density employment areas. BusPLUS services use a small bus to pick up and drop off customers at designated BusPLUS stops. BusPLUS vehicles are anticipated to be equipped with audio-visual equipment in 2023.</p>

Specialized Transit Services –2021/2022 Service Profile (Urban Service Area) MobilityPLUS

Item	Description
Type of Service	<p>Shared Ride – Door to Door – Pre-Booked Service</p> <p>Registrants are able to book trips same day to seven days in advance. Trips, with the exception dialysis trips, are awarded on a first come first serve basis. There is no guarantee of trip availability.</p>
Service Area	Within the boundaries of the Cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge.
Hours of Service	<p>Monday to Friday 5:15 a.m. to 1:15 a.m.</p> <p>Saturday 5:30 a.m. to 1:15 a.m.</p> <p>Sunday 7:15 a.m. to 1:15 a.m.</p> <p>Statutory Holiday 7:15 a.m. to 1:15 a.m.</p>
Active Registrants (as of Dec 31, 2021)	1,631 (Individuals who have used the service at least once during the reporting year)
Annual eligible passenger trips	119,899 (2021) (Includes Primary service & Secondary service and Taxiscrip).
Attendant/companion trips	5,350 (2021) (included in eligible trips)
Annual service hours	64,417 (2021) - includes primary service only
Fleet requirements	<p>Fleet requirements are provided by primary (dedicated vans) and secondary (contracted taxi) service providers. The primary service provider operates 37 vehicles, while the number of vehicles provided by the secondary service provider corresponds directly to demand and budget. The four secondary service providers provide 17 accessible taxi vehicles.</p>

Item	Description
Service Administration	<p data-bbox="743 233 1409 338">Service booking - handling in excess of 93,082 (2021) calls annually for trip booking, cancellations, etc.</p> <p data-bbox="743 380 1398 590">Service scheduling - providing daily schedules for primary and secondary service providers consisting of 25 vehicles per day during peak periods and providing over 119,899 (2021) (Includes Primary and Taxiscrip) trips on an annual basis.</p> <p data-bbox="743 632 1419 1136">Dispatching service – deals with “real-time” monitoring of the service through Mobile Data Terminals (MDT’s) aided by the Trapeze Novus Scheduling System. The recent 5-Year Business Plan allowed for an upgrade to Novus in 2017 (completed in 2021), allowing for prepayment of fares (pre-payment to be implemented in 2023). GRT now has an Online Passenger Portal for customers to book and cancel trips online. They can also see future bookings. GRT also has an optional Notifications system in place that both reminds customers of rides and alerts when rides are imminent.</p>
Other Service Features	<p data-bbox="743 1148 1414 1358">TaxiSCRIP service is for MobilityPLUS customers who buy TaxiSCRIP coupons for 50% of the face value of taxi service, call the taxis directly and pay with TaxiSCRIP coupons, delivering in excess of 35,038 annual trips in 2021.</p> <p data-bbox="743 1400 1419 1610">Complimentary fares on conventional transit for MobilityPLUS registrants generating significant annual trips on conventional transit services to MobilityPLUS registrants. Due to the new Fare box system, we can no longer track these MP trips on conventional buses.</p> <p data-bbox="743 1652 1292 1688">Commuter Bus Service ended in 2020.</p>

Specialized Transit Services – 2021/2022 Service Profile (Rural Service Area – excluding North Dumfries) Kiwanis Transit

Item	Description
Type of Service	<p>Shared Ride – Door to Door – Pre-Booked Service</p> <p>Registrants are able to book trips two to seven days in advance. Trips, with the exception of subscription trips, are awarded on a first come first serve basis. There is no guarantee of trip availability.</p>
Service Area	<p>Within the boundaries of the Townships of Woolwich, Wellesley and Wilmot and the Urban Service Area, depending on availability.</p>
Hours of Service	<p>Monday to Friday 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturday 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.</p>
Active Registrants (as of Dec 31, 2021)	<p>2,353 Individuals who have used the service at least once during the reporting year)</p>
Annual eligible passenger trips	<p>20,636 (2021)</p>
Annual service hours	<p>11,594 (2021) - Includes both primary and secondary service providers.</p>
Fleet requirements	<p>Fleet requirements are provided by primary (dedicated vans) and secondary (contracted taxi) service providers. The primary service provider operates 8 vehicles, while the number of vehicles provided by the secondary service provider corresponds directly to demand and budget.</p>
Service Administration	<p>Service booking - handling in excess of 17,005 (2021) calls annually for trip booking, cancelations, etc.</p> <p>Service scheduling - providing daily schedules for primary and secondary service providers consisting of 8 vehicles per day during peak periods and providing 20,636 plus trips on an annual basis.</p> <p>Dispatching service – deals with “real-time” monitoring of the service.</p>

Specialized Transit Services – 2021/2022 Service Profile (Rural Service Area – North Dumfries) MobilityPLUS

Item	Description
Type of Service	Shared Ride – Door-to-Door – Pre-Booked Service
Service Area	Within the boundary of the Township of North Dumfries. Transit Service can be arranged to and from the Urban Service Area, dependent on availability. During 2018, there were requests for additional service to the Cities of K-W And Cambridge from North Dumfries. These were allowed on a case-by-case basis.
Active Registrants (as of Dec 31, 2021)	26 Individuals who have used the service at least once during the reporting year)
Annual eligible passenger trips	363 (2021)
Annual service hours	Secondary service providers only, as required
Fleet requirements	Secondary (contracted taxi) service providers.
Service Administration	Service booking - handling in excess of 363 (2021) calls annually for trip booking, cancellations, etc. is done by MobilityPLUS Dispatching service – deals with “real-time” monitoring of the service.

Section III – Prior Years Accessibility Initiatives

Conventional Transit Service Plan – Accessibility Initiatives

Accessible Bus Stops

As of November 2021, there are approximately 2,500 stops in the system of which over 72% are considered accessible without gravel or grass/turf landing pads. However, approximately 13% of these stops have additional accessibility issues which have been identified, such as lack of sidewalk connection, obstructions and steep grades.

GRT is in the process of developing an enhanced accessibility standard that will determine the criteria for enhanced accessibility at each stop that would accommodate a wider array of disabilities, by considering additional features such as shelter type/dimensions, seating and stop information. Continuing forward, bus stops will be upgraded to accessibility standards as the Region's sidewalk network is expanded, noting that in a very few number of situations, the provision of a connector pad to the sidewalk network is not feasible due to physical limitations. In these situations, the stop will be marked as not being accessible and the nearest accessible area will be used to provide service to passengers (e.g. driveways) requiring an accessible stop.

Given the Cities of Kitchener, Waterloo & Cambridge are responsible for the construction of sidewalks, we have confirmed that all stop locations have not been made accessible, given the absence of a sidewalk, and will continue to work in conjunction with the Cities to address these locations in a timely manner. Further, going forward, all stops added to the system will be made accessible as may be required assuming some are linked to the City's sidewalk system.

Accessible Routes and Fleet

Transit routes are designated as accessible when all buses used on the route are low floor accessible buses and all stops (where possible) along the route are accessible (have a connecting pad from the stop area to the City sidewalk network, providing there is a connecting sidewalk and sufficient spacing to provide a connecting pad).

Grand River Transit's conventional transit service as of 2021 is defined by 50 fixed routes, 1 Light Rail route and 5 BusPLUS Routes. All routes have been designated accessible since September 7, 2013. GRT entered into a new contract for BusPLUS in 2016; these vehicles are now low floor accessible.

GRT's entire fleet is low-floor accessible.

INIT Technology Implementation

GRT has completed the upgrade to its Automatic Vehicle Location and Communication (AVLC) system, often times referenced as "INIT Technology". The technology supports improved customer service and service delivery to all current and future customers. The INIT system also provides assistance in the delivery of customer service, allowing supervisors to accurately investigate customer concerns funneled through the Marketing and Customer Service Area. Self serve features and real time information is available through the EasyGO next bus texting, online trip planning and mobile app., and digital LED next bus displays.

The features of the system, all of which are fully functioning as of 2016, are set out below:

- Automatic in-vehicle visual display of next stop location,
- Automatic in-vehicle audio announcement of next stop location, tracking of in-service buses along routes via a Global Positioning System (GPS), a feature of INIT, which supports better service management,
- Automatic on-street information signs with real-time information on next buses noting, the signs are located at most iXpress stops,
- Automatic passenger counters on all buses.

The implementation of the INIT Technology has resulted in compliance with several sections of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation well in advance of the compliance date set out in the Regulation.

Bus Stop Sign Upgrade Program

In 2011, the design and colouring of bus stop markers was reviewed in consultation with various stakeholder groups including The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) and the Specialized Transit Services Advisory Committee (STSAC) in an effort to provide greater visibility and more comprehensive information relating to the stop. Suggestions included:

- A high contrast colour scheme
- Bus pictogram
- Routes servicing the stop
- Service notes as applicable
- Website
- Customer service information

In December 2016, GRT piloted a new stop marker at the Cambridge Centre Station. In addition to the changes requested, and the feedback received from both customers and staff, the new GRT bus stop signs are being installed and replaced as required.

Level of Conventional Service Accessibility

Since 2012 Grand River Transit's conventional fleet has been entirely low-floor accessible. Which has allowed for service integration between the conventional and specialized services.

Process for Managing, Evaluating and Taking Action on Customer Feedback

Feedback from customers can be generated by the customer or transferred internally throughout the various Regional departments to GRT. Generally, when GRT initiates the gathering of feedback, it is related to a specific issue. The methods for managing, evaluating and taking action with respect to each method are discussed in greater detail below.

Receiving Feedback (Customer Generated)

Feedback from customers serves as key inputs to Grand River Transit's service delivery and annual service plans, including those elements dealing specifically with accessibility.

Customer feedback with respect to both conventional and specialized services is directed to customer service representatives at the Service First Call Centre (SFCC), who generate reports to the specific areas of GRT Services. A SFCC Notification is generated to extend a compliment, to record a request and/or to register a complaint or comment.

Contacts are received from passengers/public via the telephone, in person, mail, email as well as the GRT website and social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter). Where required, customers are contacted to gather additional information ensure all feedback is captured in full.

Annual reports are reviewed to determine trends and whether new programs and services have had an impact on customer contacts.

Procedures to Address Equipment Failures

Fleet requirements are determined based on the number of vehicles required during peak operating times, plus those that will be subject to required inspections and maintenance. This is referred to as the spare fleet ratio. This ratio can vary significantly given factors such as the age and make-up of the fleet.

There are a number of actions taken to mitigate in-service breakdowns, including the following:

1. Strict adherence to Preventative Maintenance schedules (a PM is scheduled every 7000 km and Ministry of Transportation (MTO) inspections every 6 months.
2. Breakdown/component failure prevention through predictive engine oil and transmission fluid analyses
3. Each day, prior to a bus leaving the garage for service, the Operator completes a “circle check”, ensuring that the vehicle is functioning properly, this check includes the various accessibility features on the bus (ramp, kneeling feature, tie downs, etc.). Should any features be found to not be in working order, the Operator will attempt to have it repaired prior to going into service. If the bus cannot be repaired in time, an alternate bus is assigned to the Operator.
4. Daily bus defect reports are turned into the garage by the Operator at the end of the day for follow-up by maintenance before buses are re-deployed.
5. Every evening when buses are serviced (refueled, fare box emptied, etc.), employees also check that features of the bus appear to be in working order. In the event that an issue is discovered, the bus is either repaired that evening, or removed from service the following day until it can be repaired.

While the aforementioned steps mitigate in-service breakdowns, they do not eliminate them.

When a bus defect disables the bus while in service, the following steps are taken:

1. The Bus Operator contacts dispatch and relays the defect information.
2. The Dispatcher determines the extent of the defect and identifies a change-off location.
3. Dispatch contacts maintenance who arrange for a replacement bus.

It should be noted that the procedures set out above may be impacted by severe weather or other vehicle issues that may result in the inability to replace all buses experiencing difficulty in service (i.e. severe winter conditions may impact the functionality of the ramp or kneeling features of the bus).

GRT and Administrative Customer Service Policies

Stop Announcements – General

The GRT employs INIT Technology on-board its accessible conventional fleet of buses, which provides for the automatic announcement and display of next stop information on board all buses. There is a risk that the system may malfunction, with such malfunction applying to a specific bus and/or system wide. In such situations, every effort is made to mitigate the duration of any downtime associated with the malfunction.

The Administrative Policy relating to the calling of stops, in the event the automatic stop announcement feature is not functioning, is as follows:

In the event that the automatic stop announcement system fails to operate, the Operator will manually indicate to boarding customers the automated call out system is not functioning and assistance finding a stop is needed, they should see the Operator.

If the stop announcement feature is malfunctioning on a specific bus, Operators are to contact Dispatch and arrange for the bus to be changed-off.

As of January 2017:

Automatic external-vehicle audio announcement of conventional bus route number and destination.

Stop Announcement – Route on Detour

Bus routes are subject to detour routing from time to time. The detour may be planned (e.g. relating to scheduled major road/sewer construction) or may be as a result of an unscheduled event such as water main break. Detours may require the establishment of temporary stops (replacing regular stops).

The Administrative Policy relating to the calling of stops, when a route is on detour, is as follows:

During periods when a route is on detour, Operator will manually indicate to boarding customers the automated call out system is not functioning and assistance finding a stop is needed, they should see the Operator.

Service Disruptions – Detours

Consistent with GRT's Customer Service Policy, a supporting Administrative Policy respecting the communication of detours has been established, which is as follows:

- If detours are known within a sufficient notice period, in addition to placing notices on affected bus stops, public communication of the detour will be provided via the GRT's website and social media alerts. Information will also be available by phone from Customer Service staff.
- For detours with little advance warning, notices are placed on affected stops and the website is updated as soon as possible and alerts announced on social media. If the detour is of sufficient duration, the detour information will be provided via the GRT's website and social media alerts. Information will also be available by phone from Customer Service staff.
- Postings on the GRT website are to include a note that the information is accurate at time of posting and is subject to change without notice.

GRT has a real-time service alerts for emergency detours, trip cancellations and ION light rail disruptions via a dedicated Twitter account (@alertsGRT) as well as the service alerts page on the GRT website.

Section IV – Methodology for Annual Update

Summary of AODA Specific Work Plan Initiatives

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) – Standard Development

Throughout the AODA standard setting process, the transit industry at large and Grand River Transit Administration have participated to various degrees. Subsequent to Standard approval, the industry has remained engaged with Ontario Public Transit Association Members.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation – Regulation 191-11 (IASR)

On July 1, 2011, Regulation 191-11 came into effect, setting in place the related standard requirements dealing with Transportation, Employment, and Information & Communications under the AODA. The timelines associated with the requirements, as provided by Regulation, called for immediate compliance in some cases; as well, a number of Requirements had compliance dates up until January 1, 2017.

As of October 2016, GRT is in compliance with all Accessibility Regulation requirements as prescribed within the IASR – Regulation 191-11. For the full implementation schedule, reference past GRT Accessibility Plans: 2012 (DOCS 1223076), 2013 (DOCS 1454869), 2014 (DOCS 1734174) and 2015 (DOCS 1964609), 2016 (Doc's 2229778), and 2017 (Doc's 2562092).

Section V – Process for Estimating Demand for Specialized Transportation Services January 1, 2013

42. (1) Specialized transportation service providers shall, in their accessibility plans,
- (a) Identify the process for estimating the demand for specialized transportation services; and
 - (b) Develop steps to reduce wait times for specialized transportation services.

Other Influencing Factors (Dialysis)

There are many other local influencing factors that can impact the demand for specialized service. The most significant factor in the Urban and the Rural Service Area over the past number of years is the demand associated with customers who are dialysis patients. These customers generally require treatment three times per week (175 trips annually each).

In late 2019, there were 163 registrants using specialized service requiring dialysis treatments. These trips are scheduled Monday through to Saturday, taking trips two rides per day, three times per week. The MobilityPLUS 5-Year Business Plan has identified solutions and to make recommendations to the transportation needs of dialysis patients and GRT has undertaken a comprehensive service review of MobilityPLUS services in 2020 and 2021 to assist in addressing increasing customer demand and unaccommodated trips.

In May 2022, changes were made to customers requesting specialized services for dialysis appointments. Registrants requesting service are no longer automatically approved for MobilityPLUS and follow the same eligibility review as other clients. In addition, subscription trips are not prioritized for new registrants needing to get to dialysis, in alignment to the AODA. These changes were further supported through reducing the lead time needed to book on-demand trips and eliminating purpose of trip as criteria for booking.

Section VI – Steps to Reduce Wait Times for Specialized Transportation Services

Change in Scheduling Software

On March 17, 2014, GRT Mobility *PLUS* introduced new scheduling software after running with its second generation of computerized scheduling since 1998. The introduction of Trapeze Novus Scheduling Software increased productivity and improved on time performance.

Given the only way to ensure trips are provided on schedule (or reduce wait times) is to leave room in the schedule to allow for unforeseen delays, trip schedulers must be careful not to leave so much time that will result in other trips being non-accommodated and an ultimately inefficient service. With the initiation of Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) in early 2012 and the new computerized scheduling system in March 2014, specialized services are now able to measure more accurately On Time Performance going forward.

A further upgrade to the software was implemented in 2020 to keep the scheduling software up-to-date and efficient.

In late 2014 and into 2016 Requirement 64 – Eligibility Application Process was augmented in the area of its Appeal Process:

- a) If a person has completed an application for eligibility for specialized transportation services and the person's eligibility has not been determined within 14 calendar days after the completed application is received by the specialized transportation service provider, the person shall be considered to have temporary eligibility for specialized transportation services until a decision on his or her eligibility is made.
- b) GRT does not charge a fee to persons with disabilities who apply or who are considered eligible for specialized transportation services.
- c) GRT does require a reassessment of the eligibility of temporarily eligible registrants at reasonable intervals.
- d) GRT does, upon the request of the person requesting specialized transportation services, make available to the requester all of his or her specialized transportation services eligibility application and decision information in accessible formats.
- e) GRT has established an independent appeal process to review decisions respecting eligibility.
- f) The decision on an appeal with respect to eligibility is made within 30 calendar days after receiving the complete appeal application, but if a final decision is not made within the 30 days, the applicant shall be granted temporary eligibility until a final decision is made.

As of January 1, 2018, the following policy changes for specialized transit services were implemented to assist further in saving resources to handle increased demands and to reduce wait times for specialized transit services:

Eligibility Policy

MobilityPLUS eligibility, since all conventional buses are now low floor and no longer have this barrier. Current customers are being reassessed to this new criterion when their eligibility comes up for renewal. This application renewal process occurs at five-year intervals after a customer's initial registration. Current customers expected to be impacted by the new criteria are those who became eligible due to a disability where using stairs was a barrier.

No-Show and Late Cancellation Policy

Introduced a new policy to enhance accountability for customers who regularly book trips and are either not there when the bus arrives or do not cancel early enough for the ride to be rebooked. This policy exists in most other specialized transit services to help ensure these untaken rides can be available for waitlisted customers.

Introduction of new Customer Self service online trip booking, trip notification and Prepayment account system

As of June 2021, trip notification and online booking launched successfully. All MobilityPLUS members received letters and how-to guides advising of the new features.

Prepayment functionality continues to be reviewed with no current timeline for implementation.

Increases in Service

In 2018 and 2019, there was an increase of 1 bus in the complement of MobilityPLUS vehicles in dedicated service and a budget request has been submitted for another increase in 2020, but due to Covid-19 this vehicle addition was not made in 2020. Budget was also increased in these years for TaxiSCRIPT.

Requirement 63 – Categories of Eligibility

(1) Every specialized transportation service provider shall have three categories of eligibility to qualify for specialized transportation services,

- a) Unconditional Eligibility;
- b) Temporary Eligibility; and
- c) Conditional Eligibility

(2) For purposes of eligibility for specialized transportation services, specialized transportation service categorizes persons with disabilities as follows:

1. A person with a disability that prevents them from using conventional transportation services shall be categorized as having unconditional eligibility.
2. A person with a temporary disability that prevents them from using conventional transportation services shall be categorized as having temporary eligibility.
3. A person with a disability where environmental or physical barriers limit their ability to consistently use conventional transportation services shall be categorized as having conditional eligibility.

(3) A specialized transportation service provider may deny requests for specialized transportation services to persons who are categorized as having temporary eligibility or conditional eligibility if the conventional transportation service is accessible to the person and the person has the ability to use it.

Appendix C: Design of Public Spaces Standard Compliance Summary

DOPS Item	DOPS Specification Documentation	Procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance	Procedures for dealing with temporary service disruptions
Recreational Trails and Beach Access Routes (Sect. 80.6-80.16)	Staff responsible for Regional forests and associated trails have been trained on DOPS requirements. DOPS specifications have been integrated in related procedures.	Trails undergo regular maintenance, and emergency maintenance as required. Procedures include mowing edges, keeping brush back, hazard removal, and required repairs.	All trail service disruptions are posted on site. Fencing is installed when necessary, and all repairs are completed as soon as possible.
Outdoor Public Use Eating Areas (Sect. 80.16-80.17)	Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Maintenance Procedure”	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Building Notices”
Outdoor Play Spaces (Sect. 80.18-80.20)	Do not have public play spaces	Do not have public play spaces	Do not have public play spaces
Sidewalks or Walkways (Sect. 80.21-80.23)	Roadways: Integrated requirements in Region of Waterloo standard specifications and drawings. Facilities: Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Roadways: Preventative and emergency maintenance procedures available through Region of Waterloo Transportation, Design and Construction, and standard Maintenance agreements with cities. Facilities: Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Maintenance Procedure”	Roadways: Planned service disruption procedures available through Design and Construction. Unplanned service disruption procedures available through Service First Call Centre. Facilities: Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Building Notices”
Ramps (Sect. 80.24)	Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Maintenance Procedure”	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Building Notices”

DOPS Item	DOPS Specification Documentation	Procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance	Procedures for dealing with temporary service disruptions
Stairs (Sect. 80.25)	Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Maintenance Procedure”	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Building Notices”
Curb Ramps (Sect. 80.26)	Roadways: Integrated requirements in Region of Waterloo standard specifications and drawings. Facilities: Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Roadways: Preventative and emergency maintenance procedures available through Region of Waterloo Transportation, Design and Construction, and standard Maintenance agreements with cities. Facilities: Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Maintenance Procedure”	Roadways: Planned service disruption procedures available through Design and Construction. Unplanned service disruption procedures available through Service First Call Centre. Facilities: Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Building Notices”
Depressed Curbs (Sect. 80.27)	Roadways: Integrated requirements in Region of Waterloo standard specifications and drawings. Facilities: Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Roadways: Preventative and emergency maintenance procedures available through Region of Waterloo Transportation, Design and Construction, and standard Maintenance agreements with cities. Facilities: Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Maintenance Procedure”	Roadways: Planned service disruption procedures available through Design and Construction. Unplanned service disruption procedures available through Service First Call Centre. Facilities: Facilities Standard Operating Procedure “Building Notices”

DOPS Item	DOPS Specification Documentation	Procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance	Procedures for dealing with temporary service disruptions
Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Sect. 80.28)	Ensured requirements are aligned with Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) guidelines for pedestrian signals, followed by the Region of Waterloo.	Preventative and emergency maintenance procedures available through Transportation and Design and Construction.	Planned service disruption procedures available through Design and Construction. Unplanned service disruption procedures available through Service First Call Centre.
Rest Areas (Sect. 80.29)	Process for AAC consultation integrated in project plans as required.	Preventative and emergency maintenance procedures available through Region of Waterloo Transportation, Design and Construction, and standard Maintenance agreements with cities.	Planned service disruption procedures available through Design and Construction. Unplanned service disruption procedures available through Service First Call Centre.
Off-street Accessible Parking (Sect. 80.32-80.38)	Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure "Maintenance Procedure"	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure "Building Notices"
On-Street Accessible Parking (Sect. 80.39)	Consulted with AAC as required. Developed practices for identification and development of accessible on-street parking.	Preventative and emergency maintenance procedures available through Region of Waterloo Transportation, Design and Construction, and standard Maintenance agreements with cities.	Planned service disruption procedures available through Transportation and Design and Construction. Unplanned service disruption procedures available through Service First Call Centre.
Service Counters (Sect. 80.40-80.41)	Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure "Maintenance Procedure"	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure "Building Notices"

DOPS Item	DOPS Specification Documentation	Procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance	Procedures for dealing with temporary service disruptions
Fixed Queuing Guides (Sect. 80.42)	Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure "Maintenance Procedure"	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure "Building Notices"
Waiting Areas (Sect. 80.43)	Integrated requirements in standard specifications documents for internal and contractor use.	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure "Maintenance Procedure"	Facilities Standard Operating Procedure "Building Notices"