

City of Owen Sound

2014 Transit Accessibility Plan

August 2014

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### **1 Introduction**

This accessibility plan is designed to meet the City's requirements for planning under AODA (2005) and the associated Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) 191/11, by identifying barriers to accessibility and developing proposed solutions to reduce or eliminate those barriers, in consultation with the community. The City of Owen Sound is committed to:

- Continuous development and improvement of accessibility of the public transportation services and facilities in accordance with the AODA (2005) and its regulations
- The inclusion of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual transit accessibility plan, together with the City's broader accessibility plan

### **2 Owen Sound Transit – Service Description**

The City of Owen Sound currently operates both conventional accessible fixed route transit service as well as specialized transit services for passengers with disabilities that require door-to-door service, within the boundaries of the City of Owen Sound.

Both services are planned and managed by the City of Owen Sound, with daily operations and vehicle maintenance and storage contracted to First Student Canada. The operations and maintenance contract with First Student was effective in October 2013 and will be in effect for eight years, until 2021. Table 1 and Table 2 provide summary information on the characteristics of the services.

**Table 1 – Owen Sound Transit Service Characteristics – Conventional Fixed Route**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Type of service</b>	Fixed route pulse service to Downtown Terminal Operated under contract with First Student
<b>Service area</b>	Urban area – City of Owen Sound
<b>Hours of service</b>	Monday to Friday 0630 to 1830 (last trip 1800) Saturday 0900 to 1630 (last trip 1600)
<b>Annual boardings</b>	Approximately 350,000
<b>Annual revenue service hours</b>	Approximately 13,500
<b>Annual revenue kilometres</b>	Approximately 350,000
<b>Number of routes</b>	4 regular fixed routes
<b>Level of services</b>	Fixed route, 30-minute service all periods
<b>Fleet composition</b>	4 accessible buses, plus shared spare
<b>Fare Media</b>	Cash and passes
<b>Cash Fare</b>	Children under 6 free; Students \$2.00, Others \$2.50
<b>Passes</b>	Adult \$60; Senior: \$45; HS: \$35; Elem: \$30

**Table 2 - Owen Sound Transit Service Characteristics – Specialized Transit**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Type of service</b>	Shared Ride door –to-door accessible service Operated under contract with First Student
<b>Service area</b>	Urban area – City of Owen Sound
<b>Hours of service</b>	Monday to Friday 0630 to 1830 (last drop 1800) Saturday 0900 to 1630 (last drop 1600)
<b>Annual trips</b>	Approximately 8,500
<b>Annual revenue service hours</b>	Approx. 3,400
<b>Number of routes</b>	1 demand response
<b>Fleet composition</b>	1 accessible bus, plus shared spare
<b>Fare Media</b>	Cash and passes
<b>Cash Fare</b>	Children under 6 free; Students \$2.00, Others \$2.50
<b>Passes</b>	Adult \$60; Senior: \$45; HS: \$35; Elem: \$30

### 3 Prior Years Accessibility Initiatives

The City of Owen Sound has been committed to the accessibility of its services for many years, and is committed to improving the accessibility of its service for all members of the community.

The following improvements have been completed to identify and remove accessibility barriers:

- Provision of low-floor accessible buses: the Owen Transit fleet has been 100 percent accessible since prior to 2006
- Bus replacement program: Owen Sound is currently working with its contractor to replace the existing fleet with modern accessible buses, equipped with a wide range of accessible features, and equipped for future provision of technology requirements consistent with the AODA and its regulations.
- Implementation of fare and service parity in parallel with accessible conventional services effective 2013
- Regular consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (a council committee comprising members of council and the community including people with disabilities)
- Policies and practices established through contracts with service providers to:
  - meet the training requirements established by the AODA and its regulations for drivers and other employees
  - provide audible next stop announcements
  - provide accessible information when requested
  - provide accessible feedback mechanisms
  - address service provision in the event of equipment malfunction
  - provide assistance to passengers with mobility aids upon request
- Established policies for specialized transit (established in 2000 and regularly updated through 2007) including:
  - Removal of the fare requirement for an attendant / support person upon using conventional and/or specialized services

- criteria, policies and procedures for service use by visitors and registrants from other municipalities for specialized transit services
- policies and procedures for the communication of service delays and travel with companions and children on specialized transit services
- an independent appeal process for specialized transit eligibility disputes
- Establishment of accessibility policies (corporate)
- Accessible web site, compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level A requirements

#### **4 2014 Accessibility Work Plan**

As part of its on-going development of the accessibility plan, including consultation with and feedback from passengers and the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the City has identified a number of on-going barriers to accessibility, as well as the new and upcoming requirements of the IASR. This section describes those barriers as well as the plans to address them. This work plan forms a key part of the consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee as part of the development of the Transit Accessibility Plan as well as the broader public as part of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan development for the City of Owen Sound.

##### **4.1 Vehicles**

As part of the current bus replacement program, the City has conducted extensive consultation with the public and the Accessibility Advisory Committee. As the procurement and delivery process continues, the City of Owen Sound will continue to work with the contractor to ensure that the accessibility features of the vehicles comply with the AODA and its regulations.

##### **4.2 Stops and Shelters**

As part of the ongoing review of routes and services, the city of Owen Sound has developed a new routing pattern for its service to both maintain quality of service and control operating costs. During the implementation of the new route system, the City will consult with the Accessibility Advisory Committee on stop and shelter design criteria and locations.

As part of this process, the City will also be developing an implementation plan for the provision of static service timetable information at key stops, with a view to providing this information at all stops over time.

#### **4.3 Roads and Sidewalks**

The roads and sidewalks on the approaches to Owen Sound Transit bus stops determine the accessibility of transit services. Specific barriers in the following areas have been identified:

- Not all stops are located with sidewalk access to the stop. This is true in the existing route system, as well as in the revised route system
- The walking and wheeling path to and from bus stops do not always have curb cuts at corners.
- Uneven surfaces and low hanging vegetation limit accessibility
- Lack of formal crosswalks, with signals where appropriate
- Potentially short walk times at priority signalized intersections
- Guard rails and other street furniture sometimes restrict accessible travel between the sidewalk and the curb.
- Where curb cuts exist, they may be too low or lacking in tactile demarcations to provide a cue to a person with a visual impairment.
- Snow clearing is undertaken diligently according to the City's Winter Control Policy, but cannot always be accomplished prior to the start of service following a snowfall.

To address these barriers, the City will ensure communication between all relevant departments and the Accessibility Advisory Committee to specifically identify and prioritize barrier removal, in conjunction with the capital works planning process.

#### **4.4 Contractor Obligations**

In dealing with its contract operator, the City will work to ensure that the contractor meets all necessary obligations of the AODA and its regulations. This includes ensuring that the contractor meets the policy requirements of:

- audible calling of stops,
- adequate replacement of equipment or vehicles in the event of

malfunction, specifically to ensure that a comparably accessible vehicle is used when replacement vehicles are provided

- all training requirements
- proper documentation of policies and procedures
- adherence to the training requirements

The City will meet with its contract operator to review the policy training and service delivery requirements, to ensure that all proper policies and documentation are in place, and will monitor service delivery to ensure that all practice conforms to established policies.

Specifically, the City will ensure that its contractor develops and implements an emergency preparedness plan and appropriate employee training on the plan, and also develops appropriate updates relevant to the new vehicles expected in 2015.

#### **4.5 Specialized Transit Policies**

The City will review its current Standard Policy (Policy 012) regarding specialized transit policies and procedures to ensure that all language of the policy is consistent with the requirements of the AODA and its regulations.

This City will also explore options for its eligibility review and appeals processes, to ensure consistent and fair assessment of applicants' eligibility.

#### **4.6 Documentation of Practice in Relevant Policies**

Where appropriate, the City will ensure that all current accessibility practices required under the Act and its regulations are properly documented in Standard Policies, or documented in appropriate policies and training materials established by the contractor.

Examples include the following areas where practices conform to the regulated requirements, but formal procedures are not in place. This will ensure proper maintenance of these practices in the future:

- provision of communication and feedback materials in accessible format
- provision of boarding and securement assistance to passengers with mobility aids, upon request
- communication of information regarding in-service delays
- provision of alternative accessible transportation for detours, where



alternative services are not accessible

## **5 Process for Managing, Evaluating and Taking Action on Customer Feedback**

Customer/rider feedback is important to the day-to-day operation of the transit system and to create a long term, successful service. Feedback can be provided either directly to the City or through the contractor.

Where the contractor is the first point of contact, contractor staff determine if the issue is one related to contract operation, or best dealt with by City staff. Operations issues are documented, evaluated and addressed in a timely manner, and reported to the City.

Where the City is the first point of contact, City staff make the same determination, and refer operations to the contractor for assessment and action. Issues are addressed and reported to the City.

The City is responsible for evaluating longer term and infrastructure issues such as:

- Route and service planning
- Stop and shelter locations
- Terminal operations
- Information and communications

All feedback and response can be managed using accessible communication materials and services, where necessary.

Appropriate actions are delegated to the contractor or appropriate staff departments, and reported to the customer upon request.

## **6 Process For Estimating Demand For Specialized Services**

Staff estimates the demand for specialized services through review and analysis of the following factors:

- Past ridership trends
- Service denials
- Review of incremental annual increase in demand
- Ridership growth levels (both on conventional and on specialized transit)
- Any anticipated changes to legislation, policies and/or procedures which

may increase the demand for services

This information will be used to consider service changes as well as to help prioritize any accessibility improvements.

## **7 Steps to Reduce Wait Times for Specialized Transportation Services**

Owen Sound Transit is currently able to provide same-day booking and travel to its customers, on occasion. Staff will continue to work with the contract operator to ensure that wait times are minimized.

Specifically, new vehicles will be roughed-in to accommodate future installation of technology features to provide additional information to staff to assist in improving scheduling and operations, as well as electronic calling of stops on conventional fixed route services.

## **8 Consultations on the Content of This Accessibility Plan**

In the preparation of this plan, the City has conducted the following consultation activities:

- Consultation with City staff and contract operations staff operating and support staff to ensure that those responsible for delivery of accessible service provide input.
- Consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure input is received from members of the City's community with disabilities community
- Consultation with the public as part of the broader Multi-Year Accessibility Plan development.

## **9 Communicating the Plan to the Public**

The City of Owen Sound will communicate the accessibility plan to the public through the following actions:

- The Plan will be posted at our administrative office and at City Hall.
- Copies of the Plan will be available at our administrative offices and City Hall.
- The Plan will be published on our the transit section of the City Website
- The plan will be reviewed as part of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

review process

## **10 Methodology for Plan Review and Update**

The 2014 Owen Sound Transit Accessibility Plan informs the City of Owen Sound Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, consistent with requirements established of the AODA and its regulations.

The annual plan will provide an update on accessibility initiatives that reflect compliance with the AODA and its regulations as well as forecasting initiatives that support the continuous removal of accessibility barriers. Progress will be reported annually and will be used to measure progress and develop subsequent annual workplans.

There are three key inputs to the annual accessibility plan, including:

- Legislative and regulatory requirements and associated compliance timelines
- Customer feedback and annual public consultation
- City of Owen Sound Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) consultation