

St. Catharines Transit Commission 2011 Accessibility Plan

St. Catharines Transit Commission – Accessibility Plan

2011 ST. CATHARINES TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

The following document is the St. Catharines Transit's Accessibility Plan for 2011. It forms a part of the City of St. Catharines Accessibility Plan.

Introduction

St. Catharines Transit recognizes that as many as 20% of the residents of St. Catharines may have disabilities within the next two decades. As a result, reliance upon public transportation will grow as people drive less or require other forms of transportation for their personal mobility.

St. Catharines Transit is committed to:

- The continual improvement of access to public transportation premises, facilities and services for passengers and employees with disabilities.
- The provision of high quality service which is accessible to all passengers and employees.
- Encouraging Paratransit passengers to use accessible, conventional transit whenever it is possible for them to do so.

Background

St. Catharines Transit has been working at increasing access to all people for over two decades. In 1988, St. Catharines Transit drafted its first Accessibility Plan and we have updated this plan each year thereafter.

The following are examples of accessibility accommodation measures which St. Catharines Transit has already put into place:

1. Ninety percent of the conventional routes are now accessible on weekdays, 100 percent on weekends.
2. Automated stop announcement technology was installed on all 63 conventional buses in early 2009.

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3. St. Catharines Transit continues to replace the conventional bus fleet with low-floor accessible buses. Three low floor accessible buses were added to the fleet in 2010, bringing the total to 58 out of 63 buses.
4. Four new bus shelters were installed on bus routes in 2010.
5. Three bus stops had accessible concrete landing pads installed.
6. All St. Catharines Transit buses have Easier Access enhancements, such as brightly coloured on-vehicle grab rails, handrails and stanchions, high-contrast stair nosings, illuminated step wells, and lowered stop request cords or buttons. Stop request strips are easily accessed underneath the courtesy seats on low floor buses.
7. St. Catharines Transit provides Customer Service Training in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarions with Disabilities Act (A.O.D.A.) to all existing and newly hired bus operators.
8. St. Catharines Transit operates the Paratransit service for persons with disabilities who are unable to use conventional transit service.
9. St. Catharines Transit has a Community Bus, a service designed 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 travel as close as possible to apartment buildings, senior's residences medical buildings and shopping centres. The routes are designed to bring the bus close to the people and to operate at a lower average destination time objective than regular transit. St. Catharines Transit operates two Community Bus Routes in addition to its 20 regular transit routes.
10. St. Catharines Transit information is accessible on the website (<http://www.yourbus.com>), and is linked to the City of St. Catharines Web site (<http://www.stcatharines.ca>). The website has been upgraded with flexible fonts and maps. We have also expanded the accessible service page.
11. The Paratransit System includes 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.
12. Greater visual differentiation has been created at the platform curbing edges at the downtown terminal to indicate the changes in grade.

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13. In 2009 we introduced a Customer Service policy which was developed in accordance with the A.O.D.A..

BARRIERS TO ACCESS AT ST. CATHARINES TRANSIT

St. Catharines Transit recognizes that its infrastructure - including its administrative offices, downtown terminal, bus stops and bus shelters, and vehicles - may present various barriers to people with disabilities. In striving to ensure access to physical facilities, St. Catharines Transit's objective is to create a service environment that is free of barriers.

St. Catharines Transit Administrative Offices

- Interior doors are manual and therefore difficult for some people to use

Shelters & Stops

- Approaches:
 - Clearing snow and ice from major bus stops and shelters is undertaken, however cannot be accomplished instantaneously.
- Landing pads:
 - Boarding and exiting buses can be difficult at stops that do not have a concrete landing pad - a hard, level surface, which repels water and mud in summer, and is capable of being cleared of snow and ice accumulations in winter.
- Shelters:
 - During inclement weather, the absence of a shelter at the bus stop can be a barrier to using St. Catharines Transit.
 - Some shelters do not have interior seating and many bus stops do not have exterior seating.

St. Catharines Downtown Terminal

St. Catharines Transit operates on a radial system. Therefore, all buses (except for two routes) pass through the Downtown Terminal every trip to allow customers to make connections to other buses in the system. On an average weekday during the academic year, St. Catharines Transit accommodates over 30,000 trips.

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Areas identified as barriers at the Downtown Terminal include:

- The time available for a connecting passenger to travel between buses may not be sufficient for some people with disabilities.
- Some signage may not be easily read by persons in a wheelchair due to signs being located too high to be read.

Buses

- Not enough low floor buses in the fleet to service all routes.
- Restraint equipment for wheelchairs and scooters is designed to accommodate most designs. However, some of the newer scooters may be too large to manoeuvre into position or be properly restrained and may not be able to be safely accommodated.

Customer Information

Legibility of printed material: Rider's Guides, public notices may be difficult to read for some customers.

Roads and Sidewalks

The roads and sidewalks on the approaches to St. Catharines Transit bus stops, although maintained by the City of St. Catharines, determine the accessibility of St. Catharines Transit services. Specific barriers in the following areas have been identified:

- The walking and wheeling path to and from bus stops do not always have curb cuts at corners.
- Where curb cuts exist they may be too low or lacking in tactile demarcations to provide a cue to a person who is visually impaired.
- Sidewalk snow clearing is undertaken diligently, however cannot be accomplished instantaneously

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Policy Barriers

There are no policy barriers to hiring an individual with a physical or cognitive disability.

Resource Barriers

St. Catharines Transit recognizes the availability of resources can be a major factor in determining the progress in reducing or eliminating the barriers identified in consultation with people with disabilities. St. Catharines Transit further recognizes that resource constraints require a process of prioritization.

ON GOING ACTIONS

St. Catharines Transit is committed to the following actions on an annual basis:

- Consult with our Paratransit Advisory Board to seek their advice on which barriers and which remedial actions should have priority for the coming year.
- Request funding through our municipal capital and operating budgets to address the highest priority barriers.
- Take advantage of opportunities to secure funding to extend or accelerate the removal of priority barriers.
- Lobby the provincial government to ensure that sufficient additional funding is provided to allow us to meet the new accessibility standards being developed through the Ministry of Community and Social Services under the AODA, without compromising service.

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ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2011

St. Catharines Transit intends to make its services more accessible by taking the following actions in 2011:

- Request funding to purchase 5 new low-floor buses.
- Request funding to purchase 1 new Paratransit vehicle.
- Expand our snow clearing at bus stops using staff from Mainstream Services.
- Ensure that Paratransit customers are fully informed of the travel options available to them on the fully accessible conventional transit routes and Community Bus routes.
- Review bus stops to determine which ones are the least accessible and continue to improve these stops.
- Add new bus benches and shelters at bus stops where possible.
- Install improved signage at the Hub entrance to indicate accessible public entrance location.
- Work with City and Regional staff to improve the curb cuts and tactile demarcations at bus stops to assist those with visual impairments.
- Maintain our Customer Service training program in accordance with the AODA.
- Restructure our reception desk at the Administrative Office to meet accessibility standards.

ACTIONS BEYOND 2011

The St. Catharines Transit Commission will develop its future accessibility action plans to be in compliance with the regulations developed under the AODA. Each year these plans will be identified.

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Communicating the Accessibility Plan to the Public

St. Catharines Transit 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.

Dated: January 2011