

Accessible Transit Services Plan

2006 Status Report



TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Accessible Transit Services Plan –2006 Status Report

1.0 Introduction

This report provides an update on activities the TTC has undertaken between September 2005 and December 2006 to meet the goal of improving accessibility for everybody, including disabled people, to all of its services and facilities. It is the fourth in a series of annual reports which have been prepared following the passage of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA). This plan summarises the results, to date, of the extensive planning and implementation activities the TTC has undertaken over many years to make the system more accessible. The TTC has committed to produce an annual status report on the accessibility initiatives being undertaken at the TTC on an ongoing basis.

In addition to these annual reports, TTC staff regularly provide reports and briefings to the Toronto Transit Commission and/or the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT) throughout the year on individual elements of the plan. The annual budgets the TTC presents to the City of Toronto for approval detail the various capital and operating items required to support the TTC's accessibility initiatives.

In June, 2005, the Province of Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), came into effect. The legislation provides for the development of accessibility standards that will lead to accessible services and facilities being in place by 2025. Standards are now being developed by the Province's Community and Social Services Accessibility Directorate, and the implications these standards may have on the TTC's accessibility plans have not yet been determined. Greater detail on the implications of AODA is discussed in Section 5.0 of this report. Future editions of the annual *Accessible Transit Services Plan Status Reports* will comment on the accessibility standards, which are anticipated to be available by early 2007.

The TTC has made substantial progress in achieving its goal of fully-accessible service. The specialized services to Wheel-Trans registrants, the five Community Bus services, and the key stations identified in the *Choices for the Future* report are accessible now, along with all of the subway fleet and over 63% of the bus fleet. All of the conventional bus fleet is forecast to be accessible by 2010, and the remainder of the TTC's subway stations will be accessible by 2020. Plans also call for the Toronto streetcar system to be accessible by 2024 or sooner, therefore, the TTC's plans, as outlined in this document, will result in all services and facilities being accessible before the accessibility goal established by the AODA. Implementation of these accessibility plans is dependant on funding support for municipal transit from all levels of government.

As has been done in previous reports, this current report is organised using the same structure as the original 2003 report and, for each objective discussed, a reference section from the 2003 report is noted to facilitate comparisons and provide additional context for the current status report.

2.0 Programs Related to Individual Vehicle-Types and Modes of Travel

2.1 To-the-Door Specialized Service

2.1.1 Wheel-Trans Zone Service

Objective:

To increase the number of zone bus services operated to accommodate increasing demand. *(Reference: Section 5.1 of the 2003 Plan)*

Progress/Plans:

In 2006, the number of zone bus services was unchanged, but service hours were increased by about 50 per week. The Northwest/York University zone expansion and the North Yonge/Bathurst amalgamation with the Midtown Bathurst zone have been delayed until the spring of 2007.

2.1.2 Wheel-Trans Productivity Improvements

Objective:

To install automatic vehicle locating (AVL) equipment on Wheel-Trans buses, with all vehicles to be equipped by the end of 2004. This project will provide for real-time vehicle information in order to improve schedule adherence, vehicle productivity, and customer trip information. *(Reference: Section 5.2 of the 2003 Plan)*

Progress/Plans:

The original plan for a stand-alone project to install AVL equipment on Wheel-Trans vehicles has been revised and will now be considered as a possible option during the upgrade of the Wheel-Trans Information System (WTIS) in 2007/2008.

2.2 Conventional Bus System

2.2.1 Accessible Bus Fleet

Objective:

Continue to purchase low-floor accessible buses for fleet replacement and system growth, with a target of having the bus fleet 100% accessible by 2012 *(Reference: Section 5.3 of the 2003 Plan)*

Progress/Plans:

The TTC continued to renew its bus fleet with an order for 230 low-floor accessible buses to be received in 2006. By the end of December, most of these new vehicles were received and placed in revenue service. This resulted in over 63% of the conventional bus fleet being accessible.

As a result of the increased availability of accessible buses, the following routes were newly designated as accessible, in 2006:

- 63 OSSINGTON
- 316 OSSINGTON
- 109 RANEE
- 193 EXHIBITION EXPRESS
- 61 AVENUE RD. NORTH
- 165 WESTON RD NORTH
- 96 WILSON
- 319 WILSON

There are now 75 accessible regular bus routes, 11 accessible Blue Night bus routes, and 5 accessible Community Bus routes, for a total of 91 accessible scheduled bus services.

With the closure of the CNG fuelling station at Wilson Garage, the CNG-powered Orion VI low-floor buses are being retired. At the same time, the TTC has been experiencing increased ridership, increasing vehicle requirements on exiting routes. These factors have put greater pressure on the TTC's ability to meet regularly-scheduled service. Once there are sufficient new accessible buses to serve an entire route, and they are allocated to the proper garages, additional accessible routes will be designated in the year ahead.

The proportion of the bus fleet that is accessible will increase again in 2007 with the delivery of 324 additional low-floor accessible buses. This enables the TTC to expand service to meet growing ridership and to retire older non-accessible buses. These deliveries will increase the share of accessible vehicles to over 75% of the fleet. The pattern of replacing older, non-accessible buses with new accessible buses will continue until the entire TTC bus fleet is accessible in 2010.

The selection of routes to be made accessible is made through consultation with the TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT), based on the objective of maximising benefits to seniors and people with mobility difficulties, taking into account connectivity to accessible subway stations and proximity to services and institutions which serve disabled people.

2.3 Subway/RT System

2.3.1 Installing Elevators and Accessibility Features in Subway Stations

Easier Access Phase II

Objective:

To complete the installation of elevators and other accessibility features in the nine remaining subway stations in the Easier Access Phase II program. (*Reference: Section 5.4 of the 2003 Plan*)

Progress/Plans:

Easier Access stations are stations which have been updated to:

- provide more opportunities for those disabled people travelling to and from the local service area of the station;
- permit Wheel-Trans registrants additional travel options including the use of the accessible subway system; and,
- allow connections to accessible bus routes that serve the station.

In September 2005, Eglinton West Station had its accessibility features put into operation. The improvements at this station include two elevators and the associated changes to the station structure, three separate sets of automatic accessible doors, an accessible fare gate, closed-circuit television units, and additional illuminated and non-illuminated signage at all levels of the station. In June 2006, two bus routes connecting to Eglinton West Station became accessible.

Broadview Station became an accessible station in January 2006, followed by Jane Station in April 2006. To increase connectivity between the rapid transit system and the bus route network, all four bus routes serving Broadview Station are accessible, and two routes serving Jane Station are accessible. Installation of accessibility features, including elevators, is now underway at three stations, with the completion of work at Osgoode and York Mills Stations planned for early 2007, and St. Clair Station planned for June 2007.

Phase II of the Easier Access program will conclude with accessible features expected to be in operation at Lawrence West Station in late 2007 and at North York Centre in early 2008.

The *1989 Choices for the Future* report determined that the transit needs of the disabled community could best be met with twenty accessible stations served by the specialized to-the-door services of Wheel-Trans. With the completion of the Easier Access II program, Toronto will have thirty accessible stations, which is 50% more than were called for in the earlier study.

Easier Access Phase III

Objective:

To make all of the remaining 40 stations accessible by 2020. (Reference, Section 5.4 of the 2003 Plan)

Progress/Plans:

An initial assessment of the 40 remaining stations has been completed, and the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT) has provided advice on which stations should be candidates for incremental improvements and on the priority locations for the installation of elevators. More-detailed work is being undertaken related to functional layouts and property acquisition to refine cost estimates and to gain a better understanding of the time needed to implement the major changes required for each station. Detailed design work for the first Easier Access III stations will proceed concurrently with the completion of the construction work for the Easier Access II program. The design work will then be accelerated after the Easier Access II program is concluded and more resources are devoted to the design and construction of the 40 Easier Access III stations. A more-detailed description of this work is outlined in the TTC's 2007-2011 Capital Budget.

Joint TTC-Private Developer Improvements to Stations

Objective:

To take advantage of development around subway stations to accelerate the installation of elevators and accessibility features at stations. *(Reference: Section 5.4 of the 2003 plan)*

Progress/Plans:

- As a result of the construction of the new Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts (Osgoode Station), an accessible direct connection between the Centre and Osgoode Station is currently being constructed and planned completion is expected in early 2007. This will result in Osgoode Station being accessible.
- The TTC had approved, in principle, the construction of a direct accessible connection between the Royal Ontario Museum and Museum Station in conjunction with the construction of a residential development on the Planetarium site. The specific development proposal that prompted the agreement has since been withdrawn but, as future plans are brought forward for the site, joint development of an accessible access will be pursued.
- At the Regional Bus Terminal adjacent to Finch Station, an elevator that connects the subway station mezzanine level to street level was opened by GO Transit for public use August 2006. This permits TTC disabled customers to connect with transit services heading north into York Region and beyond.

2.3.2 Escalator Reliability

Objective:

To maintain escalator reliability at acceptable levels by effectively managing ageing escalators that are being operated beyond their design life of 25 years. *(Reference: Section 5.4 of the 2003 Plan)*

Progress/Plans:

Reliability results for elevators and escalators have again improved in 2006. For escalators, the number of days between unplanned outages improved to 17.4 mean days between stoppages for the first nine months of 2006, compared to 16.4 days for all of 2005, and up from 10.5 days in 2001. For elevators, the mean days between unplanned outages was 63.1 days in the first nine months of 2006, up from 61.8 days in 2005.

Several initiatives are ongoing:

- Since the start of the Escalator Rebuild program in 1997, many of the system's oldest and least-reliable units have been completely rebuilt to extend their service by 20 years. This year, six additional escalator units will be refurbished.
- Although the escalators on the Sheppard Subway line (20 units) are relatively new, they have been problematic and are a significant source of unplanned service calls. To correct reliability and maintainability concerns, a mini-overhaul on 2 of the 20 escalators at Sheppard-Yonge Station was started in 2006, and plans are in place to do all 20 units over the next three years.
- Maintenance staff have secured funds to develop a remote monitoring system that will provide real-time fault and status notification of escalator and elevator outages. Once the capabilities of the system are proven in the field, it is planned to study whether customers can have similar access to elevator operational status information. A working prototype will be ready in 2007, with full-scale implementation starting in 2008.
- A new five-year contract was recently signed to secure and provide continuity for the maintenance of 80 elevators in the subway. Incentives have been designed in the contract to promote continuous reliability improvements.

These initiatives will enable the TTC to improve the reliability of critical equipment so that stations are accessible on a consistent basis.

2.3.3 Station Announcements

Objective:

To investigate the use of an automated stop announcement system similar to that used in other subway systems and, if an acceptable system can be found, retrofit the existing subway and Scarborough RT cars with an automated announcement system. (*Reference: Section 5.4 of the 2003 Plan*)

Progress/Plans:

In 2003, the Commission approved a \$2 million program to have computerized stop announcements on trains. The initial implementation of automated station stop announcements began on the Sheppard subway in March 2006. The announcement system

was activated on the Yonge-University-Spadina subway in December 2006 and will be fully implemented for the entire subway system by the end of 2007.

In the interim, an extensive plan has been initiated to ensure that operators manually call station stops to a set script. One-on-one counselling of all operators, and additional operator training, has been completed, along with numerous operator notices, and information has been provided to employees in their pay envelopes. These activities have resulted in a significant improvement in the consistency and clarity of station stop announcements. The one-on-one training of all Operating personnel included a video presentation from members of the blind community, documentation of an Ontario Human Rights Commission Interim Order, a message from the previous Chief General Manager, and information cards explaining the new standard of calling stations twice for each station: once when en-route to the next station and once for the arrival at the station. Quality assurance checks are being conducted on a monthly basis by the Safety Department, with employees being counselled for irregularities during the transition period from the old standard to the new.

In addition to providing automated stop announcements on the subway, the TTC is proceeding with a project to implement an automated stop announcement system for buses and streetcars. The system provides audio announcements of stops via the vehicle public address system and visual identification of stops via an LED display. A test of 12 buses on two routes was conducted in late 2005—early 2006. Based on feedback from customers and ACAT, and technical lessons learned during the test, system modifications were made and procurement of components for all buses and streetcars has been initiated. As of September 2006, 75 buses were equipped with the automated stop announcement system. All surface revenue vehicles, except those scheduled for imminent retirement, are expected to be equipped with the system by the end of 2007. Until vehicles are equipped with the automated stop announcement system, Operators will be required to call stops in accordance with TTC policy.

2.4 Accessibility of the Streetcar Network

2.4.1. Construction of Accessible Streetcar Facilities

Objective:

To ensure that new streetcar facilities are constructed to accommodate accessible service once accessible streetcars are acquired. (*Reference: Section 5.5 of the 2003 Plan*)

Progress/Plans:

In June 2005, the Ministry of the Environment approved an Environmental Assessment Report submitted by the City of Toronto for the reconstruction of the 512 ST CLAIR streetcar line. The project involves the construction of a partially-exclusive right-of-way for streetcars on St. Clair Avenue. The design includes the features necessary to accommodate low-floor accessible streetcars when such vehicles are acquired. Construction of the St. Clair right-of-way is now underway and is expected to be complete in 2008.

2.4.2 Purchase of Accessible Streetcars

Objective:

To acquire new accessible streetcars. (Reference: Section 5.5 of the 2003 Plan)

Progress/Plans:

The TTC's streetcar fleet is 20-to-30 years old and will need to be replaced as part of the "State of Good Repair" capital program. Plans call for these vehicles to be replaced with modern-designed, accessible, low-floor "Light Rail Vehicles" (LRV's) as the current streetcars reach the end of their useful lives. The TTC's current streetcar fleet plans calls for all of the current non-accessible streetcars to be replaced with accessible vehicles by 2024.

New LRV's to replace the existing fleet are expensive, however, costing approximately \$5 million per vehicle. Full replacement of the current fleet will cost in the order of \$1.2 billion and, to date, there is no agreement on funding for the purchase of new replacement vehicles. TTC staff are continuing with the specification process required to procure accessible replacement streetcars that conform to the unique requirements of the TTC's surface rail network and maintenance facilities. Following confirmation of funding, there will be a tendering process, the production, evaluation, and refinement of a prototype vehicle and, ultimately, actual vehicle production. This process is expected to take a number of years, and the earliest that a new, accessible prototype streetcar could be available for testing in Toronto is projected to be 2010, with revenue operation commencing in 2011. Funding has been approved to allow TTC staff to proceed with the design and procurement process only.

In August 2006, a draft partial specification was released as part of a Request for Interest (RFI) package. Several major streetcar builders have shown interest and are expected to suggest design changes to some of their current stock vehicles to meet the TTC requirements. The RFI closed on November 10, 2006. Depending on the acceptability of responses to the RFI, and subsequent discussions with potential car builders, a Request for Proposal (RFP) may be issued in mid-2007, if full project approval is secured by that time.

Accessibility of streetcars is expected to be the final item to be completed in the TTC's plans to make all of its services and facilities accessible.

3.0 System-Wide Initiatives

3.1 Integration of Accessible Service

3.1.1 Information for Wheel-Trans Registrants

Objective:

To inform Wheel-Trans registrants of their travel options and the added benefits of using accessible conventional services now that Wheel-Trans vehicles are providing service directly into accessible subway stations. *(Reference: Section 6.0 of the 2003 Plan)*

Progress/Plans:

It was decided to develop and hold "orientation" sessions at accessible stations to familiarize Wheel-Trans registrants with accessibility features, as well as to allow them the opportunity to experience travelling on a conventional bus and subway. This initiative will be expanded into travel training by spring 2007.

3.1.2 Designing Wheel-Trans Operations to Feed "Key" Subway Stations

Objective:

To increase the integration of TTC conventional and to-the-door service, with Wheel-Trans taking on a greater role as a "subway feeder", as the subway system becomes more accessible. *(Reference: Section 2.1 of the 2003 Plan)*

Progress/Plans:

In September 2004, a subway feeder from Variety Village to Main Street Station was implemented, following a request from Variety Village management. A feeder route from the Toronto Rehabilitation Centre to the accessible services at Sunnybrook Hospital will be implemented by early 2007. A third feeder route will be investigated for 2007.

3.2 Staff Training

Objective:

To incorporate accessibility and sensitivity issues into the training curriculum for the TTC's approximately 3,000 surface operators, 500 subway operators, 350 collectors, and 200 route supervisors, and ensure that this training is systematically delivered and tracked. *(Reference: Section 6.1 of the 2003 Plan)*

Progress/Plans:

The Training Department collaborated with a working group of ACAT members in 2004 to develop new training content on accessibility and sensitivity issues including a review of

communications with customers with disabilities to ensure that the content reflects real-life situations and customer needs.

This new content continued to be delivered in 2005 in the Bus Operator Recertification program where speakers selected by the working group discussed accessibility issues in the classroom portion of the program.

The Collectors and Subway Operators Recertification programs and the Collectors Initial program were also revised in 2005 to include the new accessibility and sensitivity content. Delivery of these revised programs began in 2006 and will continue through 2007.

The Streetcar Operator Recertification program is being revised in 2006 to include the new content and will start delivery in 2007.

In October 2006, Wheel-Trans staff will be trained on the accessible features found at subways and on buses. This will provide valuable knowledge for the Accessibility Orientation sessions to be held in the future.

3.3 Customer Information

3.3.1 Information on Elevator Status and Availability

Objective:

To provide timely public information on the in-service status of elevators.
(Reference: Section 6.3 of the 2003 Plan)

Progress/Plans:

New signage has been designed for placement at each elevator to assist customers who reach elevators that are temporarily out-of-service. The signage will direct customers to alternative accessible paths and services at, or in close vicinity of, an elevator that is out-of-order. The signage was developed with the assistance of the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation and tested at Davisville Station in 2004. Installation of the signage at 17 stations was completed, with signage installation proceeding at all remaining elevators in the system (13 stations).

3.3.2 Information on Accessible Services

Objective:

To provide improved information to passengers about accessible services through the development and distribution of brochures about accessibility features, and information on the TTC web site. (Reference: Section 6.3 of the 2003 Plan)

Progress/Plans:

In November 2005, an updated Easier Access Booklet, which provides information on accessible TTC services, fares, telephone information services, etc., was distributed in hard

copy and was posted on the TTC's web site at: www.toronto.ca/ttc/accessible.htm. An updated edition of the Easier Access Booklet is set for distribution in November 2006.

Additional information on accessible services posted on the TTC web site include:

- ACAT Information,
- Accessible Alternative Signage,
- Accessible Routes and Stations,
- Easier Access Booklet, and
- Wheel-Trans Policies and User Information.

The TTC's Accessible Transit Services Plans are also available on the TTC's web site. They can be found at:

www.toronto.ca/ttc/schedules/service_reports.htm#accessibletransitservicesplan

In February 2006, Wheel-Trans introduced an on-line service for registrants to obtain trip information, www.wheeltrans.ttc.ca/trips and, in May 2006, Wheel-Trans introduced an automated phone call-out service that notifies registrants with information on their confirmed trip times, and vehicle types.

3.3.3 Station Directory Signage

Objective:

To design and implement directory signage incorporating accessibility information at all subway stations with accessible bus routes. (*Reference: Appendix 3 of the 2003 Plan*)

Progress/Plans:

Directory signage that incorporates accessibility information has been implemented at three stations: Kipling, Eglinton, and Broadview. In the next 15 - 18 months, directory signage installation is scheduled for Eglinton West, York Mills, St. Clair, and Lawrence West subway stations. This program will continue to be expanded.

4.0 Community Input through ACAT

Objective:

To obtain effective community input on issues related to the implementation of improved accessibility of TTC facilities and services. (*Reference: Section 4.1, Appendix 3 of the 2003 Plan*)

Progress/Plans:

There were a great number of matters for which the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT) and its various subcommittees provided advice to TTC staff and/or

to the Toronto Transit Commission itself since the last TTC Accessible Transit Services Plan update.

ACAT continued to provide advice on the design of accessible stations, the acquisition and assignment of accessible buses to routes they identified as being of priority, and such operational practices as the announcements of stops. For example, in 2006, Broadview Station and Jane Station became accessible to TTC standards, the latest Orion VII low-floor accessible buses were allocated and a corresponding number of non-accessible buses were retired, and the TTC tested prototype stop announcement technologies for surface services. ACAT assisted with each of these initiatives and more.

One of the major undertakings for ACAT in 2006 was providing advice on the design of the new subway cars which the TTC is obtaining. The ACAT Design Review Subcommittee was asked to review the design of current subway cars and comment on where adjustments to current designs would be warranted and/or to identify features to be added to the new subway cars. Staff took ACAT's insights into consideration in the drafting of the design plans and the development of a prototype car for further review by ACAT and by the general public.

Where the car design group and ACAT were not in complete agreement, as was the case with the design of seating, the positions were communicated to the TTC's Commission.

The minutes of ACAT meetings are posted within the Easier Access portion of the TTC's website at: http://www.toronto.ca/ttc/schedules/service_reports.htm#acat

Those wanting to obtain a better appreciation of the numerous accessibility matters that have come before ACAT may wish to refer to the minutes.

5.0 Implications of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

As noted in the Introduction, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) required public transit service providers to carry out certain activities, including producing accessibility plans.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was meant to overcome limitations in the ODA, such as the lack of accessibility target dates. The AODA requires accessible services and facilities for all sectors to be in place by 2025. The legislation also requires the creation of accessibility standards, and outlines the processes for the development of the standards.

In 2006, the work to create standards for customer services and for transportation was initiated by the Province of Ontario. The TTC supports the objectives of the AODA and has been assisting in the development of the transportation standards by participating in the Transportation Standards Development Committee and by providing information to the committee and the consultants supporting the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

In July, the Toronto Transit Commission forwarded a report to the Minister of Community and Social Services and others noting that the process for the development of standards

had unrealistic deadlines and provided little attention to “the feasibility and operational and cost implications of the proposed standards” and that this “could result in substantial unexpected costs and/or a net deterioration in the provision of accessible transit services”.

The Commission report indicated that the standards could have significant implications for the way in which accessible transit services are to be provided, and the cost of those services. The report also indicated the Province is not planning to provide additional funding for any changes to services, facilities, or operations required as a result of the standards.

An example was provided about how accessibility standards used in another jurisdiction resulted in dramatic increases in some transit costs and in pressure to reduce the overall amount of service provided to help offset the cost increases. However, the Commission report could not assess these or other approaches because “the standards are still being developed and the cost and operational implications remain uncertain”.

In addition to the transportation standards, the TTC will be subject to standards for customer service, built environment, employment, information, and communications as they are put in place by the Province of Ontario. Again, the Province is not planning to fund additional costs which might result from the introduction of these standards either.

The Province is expected to issue at least some of the accessibility standards in early 2007. If that is the case, the next edition of the TTC’s Accessible Transit Services Plan may be able to outline the cost and service implications and any impacts on the accessibility objectives outlined elsewhere in this report.

A section of the 2003 TTC report was titled “Funding is the Key”. Funding support from every level of government will be even more critical in the future than it was in 2003 if accessibility standards are to be implemented without increases in fares and/or service reductions to compensate for added costs which might result from any Provincially-imposed standards.
