

2011 - 2012 GREATER SUDBURY TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

The freedom to make choices is, in our mobile society, dependent upon the freedom to move.

--- Colorado Transit

Aim

The aim of the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan is to describe measures that Greater Sudbury Transit has taken and will take to identify, remove and prevent barriers to public access to Greater Sudbury Transit.

Objectives

The Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan describes the process by which Greater Sudbury Transit identifies, reviews and prevents barriers to public access to the Transit system and includes a list of barriers to be addressed and measures which will be undertaken to ensure barrier removal is completed as expeditiously as possible within the resources allocated to Greater Sudbury Transit services.

Description of Greater Sudbury Transit

The City of Greater Sudbury was created on January 1, 2001 combining the Region of Sudbury, the Cities of Sudbury and Valley East and the Towns of Walden, Rayside-Balfour, Onaping-Falls, Capreol and Nickel Centre into one municipality which spans 3,627 square kilometers and is the largest Ontario City by land mass. The City of Greater Sudbury is almost 2/3 the size of Prince Edward Island and has a population of 160,000.

Greater Sudbury Transit vehicles drive 3.9 million kilometres annually, providing 163,463 hours of service and 4.8 million passenger trips. With the purchase of seven new buses in September 2011, Greater Sudbury Transit's fleet of 60 buses is fully accessible and delivers services across a route network that spans the community. The North/South route coverage is 45.7 kilometres while the East/West route length is 68 kilometres.

Conventional transit services are supplemented by Handi-Transit. Over the course of the past decade, Handi-Transit Services have been significantly enhanced, to match conventional transit service.

Accessibility Advisory Panel

The Accessibility Advisory Panel (AAP) was established by the Council of the City of Greater Sudbury as mandated by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act and is comprised primarily of persons with disabilities. The Accessibility Advisory Panel is to provide advice to Council, on an annual basis, about the preparation and implementation of two accessibility plans: the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan and the Greater Sudbury Accessibility Plan.

The members of the Accessibility Advisory Panel for the City of Greater Sudbury are:

Linda Whiteside (Chair)	Bob Bannister
Lionel Courtemanche (Vice-Chair)	Andrew Olivier
E.J. Craig Ticalo (Vice-Chair)	Earl Black
Councillor Claude Berthiaume	Linda Mende
Councillor Joscelyne Landry-Altman	Norma Fitzgerald

The staff team who have assisted the Accessibility Advisory Panel with their deliberations are:

Robert Gauthier	Manager of Transit Operations
Caroline Hallsworth	Executive Director, Administrative Services
Linda Purvis	Executive Assistant to Executive Director

Greater Sudbury Transit Commitment to Accessibility Planning

The people of the City of Greater Sudbury support the rights of persons of all ages and abilities to enjoy equal opportunities and to participate fully in the life of the community. The preamble to the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* states “that Ontarians with disabilities experience barriers to participating in the mainstream of Ontario society”. Geographic distance and physical accessibility are two barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating freely in all aspects of society and they are barriers that can be removed through the introduction of an accessible transit service to all areas of the community. The City of Greater Sudbury has removed geographic barriers between communities and is committed to the continued and strategic expansion of its area transit system so as to enable all citizens to have the freedom to move within our City.

The goal of Greater Sudbury Transit is to be a public transit system that is accessible, integrated to the degree possible, that fully respects the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and that provides appropriate alternatives for those who are unable to use even the most accessible conventional transit services. This goal is derived from the Ontario Human Rights Commission Consultation Report entitled “Human Rights and Public Transit Services in Ontario”. To help us attain this goal, all front line employees of Greater Sudbury Transit and Handi Transit have undergone accessibility training in 2010.

Based on these principles of integration and respect for dignity, it is our goal to integrate as many riders as possible on our accessible conventional transit system while providing a parallel system for those citizens who cannot access our highly accessible route system so that we can provide accessible transportation to the more than 95% of the residents of our City who live within 2 kilometres of our service boundaries.

To help attain this goal, the City of Greater Sudbury will be launching an advertizing campaign promoting full accessibility of the conventional bus system. As part of this campaign, staff will schedule multiple open house sessions at various locations such as seniors homes, medical clinics and other public venues. The intent of these sessions is to allow potential bus users an opportunity to learn how to board a transit bus with any type of mobility aid device without having to worry about holding up a bus from its route.

Ridership

The City of Greater Sudbury's Policy on Transportation for Persons with Physical Disabilities defines the service standards for accessible transportation. Since the implementation of that policy through the introduction of the harmonized and expanded service, Handi-Transit ridership has increased from 42,616 rides in 2003 to 127,085 rides in 2010 and Handi-Transit now provides service that is fully parallel to the conventional transit system.

The City of Greater Sudbury's Policy on Transportation for Persons with Physical Disabilities reflects an Ontario Court ruling that persons with disabilities who need assistance in order to use transit services because of cognitive disabilities need attendants and not parallel transit systems. Greater Sudbury Transit has implemented measures to facilitate ridership by attendants on conventional transit, including the provision of training passes for attendants and the review of an attendant or escort pass program for ambulatory passengers with special needs. In 2010, a new attendant pass program was implemented which allows required attendants to ride for free on the parallel transit system.

Recent Service Enhancements

As noted early in this plan, with the delivery of seven new fully accessible buses in the fall of 2011, each and every bus in the Greater Sudbury Transit fleet will be fully accessible. This means that all transit routes will now have fully accessible transit service.

Further, in 2009, a new stop announcement system with both audio and visual announcements was implemented and later adjusted to address the requests and concerns of the system users. In 2011, a live information link to any mobile online device was implemented which enables users of the conventional transit system to find out how many minutes away their bus is from the bus stop. This allows the user to walk to the bus stop only a few minutes ahead of time and not have to stand too long.

Accessibility Planning Process

The City of Greater Sudbury Accessibility Advisory Panel meets regularly and conducts an annual review of the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan. Greater Sudbury Transit has identified a barrier as a human made design flaw in the environment that prevents or hinders a person with a disability from fully participating in society or from accessing a service, in this case Transit.

The Accessibility Advisory Panel recognizes the value of soliciting input from citizens, and in particular from transit users, in identifying barriers to public access of Greater Sudbury Transit and accordingly scheduled an evening of public consultations on June 16, 2011. The goal of the meeting was to hear from all those interested in accessible transit systems in the City of Greater Sudbury. In particular, the Accessibility Advisory Panel indicated that it wished to identify barriers, be they physical barriers, information or communication barriers, attitudinal barriers, policies or practices, which make it difficult for a person with a disability to access Greater Sudbury Transit or Handi-Transit. For each barrier identified, the Accessibility Advisory Panel hoped also to receive suggestions as to how the barrier might be overcome. The meeting was advertised in community newspapers in both official languages and letters of invitation were sent to groups and organizations which work with persons with special needs.

Following the public meeting, the Accessibility Advisory Panel meets to review the Greater Sudbury Transit Draft Accessibility Plan and to identify strategies to monitor progress in barrier removal and prevention. The 2011 – 2012 Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan will be presented to Council for approval. Following approval, the communication portion of the plan will be activated.

Barriers Identified and Timeframes for Barrier Removal

All barriers identified through the public input process were reviewed and those which relate to Greater Sudbury Transit have been included in this plan. Items specific to a particular individual have been reviewed with that individual and are included in the plan if they apply to transit users as a group. Items identified at the public meeting, which were previously addressed and resolved are not included in this report. Examples of requests previously resolved include the request for accessible service to Silver City, the request for an alternate bus stop at the Southridge Mall and, the request to have both audible and visual signals on the stop request and fare box systems.

Barriers identified as part of the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan review, together with strategies for removal and/or prevention and responsibilities for resolution are identified below. The Accessibility Advisory Panel considered that all barriers which can be removed or addressed at little or no cost should be of highest priority, as should those barriers which have a significant impact on a person with disabilities ability to access Greater Sudbury Transit. Below is a list of barriers which have been identified by the public at the public hearing held on June 16th, 2011 and in written submissions received by the Panel, as well as the actions recommended at the meeting to remove these barriers.

**Barriers to Access as Identified by the Public
With Public Recommendations for Barrier Removal**

Focus: To assist the City of Greater Sudbury in preparing its 2011-2012 Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan;
To identify barriers to access of municipal facilities, programs and services;
To recommend ways to remove barriers.

BARRIER TYPE AND DESCRIPTION	PUBLIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BARRIER REMOVAL
Transit information line is not accessible to persons with hearing impairments and there is no TTY at the Transit system.	Add both hearing and voice carryover to the TTY. Ensure that TTY is available at all buildings.
Bus stop signs are hard to find and identify for persons with visual disabilities and can be easily confused with other signage.	A high contrast number was added to all bus stop signs in the middle of the picture. This number is used to query the next bus arrival and makes the sign stand out from other signs.
Toilet paper holders are not very accessible in the transit terminal's public washrooms.	Do a review of all of the public washrooms and make the required adjustments.
It is sometimes difficult to see if the stop indicator has been activated on some of the transit buses.	Make sure there are no obstructions in front of the next stop indicators.

Review and Monitoring Process

Throughout the year, the Accessibility Advisory Panel meets regularly with City of Greater Sudbury staff to provide advice on modifying City policies to more closely address accessibility issues as they arise and accessibility standards as they are developed.

Communication of the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan

The Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan will be presented to the Council of the City of Greater Sudbury for their approval. Subsequently, the Plan will be made available on the City of Greater Sudbury Website and will be sent by e-mail or regular mail to all participants in the planning process who have indicated that they wish to receive a copy of the plan.