

## 2019-2021 Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan

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### Introduction

To build Greater Sudbury Transit as a viable transportation option, all customers must have access to its services. An accessible fleet was a significant step in this direction. However, overall system accessibility consists of many elements beyond accessible vehicles, including but not limited to: increased service levels, facility access, improved pedestrian connections, bus stop and shelter standards, signage, wayfinding and supportive operational programs, policies and customer service. For many, Greater Sudbury Transit is the only means of travel to and from work, school, medical appointments, community events and social activities. As Greater Sudbury Transit Service's accessibility improves, everyone benefits, leading to improved connectivity, citizens transportation independence and increased ridership.

Greater Sudbury Transit is dedicated to:

- Developing, improving and enhancing accessible transit services and associated facilities/infrastructure.
- Including persons with disabilities in developing/reviewing accessibility plans.
- Providing accessible services to customers; and
- Optimizing municipal investments to provide the right service for individuals (ex: door-to-door specialized transit, accessible conventional services).

The City of Greater Sudbury has affirmed its commitment to providing its citizens with an inclusive and accessible community through its passage and adoption of strategies and policies that promote these values. Of note is the recent commitment made by Council in the 2019-2027 City of Greater Sudbury Corporate Strategic Plan that identifies, as a priority, the creation of a healthier community by implementing the Age-Friendly Strategy and ensuring accessibility.

The City of Greater Sudbury supports 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." A "barrier" is defined as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability. Barriers can present themselves in various forms be they physical, information, education, communication, technological, procedural or attitudinal, which make it difficult for a person with a disability to access programs and services offered by Greater Sudbury Transit.

Geographic distance and physical accessibility are two barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating freely in all aspects of society. The goal of Greater Sudbury Transit is to remove these barriers by providing a public transit system that is accessible, integrated to the highest degree possible, which fully respects the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and provides appropriate options, choices and support for those who are unable to use even the most accessible conventional transit services.

Based on these principles of integration and respect for dignity, Greater Sudbury Transit will ensure that this and all future Accessibility Plans will have at their core the goal of integrating as many riders as possible on the accessible conventional transit system while continuing to provide a parallel system for those citizens who cannot.

## **Governing Legislative and Policy Framework**

The Province of Ontario is responsible for determining the legislative framework and standards for accessibility for organizations across the province. Under the provincial legislative framework, municipalities, including the City of Greater Sudbury, are responsible for accessibility as it relates to municipal programs, services and facilities. Specifically, accessibility within the City of Greater Sudbury is mandated and governed by a number of pieces of provincial legislation and regulations, including the following:

- [\*The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001\*](#)
- [\*The Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990\*](#)
- [\*The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)\*](#)
- [\*Regulation 191/11– The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations \(IASR\)\*](#)
  - Part I – General Requirements
  - Part II – Information and Communications Standards
  - Part III – Employment Standards
  - Part IV – Transportation Standards
  - Part IV.1 – Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Building Environment)
  - Part IV.2 – Customer Service Standards

This 2019-2021 Greater Sudbury GOVA Transit Accessibility Plan is guided by the [City of Greater Sudbury 2017-2021 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#), consistent with requirements established under IASR 191/11.

## **Overview of the City of Greater Sudbury**

The City of Greater Sudbury was created on January 01, 2001 combining the Region of Sudbury, the City of Sudbury, Valley East and the Towns of Walden, Rayside-Balfour, Onaping-Falls, Capreol and Nickel Centre into one municipality containing a mix of urban, suburban, rural and wilderness environments which spans 3,627 square kilometers and is the largest Ontario City by land mass with a population of approximately 161,000. The low population density relative to the vast geographical area of the city directly impacts accessibility of its residents but highlights the importance of transportation.

## **Greater Sudbury Transit Services**

Greater Sudbury Transit provides both Conventional and Specialized Transit Services.

Greater Sudbury Transit delivers Conventional Fixed Route Services across a route network that spans the community with a fleet that is equipped with accessible features. Conventional Transit Service is supplemented by Specialized Services, known as GOVA Plus. GOVA Plus is a specialized transit service that provides transportation services for eligible residents that are unable, because of a disability, to ride conventional transit.

### **Summary of Service**

#### **Conventional Service**

Conventional fixed route and GOVA Zone service includes 23 fixed routes and 8 GOVA Zone routes. Fixed routes are serviced by a fleet of 58 forty-foot buses, provide 5,036,000 trips over 163,200 service hours and travel 4,200,000 kilometres per year.

#### **Specialized Service**

Specialized service is a shared ride, door-to-door, pre-booked service where trips are awarded on a first come, first serve basis. It is a contracted service that is serviced by a fleet of 15 specialized buses, provides 120,000 trips per year through 50,100 service hours and travel 1,115,00 kilometres per year.

## City of Greater Sudbury's Accessibility Advisory Panel

Throughout the year, the Accessibility Advisory Panel meets regularly with members of the Greater Sudbury Transit team to provide suggestions and advice in order to address accessibility issues as they arise.

The Accessibility Advisory Panel's mandate is to provide insight on matters related to the accessibility of municipal services, municipal programs and municipal facilities and provide feedback as required under the *AODA*. The primary objectives are:

- Assist in the development of the City of Greater Sudbury Municipal Accessibility Plan and the City of Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan.
- Assist in the development of plans for the City of Greater Sudbury to come into compliance with the accessibility standards as set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR) under the *AODA*.
- Provide insight regarding the accessibility of municipal programs, services and facilities to City of Greater Sudbury staff as requested.

The City of Greater Sudbury Accessibility Advisory Panel conducts an annual review of the Greater Sudbury Transit Accessibility Plan. 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.

## Accessibility Planning, Monitoring and Review Process

Most recently, public input was collected while performing the City of Greater Sudbury Transit Action Plan (Appendix A). Discussions were held during open houses across the community, ride along interviews on GOVA Plus buses, one-on-one telephone interviews with GOVA Plus Eligible users, and through workshops with community partners and advocacy groups as well as the Accessibility Advisory Panel. Feedback on GOVA Plus services was gathered through this process, and was highlighted in the Greater Sudbury Transit Action Plan report with associated recommendations to Council in 2018.

Of importance to current GOVA Plus eligible users is the ability to use GOVA Zone and Conventional GOVA Transit services dynamically. This could be achieved with better integration of both GOVA Plus and Conventional GOVA Transit services and would allow all eligible users the ability to use a combination of the services to complete some or all of their trip needs without having to book in advance. The end result of an integrated system is the ability for eligible users to take part in all community events and programs.

## Execution of Plan

Greater Sudbury Transit is constantly looking at ways that services can be improved beyond what is required. It is important to note that the availability of resources is a contributing factor when assessing the pace of progress in reducing or eliminating accessibility barriers. Resource constraints will mean that not all barriers can be addressed at once. As a result, prioritization of initiatives is required. While it is important to focus on barriers to be removed, it is equally important to recognize the vast steps taken in a relatively short period of time.

## Previous and Current Accessibility Achievements

Greater Sudbury Transit has proactively implemented many accessibility initiatives since the inception of the AODA. There are 76 [Transportation Standards under the IASR](#). Greater Sudbury Transit complies with all applicable (74) standards.

The following provides a summary of the achievements made since 2016;

- **GOVA Plus (formerly Handi-Transit) Service Recommendation Report** – On January 12, 2016 Council approved a report presenting recommendations based on a Three Tier approach which aim to improve GOVA Plus Services and increase accessibility to public transit services for the community.
- **Customer Service** - Yearly training is provided to all Sudbury Transit Operators regarding the AODA. This training is documented as outlined in the Act. Training includes sensitivity training, defining what good customer service is and clearly outlines what Greater Sudbury Transit’s expectations are of its operators. Beginning in 2020 and into 2021, in depth Customer Service training continues to be a top priority for all CGS employees.
- **AODA Compliance** – Greater Sudbury Transit has a duty to oversee and ensure appropriate GOVA Plus service is being provided by the third party service provider. In order to increase the focus of this important responsibility, the Supervisor of GOVA Plus Services position was been created, bringing certified expertise on AODA compliance. This position is also responsible for ensuring all applicable legislative requirements are being met or exceeded in both the Conventional and Specialized Transit Services and ensures Greater Sudbury Transit is aware of any legislative changes that may affect service.
- **Education/Travel Training** – A Mobility Training Program (also known as “Travel Training”) has been developed to introduce public transit to people with disabilities and older adults who are hesitant to try transit on their own and are unaware of the accessibility features of the conventional transit vehicles. This

training has been introduced in group formats and thus far is very well received. Given the importance of this type of training, it is also now being offered through a one-on-one format.

- **Pass Usage Parity** – Riders of GOVA Plus no longer need to purchase separate pass cards to ride on the conventional transit system. All GOVA Plus passes are now accepted on Conventional Greater Sudbury Transit buses. This change provides ease of use and convenience for all GOVA Plus eligible riders.
- **Policies and Procedures** – Published policies and procedures are AODA compliant and are being adhered to. Policies and practices were recently revised and amendments were made to the GOVA Plus Rider Guide. This guide has been mailed out to all active GOVA Plus Clients.
- **GOVA Plus Service Mandate** – July 08, 2019 the Community Services Committee approved the recommendations provided in the Specialized Transit Service Review Report (Appendix B) that The Greater City of Sudbury adopt the same definition of “disability” as used by the AODA and Human Rights Code.
- **Public Image** – July 2019, the name “Handi” was changed to something non-oppressive to these services users. Through the Greater Sudbury Transit Action Plan rebranding process, Handi-Transit has been rebranded GOVA Plus.

## Opportunities for Improvement

- **GOVA Plus Eligibility Process** - Currently in the review and revision stage. Last revision of this process occurred in 2013. Previous Specialized Transit staff reports included recommended changes to the eligibility processes, application forms and training of staff members conducting the screening process. A study is underway with a focus on providing recommendations for improving the eligibility process and reviewing what impact the implementation of these suggestions will have on the system and its users.
- **Continuation of Education/Travel Training** – Building on the success of the Mobility Training Program thus far and keeping in mind the goal of better integration of conventional transit services and specialized, continuation of this training will provide passengers with disabilities as well as seniors, choices of transportation that best suit their needs.
- **Bus Stops and Shelters** – Greater Sudbury Transit currently has 115 bus shelters with 40% (45) of those presently being upgraded to meet AODA standards by making them accessible. Bus stop and shelter standards will be developed to

ensure that accessibility to the stops is considered consistently throughout the route network and this will include electronic audio pre-boarding announcements emanating from the bus were implemented March 2018.

Greater Sudbury Transit will continue to revise procedures and processes ensuring full compliance with all legislation governing their services and building on the successes of not only the City of Greater Sudbury but also those of other comparable communities. Greater Sudbury Transit will continue, as it has historically, to enlist the opinions and guidance of the Accessibility Advisory Panel members and the public in its improvements planning and will ensure that accessibility is considered and included in all aspects of the City of Greater Sudbury Transit Action Plan.