

St. Catharines Transit Commission

2019 - 2023

Accessibility Plan

ST. CATHARINES TRANSIT COMMISSION ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2019 - 2023

The following document is the St. Catharines Transit's Accessibility Plan for the five-year period 2019 – 2023. It forms a part of the City of St. Catharines Accessibility Plan.

Introduction

The St. Catharines Transit Commission (SCTC) is committed to developing, implementing, maintaining and enhancing accessibility as set out under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its Standards for people with a disability in a manner that:

- Reflects 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.

Report on Achievements

SCTC has been working at increasing access to all people since the early 1990's. In July 2011, the Integrated Accessibility Regulation (IAR) became law under the AODA.

The following are accessibility achievements made during the previous plan period 2013 – 2018:

1. St Catharines Transit met all requirements under O.Reg. 191/11 Transportation Section having compliance deadlines on or prior to December 31, 2018.
2. An audit of all SCTC bus stops was completed, identifying the physical characteristics (including accessibility) of each of the 1,100 stops in the system. This will be used to plan accessibility improvements accessibility at transit stops in cooperation with public works staff at the City of St. Catharines and Niagara Region.

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3. 52 new bus shelters with accessible concrete pads and pathways to the sidewalk were installed on bus routes.
4. 66 new bus benches were installed on bus routes.
5. 34 new accessible buses were purchased as replacement of buses which were past their useful life and to increase the frequency of accessible service on Sundays.
6. An additional Sunday morning Paratransit assignment was introduced.
7. Paratransit hours of service were increased to start at 6 am, Monday-Saturday.
8. 8 Paratransit vehicles were put in service replacing vehicles that had exceeded their useful life.
9. Improved accessibility at stops throughout the city with larger concrete pads.
10. Installed an accessible customer service counter at the Downtown Bus Terminal.
11. Upgraded the Stop Announcement System on all conventional buses.
12. SCTC completed the required Integrated Accessibility Standard training of staff, using the module developed by the city.
13. Curb access at the SCTC office administration entrance was relocated to a more accessible location and widened.
14. St. Catharines Paratransit Advisory Board was consulted on the content of the new Support Person policy and application process.
15. The Paratransit application form was updated and reissued, to reflect our new policies regarding accessibility.
16. Expanded Accessible Conventional buses service on Sundays and introduced an additional route seven days per week.
17. Introduce “fillable” online application forms for Paratransit and Support Person Pass
18. Accessibility features were added to SCTC website which include a new high contrast feature, navigation aids and the ability to increase or decrease the size of the font. Timetables were also added for each route to allow screen readers to properly identify the times buses arrive.
19. A smartphone APP was launched that will allow passengers with disabilities easier access to real-time information.

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Barriers to Access at St. Catharines Transit

St. Catharines Transit recognizes that some parts of its infrastructure may present certain 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 to the extent that is reasonably possible.

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 under taken, however this cannot be accomplished instantaneously.
- Landing pads:
 - Boarding and exiting buses can be difficult at stops that do not have a concrete landing pad.
- Shelters:
 - During inclement weather, the absence of a shelter at the bus stop can be a barrier to using SCT.
 - Some shelters do not have interior seating and many bus stops do not have exterior seating.

St. Catharines Downtown Terminal

The Downtown Terminal is owned by Infrastructure Ontario and SCT is one of many tenants. All SCT bus routes (except for two) pass through the Downtown Terminal, which facilitates customers making connections to other buses in the system. On an average weekday during the academic year, SCTC accommodates over 25,000 trips.

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.

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- The public washrooms are not fully accessible due to their size.

Buses

- 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.

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.

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. SCTC further recognizes that resource constraints require a process of prioritization.

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Actions planned for 2019 - 2023

SCTC intends to make its services more accessible by taking the following actions over the next five years:

1. Upgrade approximately 80 stops to improve accessibility.
2. Install 40 new accessible shelters.
3. 40 hour per week service expansion in September 2019.
4. Add 3 additional accessible platforms at the bus terminal.
5. Purchase 32 accessible buses.
6. Purchase 9 Paratransit vehicles.
7. Renovations at Downtown Terminal to include accessible washroom facilities.
8. Participate in the Region of Niagara Specialized Transit review study.
9. Conduct a full accessibility compliance audit.

The SCTC will prepare an annual status report on the progress of measures taken to implement this Plan and post the status report on our website and provide it in an accessible format upon request.

Communicating the Accessibility Plan to the Public

SCTC will communicate the accessibility plan to the public through the following actions:

- The Plan will be available at our administrative office in an accessible format upon request, also on our website and at City Hall.
- The Commission's Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy is available on our website and at our administrative office.