

Belleville Transit

Welcome to Belleville Transit's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. This quasi-standalone document has been prepared in conjunction with the Corporation of the City of Belleville's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, in order to better address the unique characteristics of our transit system. Shared accessibility focused policies and procedures are cross referenced throughout this plan. This Belleville Transit Accessibility Plan addresses conventional (Belleville Transit), specialized (Mobility Bus) services and accessible taxicabs licensed and operating within the City of Belleville. For the purposes of this plan, unless otherwise noted, "Belleville Transit" refers all three (3) components of our municipal transit system. Both the City of Belleville and Belleville Transit's Accessibility Plans remain in effect until end of year 2022. To access the Corporation of the City of Belleville's full plan please visit [the accessibility page of our municipal website](#) or contact the Accessibility Coordinator.

Belleville Transit plays an imperative role in the master transportation system of our municipality. A public transit system provides residents with the opportunity to participate in their community regardless of age, income, or ability. Belleville Transit has been designed to support our residents in their access to education, employment opportunities, shopping for goods or services, recreational activities, medical purposes, and general independence to get around our community. In this way, not only does Belleville Transit serve as our public mode of transportation, but it does so in a way that enhances inclusion and equal opportunity.

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (A.O.D.A) the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (I.A.S.R) for Transportation details the legislative requirements for providing accessible conventional and specialized public transit services. Consistent with its responsibilities under the A.O.D.A, Belleville Transit established a mission statement which captures the importance of and commitment to accessibility in the provision of transit services.

"Our mission is to provide safe, accessible, and courteous public transportation services in response to the needs of our community"

Fun Facts About Belleville Transit (as of 2017):

- Belleville Transit's conventional bus system operates seven (7) days a week, collectively travels approximately 2,550 kilometers per day and delivers roughly 3,000 riders per day to various destinations
- All sixteen (16) conventional buses currently in fleet include accessibility features such as kneeling entrance way with a ramp, visual and audio announcements for next stop, grab bars, and priority seating with space for mobility devices which includes a securement option
- Belleville Mobility Bus fleet consists of three (3) specialized buses which can hold up to five (5) individuals in mobility devices and six (6) ambulatory riders
- Belleville Mobility Bus runs on the same service hours as the conventional service option and delivers "curb to curb" transit service
- Daily, Belleville Mobility operates two (2) of its specialized service buses and subsidizes with accessible taxis when needed
- Approximately three hundred (300) bus stops are conveniently located along each of the nine (9) conventional bus routes. Most stops are located at street intersections to facilitate the boarding/disembarking process
- There are currently nine (19) shelters at community bus stops across the city
- There is a dedicated Capital Budget allocation for bus stop accessibility upgrades
- Belleville Transit's conventional bus system is now active with Google Maps – Travel Planner
- Belleville Transit currently employs 29 full time operators

Policies and Procedures

All City of Belleville accessibility focused policies apply to Belleville Transit. Where appropriate, transit specific policies have been created, for example training policies and procedures for onboard equipment used to secure wheel chairs on conventional buses.

The City of Belleville's Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, developed in compliance with A.O.D.A legislation, applies in its entirety to Belleville Transit. Transit specific customer service procedures have been added to supplement accessible customer service training for Belleville Transit employees, such as those detailing how operators are to correctly use accessibility equipment and features or emergency preparedness for the safety of persons with disabilities on board.

During 2017 the Transportation Standard underwent review by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. A provincial committee was established and along with public input they will provide specific recommendations for updating the Transportation Standard to the Minister Responsible for Accessibility. The Corporation of the City of Belleville and Belleville Transit will continue to work in unison towards providing a fully functional, accessible public transportation system. To this end, we will undergo internal reviews of our own and establish short and long term objectives until the realization of our goal has been succeeded.

Accessibility Inclusion:

Belleville Transit has made extensive and ongoing progress transitioning the conventional transit fleet to meet the needs of customers with disabilities. The fleet now consists of sixteen (16) accessible coaches with such features as kneeling entrances with ramps, designated priority seating with securement option for mobility devices, and audio/visual announcements of all stops. Beyond establishing fare parity, Belleville Transit offers a reduced fare option for individuals with disabilities and allows for a support person to accompany an individual with a disability for free.

The Corporation of the City of Belleville along with Bellville Transit are committed to continuously upgrading both the conventional and specialized service options.

Components of the A.O.D.A & I.A.S.R for Transportation

→ CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Where we are at –

The Corporation of the City of Belleville has an established feedback process which can be either accessed on the website, or customers may visit or contact City Hall to leave feedback or request the document in an accessible format. There is no separate feedback structure for Belleville Transit, customers are invited to submit any comments, questions, or concerns through the City of Belleville feedback forms and any transit specific feedback will be shared with the General Manager of Belleville Transit. The City of Belleville and Belleville Transit will respond to all inquiries within a reasonable time, and when requested will do so in a manner which takes into account a person's disability.

Where we are going –

Feedback is an important tool used in planning and decision making for Belleville Transit. Both the conventional and specialized transit systems are a public service provided to, as the mission statement validates, respond to the needs of our community. Belleville Transit will work to promote the feedback process and develop a system by which to track it, so as to allow for relevant data collection and review for planning and decision making. Feedback and any necessary follow up will also be reviewed with the Belleville Accessibility Advisory Committee.

→ FARES (including support persons, service animals, and mobility aids)

Where we are at –

In accordance with A.O.D.A regulations Belleville Transit subscribes to fare parity, meaning that we will not charge a higher fare to a person with a disability than a fare that is charged to a person without a disability. As a best practice in accessibility and customer service, Belleville Transit allows for a support person to accompany a person with a disability free of charge.

Also in keeping compliance with A.O.D.A regulations, Belleville Transit will allow for a person with a disability to ride with a support animal and will not charge a fee to do so or separate the person from their support animal at any time. Furthermore, Belleville transit will not charge a fee for the storage of any mobility aids or assistive devices, and will allow a rider to store their aid or device within reach when possible without compromising safety for themselves or other passengers.

As part of its commitment to accessibility and inclusion, Belleville Transit offers a reduced fare option. Riders with disabilities have the opportunity to apply for this

reduced transit pass, which is applicable for both the conventional and (when eligible) specialized service options.

Where we are going –

The operational review completed in 2015 suggested a review of Belleville Transit fare options, and the recommendation to streamline the number of pass types that are available. Belleville Transit will consider the recommendations of the operational review and examine the fare options to ensure best practices, and that the fare groups meet the needs of the target demographic for which they were developed.

→ TRANSIT STOPS

Where we are at –

There are approximately three hundred (300) bus stops along the nine (9) conventional service bus routes. If the official bus stop is not accessible for any reason, the bus operator shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to board or disembark the vehicle at the closest safe location. It is the responsibility of all bus operators to report temporary accessibility barriers at transit stops to the appropriate authority as soon as possible.

In the past, a commonly identified accessibility issue at bus stops has been snow removal or maintenance during the winter months. In response to this customer feedback Belleville Transit has set aside resources to address these concerns when the need arises.

Where we are going –

There is an allocation of the Capital Budget designated for accessibility upgrades to bus stops. Projects under this budget will include installation of accessible shelters, signage, and addressing physical barriers such as sidewalks, curbs, and dropped curbs. Upgrades are being done in a phased approach and will include consultation with the Belleville Accessibility Advisory Committee as needed.

→ PRIORITY SEATING

Where we are at –

All 16 buses currently in fleet for the conventional service option are complete with priority seating. This means that on each bus, located towards the entrance doors of the bus, are clearly identified reserved seating areas for individuals with disabilities or other mobility needs (such as a pregnant women or senior citizens). The priority seating area includes space for a mobility device and an option for securement of the device.

Where we are going –

Belleville Transit will develop a communication strategy which will: A. inform the public about the purpose of priority seating and the requirement that passengers, other than persons with disabilities, must vacate the priority seating if its use is desired by a person with a disability, and B. promote the inclusive use of the accessible conventional service option by highlighting the accessible features of the conventional buses. This strategy will include redevelopment of the information provided on the webpage for Belleville Transit.

→ SERVICE DISRUPTIONS or NON FUNCTIONING EQUIPMENT

Where we are at –

Currently, any service disruptions or delays are posted on the municipal website.

Where we are going –

In our commitment to continued improvements in customer service and user experience, Belleville Transit will be exploring options for notification of service disruptions. As an exciting beginning, this past summer 2017 saw the wonderful addition of Google Maps for Belleville Transit's conventional service, a convenient new resource for users to plan out bus routes and schedules. Moving forward the goal for Belleville Transit will be to progress the functionality of the Google Maps resource to be a real time reflection of the transit service. Referred to as "Google Live", this system would automatically re-route or notify users of any service disruptions along their travel plan.

Belleville Transit also runs a Twitter feed, @BusBelleville, and will develop a strategy to utilize this social media resource to better serve our transit users. This strategy will endeavor to include notification of service disruptions, schedule delays, temporary route or schedule changes, non-functioning accessibility equipment, barriers at bus stops, and other relevant transit news or updates. The social media strategy will also aim to provide, when applicable, an alternate transit option during service disruptions and/or notice of how long the disruption is expected to last.

For the specialized service option Belleville Transit is exploring communication options such as email or phone for relaying any important notifications to its users. The User Manual for the Specialized Service will also provide Mobility Bus users with additional information regarding policies and procedures.

→ PRE-BOARDING & ON-BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where we are at –

All 16 buses currently in fleet for the conventional service are equipped with electronic signage on the outside front on the bus indicating the route number and direction / final

destination. On request, bus operators will provide verbal confirmation of this information as well. All 16 buses are also equipped with electronic audible and visual announcements of all destinations points or available route stops while the vehicle is on route.

Where we are going –

At this time there have been no concerns regarding pre-boarding or on-board announcements. Electronic boarding announcements are requirements which came in to affect January 2017, and all 16 buses are compliant with the specifications for signage as detailed by the A.O.D.A. Belleville Transit will continue to maintain or update the audible and visual electronic announcements as needed. Furthermore, and following accessible procurement practices, Belleville Transit will ensure any new vehicles added to the fleet also meet all A.O.D.A requirements.

Specialized Transit Service – Belleville Mobility Transit

→ APPLICATION & ELIGIBILITY

Where we are at –

Application forms for Belleville Mobility Transit may be obtained from City Hall, the Robert E. Ladoucier Transit Terminal, or downloaded from the City's website. To obtain this document in an accessible format please contact Belleville Transit or the Accessibility Coordinator. Completed forms, including the corresponding medical portion, must be returned to the Transit Office for review and approval. Eligibility will be determined within 14 calendar days of receipt of the completed application form. Any incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant.

Individuals are eligible to use Mobility Transit if they are a resident of the City of Belleville and are restricted in using fixed route transit because of a permanent or temporary disability. There are three categories of eligibility which could qualify an individual to use Mobility Transit, as defined by the A.O.D.A these categories are: Unconditional, Temporary, and Conditional. For further details regarding eligibility please contact Belleville Transit.

The primary goal of Belleville Mobility Transit remains the same, to respond to the needs of our community and furthermore to provide people with disabilities equal opportunity to access public transit to get around and participate in our community. With this in mind, Belleville Mobility Transit maintains the right to deny requests for specialized transportation services to persons who are categorized as having temporary or conditional eligibility, if the conventional transportation service is accessible and the individual has the ability to use it.

Where we are going –

Belleville Transit will be reviewing the application forms and process for Belleville Mobility to ensure all eligibility requirements are clear and help support the main function of this specialized service option. Additionally, a draft has been developed for a User Guide for Belleville Mobility Transit that details all policies and procedures which guide the operation of this specialized service option. The User Guide for Belleville Mobility will be reviewed by the Belleville Accessibility Advisory Committee and a finalized draft will be presented to City Council for adoption early 2018.

→ VISITORS & SPECIALIZED TRANSIT

Where we are at -

Belleville Transit will make the specialized transit service option available to visitors who provide confirmation that they are eligible for specialized services in their home region and/or who meet the eligibility requirements of Belleville Mobility Bus.

Where we are going –

In pursuit of further clarity, Belleville Transit will establish specific criteria to determine who falls into the category of visitor. This clarification will also include how visitors will access, book, use, and pay for the service.

→ ORIGIN TO DESTINATION SERVICES

Where we are at –

Following A.O.D.A legislation, specialized transportation service options must provide origin to destination trips within its service area and take into account the abilities or necessary accommodations for its passengers. According to the A.O.D.A, an origin to destination trip can include services on any accessible conventional transportation system as well. This means that, for example if there is a barrier for an individual to access the conventional service stop closest to their residence they may be granted eligibility for the specialized service, however this service may include pick up and drop off to an accessible conventional service stop which will carry the passenger for the remainder of the trip to their destination.

Currently Belleville Mobility Transit is operating on a “curb to curb” service plan, meaning that the specialized transit vehicle will pick up a passenger at an accessible location at the curb of the designated pick up spot and will drop off the passenger at an accessible location at the curb of the designated drop off spot.

Where we are going –

Although providing origin to destination service beyond the basic requirements of the AODA, including relaxed eligibility requirements, Belleville Mobility Transit has been experiencing some growing pains in terms of providing a fully functional specialized service option that meets the needs of people with disabilities in our community. In 2015

an operational review of the specialized service option was performed, and actions are being planned in order to improve this service and better meet the needs of its users.

→ SERVICE HOURS

Where we are at –

Belleville Mobility Bus is currently offering the same service hours and days as the conventional service option. Service hours currently consist of Monday to Friday 5:00am to 10:30pm, Saturday 5:30am to 7:30pm, and Sunday 9:00am to 6pm. Belleville Mobility Bus does not operate on public holidays.

Where we are going –

Belleville Transit is currently reviewing the service hours, days, and route schedules of the conventional service option to ensure the service is meeting the needs of its users in the most efficient way possible. In keeping compliance with the A.O.D.A, the specialized service option will at minimum have the same hours and days of service as the conventional service option.

→ BOOKING, TRIP RESTRICTIONS, & SERVICE DELAYS

Where we are at –

Belleville Transit manages a contract with Parkhurst Transportation, who handles the trip booking line on behalf of Belleville Mobility Bus. The dispatcher must be contacted by phone and utilizes a computer booking system to ensure the specialized service vehicles are used to their full potential. As much as possible Belleville Mobility Bus strives to offer same day booking services, but trip requests can also be made up to seven (7) days in advance. If the requested trip time is not available the booking agent may suggest alternate available times. There are no trip restrictions in terms of number of trips an individual can request or take.

Belleville Mobility Bus uses a thirty (30) minute pick up window for trips, meaning that the vehicle can arrive fifteen (15) minutes early or late from the scheduled pick up time and still be deemed “on-time”. If the vehicle will be arriving outside of this pick up window it is considered late and the dispatcher will attempt to call and advise the customer of the delay.

Where we are going –

The “User Manual” currently in development for the specialized service option will attempt to clarify and describe in more details the policies and procedures regarding operation of Belleville Mobility Bus, and will include topics such as trip booking and service delays. By the creation and review of this document with the Belleville

Accessibility Advisory Committee, Belleville mobility Bus hopes to establish some best practices in terms of the function and user experience for this specialized service option.

→ COMPANIONS & CHILDREN

Where we are at –

As previously outlined, a support person may travel with an individual with a disability free of charge. A support person is an attendant required to provide assistance to the individual during the trip or at the destination, and the customer must indicate on their application form that an attendant is required and this must be confirmed by a medical professional. A companion refers to an individual travelling as a friend, and will be permitted to accompany the registered customer subject to seat availability. A companion will be required pay the regular transit fare.

Children of a registered customer will be permitted to accompany the individual on the specialized vehicle, provided that the booking agent is notified at the time the trip is scheduled. Children over five (5) years old will be subject to paying a fare, unless the individual is accompanying the registered customer for the purpose of acting as a support person.

Where we are going –

In this instance as well, the “User Manual” currently in development for the specialized service option will attempt to clarify and describe in more details the policies and procedures regarding operation of Belleville Mobility Bus, and will include topics such as companions and children.

Specialized Taxicabs

Accessible taxicabs are used to supplement our Mobility Bus service. It is essential that the service hours of our specialized service option mirror that of the conventional service in order to ensure equal opportunity for everyone to get around and participate in our community. To accomplish this, Belleville Transit partners with Central Taxi who provides an accessible taxi during evenings and weekends as part of the Mobility Bus Service. Additionally, the accessible taxi will be used to cover any “overflow” during peak hours if needed. Booking and dispatch for the accessible taxi is done through the same system as regular Mobility Bus bookings. To maximize efficiency and to ensure we are meeting the needs of the residents of Belleville, an internal review of the policies and procedures regarding the Mobility Bus service and specialized taxicabs will occur as part of this multiyear plan. This review will allow Belleville Transit to identify any service gaps or barriers as we move forward with planning and development towards our goal to provide efficient and equitable transit services.