

Accessible Transit Service Plan

September 2004 Status Report



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1.0 Introduction

The *Accessible Transit Services Plan, Year-End 2003 Status Report*, which was presented to the Commission in February 2004, included a commitment to produce an annual report on the accessibility initiatives being undertaken at the TTC. This document provides a status report on the TTC's accessibility plans and projects up to September 2004. Subsequent annual reports will provide updates on progress for one-year periods.

The report is organised using the same structure as the 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. (Section 5.1)

Progress/Plans:

In 2004, the number of zone bus services was increased from 10 to 13. The additions were the Northwest/York University zone associated with accessible Downsview Station, Northeast/Don Mills Station associated with all the accessible stations on the Sheppard Subway, and the Rosedale South zone associated with accessible Yonge/Bloor station.

2.1.2 Wheel-Trans Productivity Improvements

Objective: To install automatic vehicle location (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. (Section 5.2)

Progress/Plans:

The original plan for a stand-alone project to install AVL equipment on Wheel Trans vehicles has been revised and this will now be considered as a possible option during the replacement of WTIS in 2005/2006. Following a decision to proceed, a system could be in place in 18 months to 24 months.

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 (Executive Summary, Section 5.3)

Progress/Plans:

The TTC received sufficient Orion VII low-floor accessible buses in 2004 to make four more bus routes accessible; the 38 HIGHLAND CREEK, 133 NEILSON, 134 PROGRESS, and the 172 CHERRY STREET routes. This selection of routes has been 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 important services or institutions. There are now 39 accessible regular bus routes, 2 accessible seasonal routes, 2 accessible Blue Night bus routes, and 4 accessible Community Bus routes, for a total of 45 accessible scheduled bus services.

It is expected that the remainder of the 2004 bus order will be received late in 2004 or early in 2005. As a result of the late delivery, the final selection of where these buses will be assigned has been deferred until closer to the arrival date, to ensure that the selection best reflects current ridership and demographic patterns.

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. (Executive Summary, Section 5.4)

Progress/Plans:

In March 2004, the Commission approved the addition of the North York Centre Station to the list of stations to be made accessible through the Easier Access II program. The addition of an elevator and other accessibility features are scheduled to be completed in 2007.

Eglinton Station: The opening of the new Eglinton Station accessibility features, including the elevator and the Easier Access Portal Unit (EAPU), will be open early October 2004. Many of the accessibility features and improvements for the bus platform area of Eglinton Station were completed in early 2004. ACAT members have reviewed the accessible bus terminal area and have provided comments on possible refinements to signage and other features.

Main Street Station: This station will be made accessible in 2004. The work is nearing completion, and elevators and additional accessibility features are expected to be in operation in October.

Eglinton West Station, Jane Station, and Broadview Stations will be made accessible in 2005. Work on the three stations is well advanced, and it is expected that the elevators and accessibility improvements will be in operation in the summer/fall of 2005. Design work is progressing on making Osgoode Station accessible in 2006, and St. Clair, York Mills, Lawrence West and North York Centre Stations in 2007.

In all, ten subway stations will be made accessible between 2004 and 2007, which is two more than were called for in the original Easier Access II plan in 2002.

Easier Access Phase III

Objective: To make all of the remaining 40 stations accessible by 2020. (Executive Summary, Section 5.4)

Progress/Plans:

Work is continuing on assessing station priorities, and possible phasing of improvements to stations in support of this major accessibility initiative. A consulting firm was contracted to undertake an analysis of the Easier Access Phase III stations to determine the feasibility of making each of them accessible and the cost of doing so. The consultants are identifying those stations that would be candidates for staged improvements. Their initial findings have been shared with a special ACAT subcommittee. The assessment will be concluded in late 2004 with the final report in 2005.

To date, this project has not received funding approval. TTC staff will be requesting funding approval for the Easier Access III program in the 2005-2009 Capital Budget request.

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. (Section 5.4)

Progress/Plans:

The accessibility of North York Centre Station by the end of 2007 will be carried out, in part, through a TTC-negotiated financial contribution from a private sector developer.

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. (Section 5.4)

Progress/Plans:

The TTC has 294 escalators in operation after removing two old and unreliable moving sidewalks at Spadina Station. Eighty of the oldest and least-reliable of the escalators have been completely rebuilt to extend their service lives by 20 years. Plans now call for a further 70 escalators to be rebuilt during the period 2005-2009.

The time required to rebuild an escalator was reduced from an average of 28 weeks in the 1990's to 18 weeks, as reported in 2003. This has now been further reduced to an average of 15 weeks in 2004.

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. (Section 5.4)

Progress/Plans:

The TTC has undertaken audits of the existing system and identified how often passengers are not provided with stop announcements and the factors that contribute to inconsistent operator announcements. Some of the problems relate to the age of the trains and the audio equipment on them, while other difficulties are the result of the varying environment in which the trains operate and/or the demands on the train operators.

The technologies for automated station stop announcements have improved and progressed to the point that they should be tried in the TTC's subways. The preliminary design of an automated station stop announcement system is underway. The installation of the automated station stop announcement system for the Sheppard Subway should be completed as early as the first quarter of 2006. The extension of this technology to the remainder of the subway lines would then be targeted for completion by the end of 2006.

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. (Section 6.0)

Progress/Plans:

Wheel-Trans, in consultation with ACAT, plans to develop information and promotional materials to encourage Wheel-Trans registrants to take advantage of the accessible conventional services, the trip-planning support offered by Wheel-Trans, and the added opportunities for trips on one or more of the TTC's accessible services. These benefits include: no advanced trip booking requirement, spontaneous travel opportunities, and travel with multiple family/friends.

Bus bay signage has been installed at bus platforms to be used by Wheel-Trans bus and accessible taxi services for trips to and from TTC accessible stations. The signage helps guide both customers and vehicle operators to the correct location to transfer between services. Wheel-Trans no-show signage is also being placed in proximity to accessible doors and/or the Wheel-Trans bus bay. This signage, plus the information cards to be left by accessible taxi drivers and Wheel-Trans bus operators, will help inform registrants of their trips.

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. (Section 2.1)

Progress/Plans:

By the end of 2007, the TTC will have 30 Easier Access stations, which is 50% more than originally planned in the 1989 *Choices for the Future* report, and will be operating accessible buses on the majority of conventional and community bus routes. These services are in addition to the to-the-door services provided by Wheel-Trans. As the various accessibility programs are put in place, all disabled people will have an expanding range of travel options available to them. Those who are registered for the TTC's Wheel-Trans services will be able to travel by various modes or combinations of modes as they choose.

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. (Section 6.1)

Progress/Plans:

The Streetcar Operator Initial Program for new streetcar operators and the Bus Operator Recertification Program are being revised in 2004 for delivery in 2005. The revision for both programs will include new content on accessibility and sensitivity issues. The focus of the three-day recertification will be diversity and human rights issues.

The Training Department has invited ACAT to participate in the program development process, and a working group of ACAT members has been identified to meet with the Department's Planning and Program Development Section to provide advice on the training programs scheduled for review and revision.

The revision of the materials for these programs will also include a review of customer service reports to ensure the training content reflects real-life situations and customer needs.

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 (Section 6.3)

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 the first half of 2004. Installation of the signage at all elevators in the system is proceeding.

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. (Executive Summary, Section 6.3)

Progress/Plans:

Three brochures are being developed for distribution in 2004. An updated Easier Access Brochure, which provides information on accessible TTC services, fares, telephone information services, etc. will be distributed in paper form and will be posted on the TTC's web site. A shorter version of the Easier Access Brochure is being developed for distribution on TTC vehicles. The "take-one" type of brochure will inform customers of the wide variety of TTC accessible services available to people with disabilities. Wheel-Trans has developed a service guide for new Wheel-Trans registrants in the use of specialized transit services.

The entire 2003 Accessible Transit Services Plan was placed on the TTC's web site. The plan details the evolution of TTC's policy on accessible services, the various consultation processes employed by the TTC, the variety of accessible services offered, and the initiatives underway to increase the quantity and quality of service to people with disabilities.

3.3.3 Station Directory Signage

Objective: To design and implement directory signage incorporating accessibility information at all subway stations with accessible bus routes. (Appendix 3)

Progress/Plans:

In 2003, staff consulted with ACAT members on the design of a new *Routes at This Station* directory sign. The Jane station prototype sign was presented at an ACAT general meeting at which revisions were suggested.

The directory signage identifies access features for the station, the location of bus bays served by accessible conventional buses and Wheel-Trans services, and other information meant to help people with disabilities locate the features and services they need. Where possible, the signage will use symbols and graphics to depict services, as the symbols can be easier to see and to interpret.

Recently, directory signs have been installed at two stations, Eglinton Station and Kipling Station. ACAT members will be invited to participate in a walkthrough of the stations and provide their comments to confirm that the directory signage meets the needs of seniors and people with disabilities.

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. (Section 4.1, Appendix 3)

Progress/Plans:

In addition to providing continuous advice and input, there were a number of major investigations undertaken by the ACAT subcommittees in 2003/2004, including:

- ◆ Easier Access and Wheel-Trans Brochures
- ◆ Easier Access Station Audits and ACAT Surveys
- ◆ Improved Integration of Conventional and Specialized Services
- ◆ Allocation of Accessible Conventional Buses
- ◆ Phased Accessibility Improvements at Stations, and
- ◆ Improved Signage and Station Access Guides
- ◆ Participation at Community Displays and Events