



Accessible Transit Plan 2005

Background

The Greater Niagara Transit Commission was established in 1960, by an Act of Provincial Parliament that grants the City of Niagara Falls and the Township of Stamford authority to operate a public transit system within the City of Niagara Falls and the Township of Stamford subject to the approval of Council and in accordance with the Public Vehicles Act and the Highway Traffic Act. The Niagara Chair-A-Van service was established in 1977 to provide transportation for the physically challenged.

It is estimated that 20% of our population will have disabilities within the next two decades. As a result, reliance upon public transportation will grow as more people stop driving, or drive less, and demand other forms of transportation due to their disabilities.

Niagara Transit will grow to be an even bigger and more indispensable component to the health of our community. Our community will directly benefit by the ability of all people to use the service of the Niagara Transit and Niagara Chair-A-Van to travel to work and school, to attend medical appointments, to run errands, to attend cultural and recreational events and to socialize.

Niagara Transit and Niagara-Chair-A-Van are committed to:

- ✓ continual improvement of access to public transportation premises, facilities and service for people and employee's with disabilities
- ✓ inclusion of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual access plan
- ✓ provision of quality services to all passengers and employees
- ✓ maximization of investment in accessible conventional transit to encourage a shift from specialized to conventional public transit

Service Levels

Chair-A-Van – January 2005

Monday to Friday – 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Saturday – 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Sunday – 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Niagara Transit – January 2005

Monday to Friday – 5:45 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Saturday – 7:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Sunday – 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Responsibilities

City of Niagara Falls Council

- ✓ Appointing Commission members
- ✓ Approving Operating and Capital budgets for conventional and physically challenged service
- ✓ Approving fares

The Greater Niagara Transit Commission

Consisting of:

- (1) Mayor of the City
- (4) Appointed by council
- ✓ Sets policies and procedures
- ✓ To transport and convey passengers
- ✓ To make regulations with respect to the operation and control of the system
- ✓ To fix transportation fares or tolls (must be approved by council)
- ✓ To appoint such officers and hire employees

Niagara Chair-A-Van Management Board

Consisting of:

- (2) Persons representing the physically disabled community
- (2) Representatives from St John Ambulance
- (3) Representatives from Niagara Transit
- ✓ Sets policies and procedures
- ✓ To approve applicants
- ✓ To transport and convey passengers unable to use conventional transit
- ✓ To make regulations with respect to the operation and control of the system

Mission Statement

Niagara Transit's/Niagara Chair-A-Van's purpose:

"To provide a safe, affordable, courteous and reliable transit service which responds to the needs of the community."

Establishment of an Internal Accessibility Planning Coordinator and Working Group

- ✓ Niagara Chair-A-Van Management Board
- ✓ Niagara Transit Health and Safety Committee which includes:

Management: General Manager, Manager of Plant and Equipment and Certified Health Representative

Union: President, Garage Representative and Certified Health Representative

Measures Taken to Remove Barriers to Passengers with Disabilities

- ✓ Consultation with Niagara Chair-A-Van Management Board members
- ✓ Accessible information on Web site
- ✓ Update physically challenged service web page to include: information from brochure, current hours of service, email address (ncav@cogeco.net)
- ✓ Consultation with City of Niagara Falls Disability Advisory Committee
- ✓ Easier Access training for bus operators

Identification of Barriers for Passengers with Disabilities

- ✓ Priority seating
- ✓ Caution yellow wrapped hand rails and stanchion bars
- ✓ Web site accessibility for those with certain impairments
- ✓ Wheelchair access for conventional transit vehicles
- ✓ Lack of shelters at bus stops
- ✓ Snow removal – bus stops and shelters
- ✓ Visibility into, and out of shelters (advertisement to be put to the right side in order to see on coming buses from the left)
- ✓ Customer service and attitude training
- ✓ Signage – height, location and visibility (e.g. shelter maps, bus stop information. on buses)

Examples of Services and Policies that Create Barriers for Passengers

- ✓ Boarding and alighting procedure
- ✓ Infant/child stroller policy
- ✓ Eligibility Criteria for specialized transit
- ✓ Food on board (e.g. diabetes)
- ✓ Service animals, guides dogs
- ✓ Vehicles limited by the confines of manufacturers
- ✓ Lack of licensing incentives to encourage wheelchair accessible taxis

Identify, Prioritize and Develop a Long-Term Plan to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Niagara Transit/Niagara Chair-A-Van intends to identify, remove and prevent the following barriers in the coming years:

- ✓ purchase low-floor buses for conventional transit
- ✓ review and refine eligibility criteria for specialized transit
- ✓ educate customers on the options offered by fully accessible conventional transit routes
- ✓ review size and colour/contrast selections for our transit maps
- ✓ create a policy to incorporate new accessibility requirements in print materials

Consult with People with Disabilities on the Content of the Plan

When and how often we consult with people with disabilities is not mandated. Ideally, we should consult with them at both the beginning and again toward the end of the process, before we create the final plan.

Examples of Consultative Options:

- ✓ Public information sessions
- ✓ Consumer focus groups sessions
- ✓ A focus group made up of representative from key agencies and organizations representing people with a disability
- ✓ Municipal Advisory Board meeting
- ✓ Telephone interviews
- ✓ Surveys

Examples of Attendees at Consultative Sessions Could Include:

- ✓ Municipal/Regional Disabilities Advisory Committees
- ✓ Ontario March of Dimes
- ✓ Aphasia Society
- ✓ Alzheimer Society
- ✓ Centre for Seniors
- ✓ Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- ✓ Community Living
- ✓ Canadian Hearing Society
- ✓ Canadian Mental Health Association
- ✓ Group Homes
- ✓ Hospitals
- ✓ Long Term Care Facilities
- ✓ Rehab Hospital

Communicate Plan to Public

- ✓ Post the Plan at the Transit Office and/or City Hall
- ✓ Post Plan at the Chair-A-Van office
- ✓ Local newspaper
- ✓ Post the Plan on web site

Review and Monitor Assessable Plan

The Plan should be reviewed annually. Objectives from the previous year should be reviewed and a report prepared outlining progress and establishing priorities for the coming year.

Accomplishments – 2004

- ✓ Purchased two new low-floor conventional transit buses
- ✓ Purchased one new vehicle for service for disabled
- ✓ Developed new transit route map
- ✓ Reduced fares for guide dog training on conventional transit
- ✓ Increased weekend service for Chair-A-Van

Goals – 2005

- ✓ Increase conventional transit weekend service using gasoline tax subsidy
- ✓ Increase weekday prime time physically challenged service using gasoline tax subsidy
- ✓ public service information sessions at retail centres to promote increased service
- ✓ Purchase two additional low-floor buses
- ✓ Purchase new vehicle for physically challenged service
- ✓ Review seating areas/layouts in conventional and specialized transit vehicles to best utilize space and enhance accessibility
- ✓ Update web site to include the following Chair-A-Van information:
 - current service hours
 - email address
 - information from brochure
 - downloadable application
- ✓ Survey Chair-A-Van passengers – satisfaction