

Summary of the Draft Recommendations for an Accessibility Standard in Public Transportation

Information and Communication Standard Development Committee

Accessible Public Transportation

Nova Scotia has a law called the *Accessibility Act*. This law helps the government make rules about how to make life easier for people with disabilities. One of the areas where people's lives could be easier is public transportation.

What is public transportation?

Public transportation is a way for people to move around from one place to another. This includes local buses and Access-A-Bus. It includes services that can be booked a few days before a trip. These are called "door-to-door." It also includes ferries, taxis and trains.

This definition of public transportation does not include private cars. It does not include buses, trains or ferries that go from one province to another. It does not include airplanes.

Barriers in public transportation

It is often harder for people with disabilities to get around. It can be harder to find a bus stop or use a local bus. It can be harder to find a ride in rural areas. It can be harder to make a trip on the weekend. It can be harder to travel to a doctor's appointment or the hospital. If there is an emergency, it can be harder to travel to a safe place.

About this document

Government and municipalities make rules about transportation. Government asked the Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board to help them make rules that make it easier for people with disabilities to get around. The Accessibility Advisory Board made some rules. Now they want to know if people think these are good rules.

This document has the draft rules. The Board will probably make changes to them after they get feedback from people with disabilities and people that work in public transportation.

Types of public transportation

Many rules in this document are only for some types of public transportation. The information below is about the different types of transportation mentioned in this document.

Door-to-door: shared rides that pick people up at their door and drop them at their destination. Trips have to be booked usually a day or more before the trip starts. Door-to-door transportation is different from taxis, or Uber and Lyft.

Access-A-Bus is like door-to-door transportation but it is only for people with disabilities. People have to ask to use Access-A-Bus. The Access-A-Bus only runs in the Halifax and Cape Breton regional municipalities.

Fixed route: buses that run on set routes and schedules. Buses in the country can sometimes be waved at to stop and pick someone up. This is called “flag stopping.”

Long-distance: big buses that go between towns and cities, like Maritime Bus. Long distance buses carry ten or more people.

Taxis and other ride-hailing: privately owned and operated services that take people from one place to another. The taxi comes very soon after being called. Uber and Lyft are ride-hailing services. Accessible ride-hailing vehicles can safely carry wheelchairs or many other mobility aids.

Other definitions

Support person: someone who helps a person with a disability.

Service or guide dog: a trained dog that helps a person with a disability.

Recommendations

This is a plain language summary of draft recommendations. It does not replace the wording of the detailed list of draft recommendations. Some details may change when the standard becomes law.

1. Minimum public transportation service standard

Every municipality has to offer door-to-door transportation services that are accessible for people with disabilities. This service must be available everywhere in the municipality. The municipality can run the service. They can hire a company to run the service. Or they can work with other municipalities to run it.

The door-to-door service must have at least 2 vehicles. At least 1 vehicle must be wheelchair accessible. This means it has a ramp, bridge plate, or lift. If the service has 3 or more vehicles, at least 2 must be wheelchair accessible.

Service times

Accessible door-to-door must run every day and at least 78 hours each week.

Accessible fixed-route transportation services must run every day and at least 78 hours total each week.

Municipalities must find out the best times for the service to run. They must consult with people with disabilities and the service providers about the best operating times.

Accessible taxis can count towards the 78 hours for accessible door-to-door services. But this can only happen after people with disabilities are consulted.

Access-A-Bus must also follow rules. Access-A-Bus must run the same number of days, and the same or more hours, as fixed route buses.

Healthcare transportation

Government must make sure people with disabilities can get transportation services for non-urgent health care.

Each health zone must have at least 2 emergency ambulances that can safely transport a person who stays in their wheelchair.

Hospital, college or university transportation

If a hospital, college or university provides transportation services, they must offer an accessible service when someone asks.

2. Fares or prices

The fare is the price of the transportation service.

People with disabilities cannot be charged more money than other people for the same trip. They cannot be charged extra fees for

- a support person travelling with a person with a disability
- a service dog
- storing disability or medical items, if the vehicle can safely transport the item

Access-A-Bus fares cannot be more than the highest fare on the local fixed-route system.

Public transportation services can have reduced or no fares to riders with disabilities.

3. Trip planning

People need to be able to find and use information to plan a trip. They need to know what the routes are. They need to know schedules. They need to know the fare or price. They need to know if the ride is accessible for them.

Service providers must make this type of information available on accessible websites.

This rule will apply to the following types of transportation

- fixed-route
- long-distance
- door-to-door.

Door-to-door service providers have to give riders the same ways to book and pay for a trip.

4. Access-A-Bus and door-to-door services

These rules are for Access-A-Bus and door-to-door services only.

- Riders are allowed to ask for a ride on the same day that they want the service. But service providers can say no to a request. There may not be enough space or drivers that day.

- Riders can travel with a service or guide dog. They can travel with at least 1 support person. They can bring any disability or medical items that can be safely put away.
- Riders can travel with children. But they have to bring and install their own child seats if needed. Drivers have to help a rider if asked.
- Visitors to Nova Scotia can use these services for up to 21 days. Visitors have to apply for Access-A-Bus if they are staying longer.
- Service providers cannot limit how many trips a person can request. For example, a provider cannot say “you can only ask for three rides each week.”
- Service providers cannot make some types of trips more important than others. For example, a provider cannot say “medical trips are the most important.”
- Service providers have to let people know when their ride is not going to be on time. They have to let riders know if their ride is going to be outside of a 30-minute pick up window.
- Access-A-Bus has to tell people how to apply for the service. If someone applies, a decision must be made in 14 days.
- Access-a-Bus can be used in emergency situations or for compassionate reasons.

5. Vehicle operation

Service providers have to keep accessibility equipment in their vehicles in working order. They have to tell the public if something breaks. They have to fix it as fast as possible. They also have to tell riders about other accessible ways they can travel until the equipment is fixed.

Fixed-route and long-distance services have to let people travel with:

- a service or guide dog
- a support person
- mobility aids or medical devices that can be safely stored

Bus drivers have to stop at the bus stop sign. They also have to lower the bus floor, or “kneel,” when asked.

Bus transfers are based on time only.

Changes in bus routes or stops

Sometimes bus routes have to change for a short time. For example, there might be construction or roadwork planned on the route. People have to know about the changes. This information has to be provided in the following ways.

- Service providers have to tell people about planned changes at least 3 days before the change starts.
- If the change is on a provincial road, government has to tell service providers 7 days before the change starts.
- If the change will last more than 7 days, the information also has to be in ASL.

Service providers have to tell people about other ways they can travel until the service change ends. Fixed route service providers have to help people with disabilities travel during service changes, if asked. For example, they can give the rider an accessible taxi voucher.

Sometimes bus routes or bus stops can't be used. For example, there may be snow blocking the bus stop. If a rider can't get off at their stop, the bus driver has to talk to them. They need to decide where the best next stop is for the rider to get off. Drivers have to report the problem right away so the bus stop can be cleared.

6. Vehicle design

Fixed-route buses have to be safe and easy to use for people with disabilities. It has to be easy to know where to wait for the right bus. It has to be easy and safe to get on and off the right bus.

Bus ads cannot cover the windows on the sidewalk side of the bus.


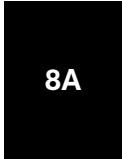


7. Fixed route bus stops, shelters and terminals, and bike lanes

A. Bus stops

Every bus stop must have a bus stop pole with a sign on it that clearly tells people that this is the right place to catch the bus they want to take. The signs have to be easy to read and understand.

There have to be bumpy tiles, called tactile indicators, in the sidewalk. These help let people with visual disabilities know this is the bus stop. They help people know that this is the direction they have to go to get on the bus. There must also be good lighting.

The pictures below show the kind of information that has to be on a sign.

<p>Bus icon</p> 	<p>Route indicator</p> 	<p>Universal symbol (static)</p> 	<p>Universal symbol (dynamic)</p> 
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The picture below shows three transit stop signs that show different levels of stop accessibility (source: Halifax Transit)

<p>Sign 1: Accessible stop (ramp can be deployed, concrete pad with access to sidewalk)</p>	<p>Sign 2: Cannot deploy accessibility ramp</p>	<p>Sign 3: Ramp can be deployed but there is no concrete pad with access to a sidewalk</p>

B. Bus stop pads

Bus stops must have large concrete pads that people can safely stand on when they wait for their bus. The pad must be connected to an accessible sidewalk. There have to be bumpy tiles, called tactile indicators, on the pad. This lets people with visual disabilities know where the bus stop pad is. In some communities, streets have curbs but not sidewalks. The photo on the right shows what this might look like. If there are bus stops on these streets, there



have to be large concrete bus stop pads that people can safely use to wait for their bus.

C. Bus stop shelters

Sometimes there is a bus shelter at the bus stop. Bus shelters have to be easy to find. They have to have easy to read signs and bumpy tiles for people with visual disabilities. The shelters have to be easy to use and big enough for a wheelchair to enter and turn around. The shelter has to have seats.

D. Bus terminals

Sometimes there are big bus stops that many buses use. These are called bus terminals. Bus terminals have to have everything already talked about so far. For example, they have to be easy to find and be big enough to move around in.

They also have to have the following features.

- good signs that tell people where they need to go to catch their bus
- good signs that show people where to find the washrooms
- big maps that show all of the bus routes
- information that tells people when their bus will be coming
- other ways to get bus information if a person can't see a map or sign

Bike lanes and bike parking

Sometimes bike lanes are on the same street that fixed route buses use. When that happens, the bike lanes have to be built so that it is still very safe for someone to get on or off a bus. There have to be signs on the bike lanes before a bus stop. These let bikers know that they have to slow down and stop when there is a bus at the bus stop.

Parking areas for bikes or scooters can't block a sidewalk.

8. Training and education

Every public transportation provider must make sure staff have accessibility training for their jobs. This includes the following positions.

- a. people who drive or operate vehicles
- b. people who talk with the public to book or schedule rides, or dispatchers
- c. people who plan, run, or support transportation services
- d. people who buy vehicle equipment for the transportation provider.

Drivers have to get this training before they begin to drive people with disabilities. Or they have to be trained when these new rules start. Everyone else has to get the training within 60 days of starting their job. Or they have to be trained when these new rules start.

People who manage drivers and dispatchers have to get accessibility training for their job every 3 years. They also have to get training for the jobs of those they supervise every 3 years.

Training has to cover the following topics.

- accessibility and human rights laws
- these new rules
- the types of barriers people with disabilities face
- respectful communication
- vehicle accessibility features
- the kinds of help riders may need
- the roles of support persons
- service and guide dogs

Drivers need extra training about how to use accessibility equipment. They need to be trained on how to keep people with disabilities safe in an emergency.

People with disabilities have to help create the training.

9. Taxis and other ride-hailing services

Taxi and ride-hailing companies, like Uber and Lyft, and their drivers must treat riders with disabilities fairly. They can't charge a rider more money for any of the following reasons.

- The rider has a disability.
- The rider is traveling with a service or guide dog.
- The rider has a wheelchair or other equipment that can be safely put in the vehicle.

They also cannot refuse a ride based on any of these reasons, or if the riders asks for reasonable help.

10. School transportation

Students with disabilities going to public schools must be allowed to ride with other students when it is safe to do so. If it isn't safe, the schools have to do the following.

- Arrange accessible transportation for the student.
- Make a written transportation plan with the student and parent or guardian.
- Explain how to meet the student's needs in the plan.

If private schools have transportation for students, they have to follow these same rules.

11. Emergency transportation

People with disabilities need to be kept safe during an emergency. Transportation providers must have policies on how they will keep people with disabilities safe.

The government must set up a Vulnerable Persons Registry in the province. It must collect information about what needs for transportation. People with disabilities could sign up if they wanted to. Municipalities would have to help make the registry and keep it updated.

Government and municipalities must have plans to evacuate people with disabilities during emergencies. They must keep a current list of accessible vehicles that can be used for emergency evacuation.

12. Recommendations for municipalities

Municipalities have to include public transportation in their accessibility plans. The plans have to address barriers. For example, they have to make sure there is enough accessible transportation. The plans have to explain what municipalities will do to remove barriers. People with disabilities have to be consulted when these plans are developed.

Municipalities must also have policies that remove barriers. For example, policies on wait times or snow removal at bus stops need to be made. They also need a way to know if they have enough accessible transportation for people with disabilities.

13. Recommendations for the Government of Nova Scotia

The government has to take the following actions.

1. Make sure transportation providers have enough funding to meet these new rules.
2. Review other laws to make sure they do not conflict with these new rules.
3. Review emergency and non-emergency health care transportation services.
4. Make sure people with disabilities can get to medical appointments.
5. Make policies about how someone can stay in their own wheelchair when using an ambulance.