



A Division of Metrolinx

- DRAFT -

Metrolinx / GO Transit
Accessible Customer Service Policy
Required for the Implementation of the Accessibility
for
Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

December 15, 2009

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Accessible Customer Service Policy

1. Purpose and Background Information

(a) Purpose

The purpose of this policy statement is to reinforce GO Transit's commitment regarding the provision of safe and courteous accessible public commuter rail and bus services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of customers with disabilities and also supports the principles of integration and equal opportunity. On a broader level, this policy statement is also meant to reinforce Metrolinx's commitment to providing goods and services in an accessible manner.

(b) Background Information

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (the "AODA") is a Provincial Act with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by 2025.

Under the AODA, Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled "*Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*", came into force on January 1, 2008. That Regulation establishes accessibility standards specific to customer service for public sector organizations and other persons or organizations that provide goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

This policy is drafted in accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* (Ontario Regulation 429/07) and addresses the following:

- the provision of goods and services to customers with disabilities;
- communication with customers with disabilities;
- notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
- the use of assistive devices by customers with disabilities;

- the use of service animals by customers with disabilities;
- the use of support persons by customers with disabilities;
- customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to customers with disabilities;
- training; and
- notice of availability and format of documents.

2. **Application**

This policy applies to all persons who deal with the public and those specifically designated, by contract to act, from time to time on behalf of Metrolinx. This includes persons who are employees (i.e., full time, part time and/or on contract) and Members of Metrolinx's and GO Transit's Accessibility Advisory Committees.

3. **Definitions**

(a) Assistive Device

A device used to assist customers with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the Customer Service Standard.

(b) Customer Service Attendants (CSA's)

A member of the Train Crew that among other duties operates the train doors, deploys the accessible bridge-plate and is responsible for on-board announcements and communication to Customers.

(c) Disability

Disability, defined to include:

- (i) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other

animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;

- (ii) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- (iii) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- (iv) a mental disorder; or
- (v) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

(d) Front-Line Staff

Front-line staff refers to GO employees (full-time and contracted) who have direct contact with GO customers. This includes station attendants, transit enforcement staff such as officers and customer attendants and call centre staff such as telephone information guides and supervisors.

(e) Line Stations

Rail stations on a rail line/corridor including terminus stations and excluding Union Station as it is a common terminus for all GO Rail services.

(f) Nurse

A Registered Nurse or Registered Practical Nurse who is a registered member in good standing with the College of Nurses of Ontario.

(g) Physician

A physician who is a registered member, in good standing, with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

(h) Service Animal

Any animal used by a customer with a disability for reasons relating to the disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability; or where the customer provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that he or she requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability; or a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

(i) Support Person

A person who accompanies a customer with a disability in order to assist him or her with communication, mobility personal care, medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

(j) Wheeled Mobility Aids (WMAs)

Devices used by customers with ambulatory disabilities to travel in the same manner as ambulatory customers walk to move about. Examples of these devices include, but are not necessarily limited to, manual and powered wheelchairs, and scooters.

4. **Policy Statement**

Metrolinx is committed to helping develop a coordinated, integrated, accessible transportation system that moves people and goods efficiently, economically and in an environmentally sustainable way.

As a Division of Metrolinx, GO Transit is committed to continuing to build, for all customers, an effective, efficient fully accessible public commuter rail and bus service.

5. General Principles

(a) The Provision of Goods and Services to Customers with Disabilities

Metrolinx and GO Transit will use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- GO Transit's services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of customers with disabilities;
- the provision of GO Transit's services to customers with disabilities are to be integrated with those provided to customers who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a customer with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from GO Transit's services; and
- customers with disabilities are given opportunities equivalent to that of customers without disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from GO Transit's services.

A wheelchair or other remedial conveyance of the customer with a disability will be permitted providing there is sufficient space to accommodate such articles in a safe manner.

(b) Communication with Customers with Disabilities

Employees of Metrolinx and GO Transit will communicate with customers with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their disability(ies), applying the techniques set out in the corporate sensitivity training programs. GO Transit is committed to providing fully accessible customer service information via our website; telephone (416-869-3200 in the Toronto local calling area; 1-888-GET ON GO [438-6646] long distance toll free; 1-800-387-3652 TTY teletypewriters); and online Customer Comment Form.

(i) Route Destination Signs on GO Buses and at Train Stations

All GO Buses are clearly marked with route destination signs. In addition, all stops are announced on both GO Trains and GO Buses, and station names are clearly marked at all train platforms.

(ii) Announcement of Stops

All GO Bus drivers and Customer Service Attendants on GO Transit are required to announce all stops:

- prior to departure, including destination information and all connecting services;
- at destination terminal locations informing passengers of all connecting buses, including the boarding platform number;
- on arrival at all train stations and bus trip terminus points; and
- on approaching every station, terminal bus stop.

(iii) Corridor Timetables

Corridor Timetables including information about accessible routes, accessible stations, and important contact telephone numbers is published several times per year. Also, to assist customers with disabilities in using GO Transit services, we have a guide for customers entitled "*Discover GO Transit's Accessible Services*". Both are available on our website, through the above information telephone numbers, and at GO Stations and Bus Terminals.

(iv) Multi-lingual Information

Multi-lingual information is available by calling 416-869-3200 in the Toronto local calling area; 1-888-GET ON GO (438-6646) long distance toll free and following the instructions provided.

(c) Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

GO Transit is aware that the operation of its services is of paramount importance to the public. However, temporary disruptions in GO Transit's services and facilities (e.g., elevators) may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within GO Transit's control or knowledge. Reference to services includes both Train and Bus services, as well as supporting services.

For the purpose of this policy statement, a "temporary disruption of service" is defined as a known or planned event that results in a deviation in regular service schedule and/or routing for an extended period of time, generally beyond one day. The known or planned nature of the event affords GO Transit the opportunity to implement a revised service routing and/or schedule and provide timely communication to its customers.

The communication will include a reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration and a description of the alternative/amended routing and/or schedule as may be applicable. Such information will be provided from a menu of options, selected at the time as appropriate in the circumstances, giving consideration to time and duration. The options include:

- various news media (radio, paper, television);
- GO Transit E-News (on-line registration required);
- GO Transit website;
- GO Transit Customer Service Staff;
- Passenger Information System (PINS) screens at Union Station and on dynamic platform signage at most Stations; and
- Posting of the appropriate notice either at stations and affected stops, and/or on board the railcars/buses as appropriate (i.e., depending on the affected location(s), extent and/or mode of service).

GO Train and Bus schedules are subject to rail/road traffic conditions and customers may have to make alternate travel

arrangements in the event of major delays. Also, information about the availability of escalators and elevators is also available on our website, or by calling GO Transit.

For all other occurrences of service disruption, GO Transit, as considered appropriate in the circumstances, will make reasonable effort to advise the public of the disruption including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative/amended service if any, that may be available.

(d) Assistive Devices and other Measures that Assist with Accessibility

A customer with a disability is to provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from GO Transit's services. Exceptions may occur in situations where GO Transit has determined that the assistive device (e.g., Segway) may pose a risk to the health and safety of a customer with a disability or the health and safety of others on the services and/or at the premises.

In these situations and others, GO Transit may offer a customer with a disability other reasonable measures to assist him or her in obtaining, using and benefiting from GO Transit's services, where GO Transit has such other measures available. This includes having the customer leave the assistive device and sit in a passenger seat in the vehicle.

Customers with a disability are responsible to ensure their assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times in accessing GO Transit services. This includes setting the brakes as appropriate on manual assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs), or switching the power off for power assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs or scooters).

(i) Boarding/Alighting

(A) Accessible GO Railcars

When a train arrives/departs a designated accessible Train Station, a Customer Service Attendant (CSA) is required to place an accessible (folding) bridge-plate across the gap between the accessible railcar and the raised mini-platform. The bridge-plate is about 90 centimeters wide (3 feet) with a raised edge along its sides; it's designed to hold a load no heavier than 270 kilograms (600 pounds).

Customers are requested to wait until the bridge-plate is securely in place before crossing the bridge-plate in either direction. Customer Service Attendants (CSAs) or other Train crew members cannot assist customers on or off the train. Customers requiring such assistance, are encouraged to travel with a support person using a "Party Ticket".

(B) GO Buses

All GO Bus drivers are trained to deploy the lift/ramp and secure the wheeled mobility aid and the Customer using a wheeled mobility aid. Customers with disabilities that require further assistance are required to bring along a support person who travels for free (See Section e) for details).

Drivers are instructed to deploy the lift, upon request, at Terminals and Designated Stops. Some express routes shall operate Terminal to Terminal Only, while other interregional and local routes (with more frequent stops) shall service designated stops on route. See Driver's Operating Timetable for more details.

(ii) Securement

(A) Accessible GO Railcars

Each of the eight (8) locations on the lower level which can accommodate customers who use mobility devices are equipped with a four-point belt securement system similar to that on GO Buses.

A retractable securement system consisting of four belts for securing a wheeled mobility aid (similar to GO Buses) is provided at each of the eight designated securement areas.

Customers and/or their accompanying support person are responsible for ensuring that wheeled mobility devices are properly secured if use of this feature is desired.

WMA securement on accessible GO railcars is optional due to lower g-forces during banked turns or rapid deceleration compared to higher g-forces on buses.

(B) GO Buses

Bus Drivers are responsible for ensuring that wheeled mobility devices are properly secured, complete with the appropriate tie-downs and restraining devices and securely fastened before moving the bus. WMA securement on GO Buses is mandatory.

Bus drivers are also responsible for ensuring that three-point personal securement (i.e., lap and shoulder belts) are securely fastened before moving the bus. The personal securement System on GO Buses is mandatory for Customers using a WMA who are under 16 years of age and discretionary/optional for customers 16 years of age and older.

In the event that the passenger is traveling with a support person who wishes to secure the mobility device the Driver must check to ensure the devices have been properly secured.

Should the passenger refuse to have his or her mobility device secured, the Driver will advise that it is mandatory for safety reasons. If the problem persists, the Driver will contact Dispatch and request assistance.

Customers using scooters shall be offered and encouraged to transfer into a seat immediately in front of or behind their device (i.e., in the Priority Seating area). The final decision to move from the scooter shall be left to the discretion of the affected Customer. If the customer using a scooter decides to move into a seat immediately in front of or behind their device, especially if the customer has an oxygen line or similar apparatus, so that the line doesn't trail across the aisle of the bus.

Drivers will be expected to perform all duties related to boarding/deboarding and securing a wheeled mobility aid (WMA) customer. This will include the preparation of the WMA area – folding of seats, safe lift operation and fully securing the wheeled mobility aid using the four point belt system, as well as the customer shoulder and lap belts, if requested. If the customer is younger than 16 years old, the lap and shoulder belt must be secured.

(C) Seating Options

(I) Priority Seating

Priority Seating is available on GO Buses and on the lower level of the designated accessible railcar, which is the 5th railcar behind the locomotive. Signs are mounted on buses and railcars instructing passengers to make a seat available in the designated

priority seating area to a passenger with a disability or a physical limitation. Other than the vestibule areas on the accessible railcar, these are the only areas that can accommodate customers using WMAs.

(II) Courtesy Seating

Courtesy Seating is available on GO Buses and railcars (other than the designated accessible railcar). If a passenger is on a non-accessible railcar and needs a seat due to mobility difficulties, pregnancy, illness, etc., they are encouraged to ask another passenger to voluntarily vacate a courtesy seat.

(iii) Wayfinding Assistance

Whenever a GO Transit employee is on duty at any GO Transit station and a customer with a disability who has arrived at least 15 minutes prior to his/her departure time requests assistance in finding a bus or train platform, the GO Transit employee will provide or arrange for such requested wayfinding assistance. If a customer with a disability arrives within 15 minutes of his/her departure time and requests wayfinding assistance, GO Transit staff will make reasonable efforts to provide assistance. In addition to assistance in locating the train or bus on departure, GO staff will provide assistance at transfer points when there is a station attendant on duty.

(e) Service Animals

Service animals accompanying customers with disabilities are permitted on all GO Transit services and/or enter premises owned and operated, or operated by GO Transit at all times, noting such permission may be subject to presentation of the appropriate identification by the owner. A passenger traveling with the aid of a seeing-eye, hearing ear or special skills dog can still travel with a support person on a "Party Ticket".

Pets are not permitted on the service nor on the premises unless it is in an enclosed container that must be secured and does not inconvenience other passengers with the exception of sight guide dogs, hearing-ear dogs or special-skills dogs with customers with disabilities, or a trainer of a skills dog. It is the responsibility of the customer with a disability to ensure that his or her service animal is kept in control at all times.

(f) Support Persons

A customer with a disability may utilize the services and/or enter premises owned and operated, or operated, by GO Transit with a support person and have access to the support person while on the service and/or on the premises.

Customers that require physical assistance during their use of GO Transit services (including physical assistance to board or alight from a bus or train) should be accompanied by a support person capable of aiding such passengers on and off the bus or train and during their use of GO Transit services.

(i) Party Ticket

If a customer has a disability that hinders his or her ability to travel alone, the passenger may purchase a Single Ticket or Day Pass, at the rate for that support person as set out in the Fare Chart, and may have the ticket or pass endorsed by a proper authority as a Party Ticket for the carriage of both the passenger and the support person accompanying him or her.

Marking of "Party Ticket" - The regular form ticket or pass will be used and endorsed by a Proper Authority as a "Party Ticket" on the ticket or pass issued for the customer with a disability. This privilege permits the customer with a disability and support person to travel together on ONE "PARTY TICKET". ONE TICKET ONLY TO BE ISSUED. Once endorsed as a PARTY TICKET, the passenger must be accompanied by the support person.

Fare information is posted at Station Ticket Sales locations and is available online at www.gotransit.com.

(g) Feedback

GO Transit (as provided by its' mission statement) is committed to ensuring that its services and operations are as accessible as possible to all Ontarians. To meet these commitments, GO Transit will incorporate enhanced accessibility in all additions and improvements to GO Transit services and operations.

Feedback from the public is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements. Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of goods and services to customers with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format or through other methods.

Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public and notice of the process will be posted on our website and/or in other appropriate locations.

GO Transit welcomes and encourages feedback from customers. All feedback is taken seriously and each customer communication is directed to the responsible GO Transit Operating Division(s) or Department(s) for review and necessary action. Customers with complaints, compliments, or suggestions can submit their feedback online at www.gotransit.com, or by calling Customer Service at: 416-869-3200 in the Toronto local calling area; 1-888-GET ON GO (438-6646) long distance toll free; 1-800-387-3652 TTY teletypewriters or in person/by mail at GO Transit's Head Office: 20 Bay Street, Suite #600, Toronto, Ontario, M5J 2W3. The Customer Service Centre at Union Station is staffed weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and weekends and holidays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:40 p.m.

(h) Accessible Training Initiatives

(i) Sensitivity Training

Metrolinx will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies (i.e., employees who provide direct or indirect service) receive training as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. The amount and format of training given is tailored to suit each person's interactions with the public and his or her involvement in the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services. This training includes:

- An overview of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)*;
- Successful completion of AODA Customer Service Standard on-line training module (available through "AccessON.ca");
- Instruction on GO Transit policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to customers with disabilities;
- Instruction on how to interact with customers with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a support person or service animal;
- Information about the equipment or devices available on GO Transit premises that may help with the provision of the services to customers with disabilities; and
- Instruction on what to do if a customer with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing GO Transit services.

All front-line employees receive this training prior to assuming the duties and responsibilities of their jobs and

at least once every five years thereafter. All employees providing indirect service (i.e., those involved in the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services) will receive and have on-going access to an on-line program which complies with AODA standards.

(ii) Sensitivity Training - Train Conductors (Bombardier and CPR)

Train Conductors (Ambassadors) are trained on sensitivity through the P.L.E.A.S.E. Customer Service program, which is GO Transit's one-day customer service course customized for train conductors. Even though GO Transit rail service has been designed for customer self-service, this sensitivity component has been added to enhance interaction with the public. This training will be refreshed at least once every five years.

(iii) Accessibility/Sensitivity Refresher Training for Bus Drivers and Other Front-Line Staff

The accessibility refresher training program for all GO Transit bus drivers and route supervisors covers the same topics/content as the initial accessibility training program. This includes a review of accessible features, policies and procedures, such as the operation of the lifts on all types of lift-equipped buses, and the securement of customers using WMAs together with their devices. All existing drivers have completed the initial training session and ongoing refresher training will take place on a three-year cycle.

Accessibility refresher training for all other front-line staff and supervisors takes place every three to five (3-5) years depending on the level of direct interaction with customers and/or employees with disabilities. This training program is also provided as individual training needs are identified.

(iv) Refamiliarization Training for Bus Drivers

On-site accessibility refresher training is conducted several days prior to the launch of any new accessible bus route at the garage where the route originates. Training is conducted with the specific type(s) of lift-equipped bus(es) that will be used on the route.

All accessibility-related procedures and equipment are reviewed with the drivers and route supervisors, with particular emphasis on customer boarding, deboarding and securement.

(v) Sign Language Training

In September, 2006, GO Transit approved an enhancement to its continuing education program by fully subsidizing sign language training for any GO Transit employees who successfully completes an approved course.

(vi) Timeline for Training

The various training requirements are addressed through a variety of programs/initiatives using a variety of training approaches. Such training has and/or is provided as soon as reasonably practicable based upon an individual being assigned the applicable duties as well as on an ongoing basis as changes occur to the applicable corporate policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of services to customers with disabilities.

(vii) Records of Training

Metrolinx and GO Transit will keep records of the training, including the date on which training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided. The names of individuals trained will be recorded for training administration purposes, subject to the Provincial *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA).

6. **Availability and Format of Documents Required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)**

Recognizing its responsibility under various pieces of Federal and Provincial legislation, and Metrolinx's intent to fulfill its mandate in an open and accessible manner, Metrolinx supports the principles with respect to freedom of access to information and protection of personal information, as defined in the *National Standard of Canada Model Code for the Protection of Personal Information* (Can/CSA 830-96). The principles cover the areas of:

- Accountability;
- Identifying purposes of collection;
- Obtaining consent;
- Limiting collection to the purposes required;
- Limiting use, disclosure and retention of personal information to that reasonably related to the stated purpose of collection;
- Accuracy in collecting and maintaining records;
- Safeguarding the information collected;
- Being open;
- Providing individual access; and
- Addressing challenges regarding compliance.

Further, GO Transit designates the Managing Director as being accountable on behalf of GO Transit for the implementation of these principles in all aspects of GO Transit's functions.

All documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, including Metrolinx and GO Transit's Accessible Customer Service policies, procedures and practices, notices of temporary disruptions, training records, and written feedback process are available upon request, subject to FIPPA.

When providing a document to a customer with a disability, GO Transit will provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes the person's disability into account.

7. **Notice of the Availability of Documents**

Notice of the availability of all documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service will be posted on the Metrolinx and GO Transit websites, and available through the Managing Director's office or the Vice-President of Customer Service.

This policy statement and any other service related document available to the public will be made available upon request to customers with disabilities in a format that takes into account their disability. The length of time it will take to produce information in alternative formats will depend on the format requested; however, every effort will be made to process requests in a timely fashion.

8. **Training of Independent Consultants/Contractors**

Responsibility for training of independent consultants/contractors that sell GO Transit's fare media belongs to the individual organization, not GO Transit. This position recognizes the independence of the contractors, noting the selling of fare media is not an integral or essential part of the contractor's business and as such GO Transit does not exercise control over such businesses, the manner in which they conduct their business, nor in the training and monitoring of employees.

9. **Supporting or Linked Policy/Procedure Documents**

- Standing GO Rail and Bus Operating Procedures – Accessible Conventional Transit Services
- GO Transit – Passenger Tariff
- GO Transit – Freedom of Information and Right to Privacy Policy
- GO Transit – Purchasing Policy
- GO Transit – Policy Respecting Ontario Human Rights

10. **Link to Other AODA Standards**

The Customer Service Standard policy statement herein described is subject to review and amendment from time to time as other common and sector specific standards developed under the AODA come into force.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

For more information about using conventional public transit services offered by GO Transit, see the information booklet, “Discover GO Transit’s Accessible Services – A Guide for Riders”. The booklet, in print or DVD format, is available by faxing a request to 416-393-0128 (please include your full name and mailing address) or on our website at www.gotransit.com.

REFERENCES

Ontario Regulation 429/07 (Customer Service), *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.