

Metrolinx 2021 Accessibility Status Report



Metrolinx 2021 Accessibility Status Report

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the efforts of current and former Metrolinx Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) members for their valuable input into our accessibility planning activities.

1. Introduction

The 2021 Accessibility Status Report provides an update to the 2020 Status Report, and is reflective of Metrolinx efforts as of December 31, 2021. Metrolinx, a Crown agency of the Province of Ontario under the responsibility of the Ministry of Transportation, operates GO Transit, PRESTO and the Union Pearson (UP) Express.

This Status Report fulfills Metrolinx's legal obligations under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) to publish an annual update on the multi-year accessibility plan. Metrolinx Multi-Year Accessibility Plans and other accessibility planning documents can be found on the Metrolinx website at the following link: www.metrolinx.com/en/aboutus/accessibility/default.aspx.

Metrolinx, including its operating divisions, remains committed to implementing plans to achieve AODA compliance. Improvements continue to be made to remove barriers in order for services to be more convenient and easier to use for all customers, including those with disabilities. Metrolinx will be in compliance with future regulatory requirements when they come into effect. More broadly, Metrolinx will work to improve the customer experience for everyone, rather than focusing only on what is required to comply with the AODA.

Metrolinx is guided by the following corporate accessibility commitment statement:

Metrolinx is committed to ensuring that its services, infrastructure and operations are accessible, safe and convenient to all customers and employees in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), and to working with partners in the GTHA (Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area) to plan, build and operate an integrated accessible transportation system. The organization will work diligently to remove existing barriers to access, avoid creating new barriers, and address gaps hindering the safety and customer experience of persons with disabilities. Metrolinx will demonstrate leadership, consulting widely and incorporating best practices that go above minimum legislated requirements to enhance accessibility in its services and infrastructure.

Examples of key accomplishments since the 2020 Status Report include:

- Finishing construction and opening the new Kipling Bus Terminal for GO Transit and Mi-Way (Mississauga Transit)

buses. The new terminal includes an accessible pedestrian bridge to the Kipling GO Station platform, meaning that this train station now includes a barrier-free route to the platform.

- Finishing construction and opening the new Union Station Bay Concourse;
- The introduction of the new Bloomington GO station in Richmond Hill/Aurora;
- Elevator upgrades and installation of tactile attention indicator tiles along platform edges at various GO stations;
- Approximately 119 additional bus stops served by GO Transit will have been made accessible by the end of 2021;
- The rollout of the PRESTO contactless payment pilot on UP Express allowing payment by directly tapping a credit card;
- Removal of the \$0.25 PRESTO overdraft fee
- The accessible PRESTO apps for Android and iPhone were updated to include load or query card via the phone's built-in Near Field Communication (NFC) feature. This enables customers to access travel history, transfer window, current balance in real time and set-up a GO default trip.

Examples of key areas of focus and planned accomplishments for the coming year include:

- Accessibility improvements (new tactile warning tiles, elevator modernization) at numerous accessible GO stations;
- Continued construction on the new Eglinton Crosstown and Finch West Light Rail Transit (LRT) projects in Toronto, and on the Hurontario LRT project in Mississauga and south Brampton;
- Continued work with municipalities to convert on-street municipal bus stops to accommodate all GO Buses;
- New accessible PRESTO fare payment options including the new PRESTO E-Tickets app for iOS/Android and the ability to tap to pay with a credit card or debit card on additional transit agencies.

2. Accessibility Accomplishments and Planned Activities

Metrolinx, GO Transit, PRESTO and UP Express have continued to make improvements to existing and planned services. This section will look at both the accessibility accomplishments and planned activities under the categories of Plan & Design, Build, and Operate & Deliver.

2.1. Plan & Design

2.1.1. Metrolinx

- 2.1.1.1. Metrolinx continues to collaborate with municipal specialized transit service providers in the GTHA to improve cross-boundary travel for customers with disabilities. Due to the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), the main area of focus for 2021 has continued to be on modifying services and procedures to ensure that both customers and staff are kept safe and healthy as ridership and service levels gradually rebuild. Examples include increasing the number of customers in each specialized transit vehicle (after this was temporarily reduced due to COVID-19 restrictions), vaccination policies for staff, and health screening questions for customers.
- 2.1.1.2. The following six Design Principles are overarching values that inform and guide the development of the Metrolinx Design Standards, and integrate the physical, digital and human aspects of the end to end customer journey: Seamless, Intuitive, Inclusive, Safe, Reliable, and Thoughtful.

2.1.2. GO Transit

- 2.1.2.1. New accessible stations will be added to the GO Transit rail network through the Transit Oriented Communities program. To date: developers are working with Metrolinx to deliver a new GO station adjacent to Woodbine Racetrack on the Kitchener corridor and

a new station building at Mimico on the Lakeshore West corridor.

2.1.2.2. Additional information about Union Station accessibility features as well as a station description will be added to the GO website. This is being prepared to complement updated station maps, and to help customers pre-plan their trip due to the complexity of this station.

2.1.3. Light Rail Transit

2.1.3.1. The Hurontario and Hamilton LRT projects are moving forward. The Hurontario LRT is slated for substantial completion by 2024. The timeline for the Hamilton LRT is still being determined. Metrolinx, municipal and other accessible design requirements will be followed for these projects.

2.1.4. Subways

2.1.4.1. Metrolinx has assumed responsibility for planning and design of new subway projects. New subway lines/extensions being planned include: Eglinton Crosstown West Extension, Ontario Line, Scarborough Subway Extension, and the Yonge North Subway Extension. Station design will meet the Metrolinx Subway Station Design Standard (DS-09) and the Universal Design Standard (DS-02) and incorporate lessons learned from LRT projects. Additionally, new design standards are being developed, which will address station and vehicle accessibility features.

2.1.5. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

2.1.5.1. Planning for the proposed Dundas BRT corridor is underway. The purpose of the

planning work is to evaluate the proposed transit corridor along a 48-kilometre stretch of Dundas Street from Highway 6 in the City of Hamilton through to the Kipling Transit Hub in the City of Toronto, linking Etobicoke and Mississauga City Centres. More than 20 kilometres of the 48-kilometre BRT, would operate in bus lanes or in a dedicated right-of-way, separate from other traffic, allowing faster and more reliable transit connections.

- 2.1.5.2. Planning for the proposed Durham-Scarborough BRT project is underway. This project would bring approximately 36 kilometres of dedicated transit infrastructure, that would connect downtown Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax, Pickering and Scarborough. This project would build on the existing PULSE service and would provide more dedicated transit infrastructure along Highway 2 and Ellesmere Road to connect to Scarborough Centre.

2.2. Build

2.2.1. GO Transit

2.2.1.1. Construction is underway on the following new stations:

- Confederation Station (Hamilton), on the Lakeshore West line - the station began receiving bus service in late-2019 with approximately 60 parking spaces available on the north side of the site. At the same time, the design and construction of a self-serve rail station is proceeding. The revised scope for Confederation Station went out for public tender in April 2020, and includes: an island platform with canopies and an accessible platform; a pedestrian tunnel; direct stair access from the platform to Centennial Parkway; and approximately 150 parking spaces.
- Mount Dennis Station (Toronto), on the Kitchener line - this new, accessible transit hub will connect Kitchener's two-way, all-day GO Transit service to the airport via UP Express, the future Eglinton Crosstown LRT, and TTC buses. It will offer 120 bike parking spaces, including 80 indoor spots, as well as a pick-up and drop-off area.

2.2.1.2. Progress has continued on making GO Train service accessible at the remaining three non-accessible and one partially-accessible GO stations. In most cases, station improvements are being delivered as part of the GO Expansion capital program. As the GO Expansion program continues to evolve, project scope and timelines are subject to change.

- Eglinton Station, on the Lakeshore East line - construction and installation of new ramps and elevators to each platform is expected to create an accessible station by the end of 2024.

- Georgetown Station, on the Kitchener line - an interim accessibility improvement project allowing for barrier-free boarding for most train trips at the station was completed in summer 2015. Completion of another project to provide barrier-free boarding for all trips is expected by the end of 2024.
- Long Branch Station, on the Lakeshore West line - the station will undergo a complete reconstruction including elevators, a new station building, reconstructed platforms, new shelters as well as various initiatives to enhance the customer experience.
- Mimico Station, on the Lakeshore West line - planned improvements are expected to provide a new barrier-free path of travel to the platform. Metrolinx is also pursuing a third-party agreement for mixed-use development at the station, which would include a new station building, parking and other customer amenities, through the Transit Oriented Communities program.

2.2.1.3. Accessible station design features continue to be added/improved as part of GO Station renovations. Key examples include:

- New yellow tactile warning (truncated dome) tiles along the full length of platforms, to identify the platform edge.
 - In 2021, new tiles were installed at the following stations: Bradford, Centennial, Guelph, Mount Joy, Scarborough, Stouffville, and Whitby.
 - For 2022, the list of stations is still being finalized.
- An elevator modernization program that will improve the performance of existing elevators, by replacing parts which have reached the end of their lifespan. The program will result in more efficient and more reliable elevators.
 - In 2021, elevators were upgraded at the following stations: Burlington, Pickering, Streetsville, and Whitby.

- For 2022, the list of stations is still being finalized.

2.2.1.4. There are 30 GO Transit Park & Ride facilities that are accessible.

- The Beamsville Park & Ride facility in Niagara Region will undergo accessibility enhancements such as accessible parking improvements and the creation of an accessible pedestrian path from the municipal roadway to the bus stop within the Park & Ride. This work is currently underway and is targeted to be completed in early-2022.

2.2.1.5. GO Transit is working with municipalities to convert on-street municipal bus stops to accommodate all GO Buses. By the end of 2021, the plan is to upgrade an additional 119 stops to be accessible.

2.2.1.6. Metrolinx developed a new Wayfinding Design Standard to better harmonize wayfinding and signage across the Metrolinx service area, including for municipal services. New signage that better reflects the Wayfinding Design Standard has been installed at various locations around Union Station, including some platforms and the York and Bay Concourses.

2.2.2. PRESTO

2.2.2.1. PRESTO is working with GO Transit to launch PRESTO contactless, the ability to tap a regular credit card (VISA, Mastercard, American Express) or Interac Debit Card instead of a PRESTO card to travel. This means that residents, business travelers and tourists will all be able to tap a payment card already in their wallet, rather than needing to learn how to buy and load a PRESTO card. PRESTO contactless will work with the accessibility features of the PRESTO fare payment devices, including the plug-in audio mode on the in-station devices. PRESTO contactless will also include web and app functionality, which will also be designed and tested to ensure accessibility.

2.2.2.2. PRESTO recently launched a new PRESTO E-Tickets app for iOS/Android with support for Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) and Durham Region Transit ticket sales. This accessible app enables customers to purchase e-tickets (adult, senior, student, etc.) with a credit card ahead of their trip, which they then activate before boarding the vehicle. Customers will be able to validate their tickets on the PRESTO devices by scanning the QR code.

2.2.3. Light Rail Transit

- 2.2.3.1. Construction for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT has progressed, and substantial completion is estimated by the end of 2022. Construction is well underway on all underground stations and at-grade stops. All stations and stops will be accessible when the Eglinton Crosstown goes into service.
- 2.2.3.2. Construction for the Finch West LRT is underway, and substantial completion is estimated by the end of 2023. All stations and stops will be accessible when the LRT goes into service.

Metrolinx, municipal and other accessible design requirements are being followed for these projects.

2.3. Operate & Deliver

2.3.1. Metrolinx

2.3.1.1. Metrolinx worked with municipal partners to launch Automated Vehicle (AV) shuttle trials in Scarborough and Whitby to provide a first-mile last-mile shared-ride option for customers travelling to and from the nearest GO station. The Whitby trial briefly went into service and the Scarborough trial underwent testing in Fall 2021. Due to the shuttle manufacturer ceasing operations, these trials had to be discontinued.

Here are some further details about each project:

- Metrolinx partnered with the City of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) to develop the West Rouge Automated Shuttle trial to serve a neighbourhood near Rouge Hill GO Station in Scarborough. The intent was for the West Rouge shuttle to offer transit service on a new route specific to the trial.
- Metrolinx partnered with Durham Region Transit (DRT), the Region of Durham, and the Town of Whitby to launch the Wave Autonomous Vehicle Electric (WAVE) shuttle pilot project. The six-kilometre shuttle route began and ended at the Whitby GO Transit station, making a loop through the Port Whitby area (in south Whitby). The plan was to integrate the shuttle service into the existing DRT schedule as Route 300.
- The AV shuttle vehicles were accessible, including such features as a ramp to board the vehicle and wheeled mobility aid securement points in the floor. There was also an attendant on-board to provide assistance to customers and assume control of the vehicle if required.
- For both pilots, new accessible stops were installed along the route.

2.3.1.2. As a result of the limits on public gatherings due to COVID-19, Metrolinx staff did not participate in in-person accessibility outreach events in 2021, most of which were

cancelled or changed to virtual events.

2.3.2. GO Transit

- 2.3.2.1. Construction has been completed on the following new train stations and bus terminals:
- Bloomington Station (Richmond Hill/Aurora), on the Richmond Hill line - the new, accessible station will include a station building with a parking garage, a platform equipped with a snowmelt system and heated shelters, a bus loop, a Kiss & Ride, and a bike lane and bike shelters with direct access to the platform. The station opened to the public in June 2021.
 - Kipling Station, on the Milton line - a new accessible bus terminal for GO Transit and MiWay (Mississauga Transit) opened to the public in early-2021. The bus terminal is connected to the Kipling GO Train platform via a new barrier-free pedestrian bridge over the train corridor. Additionally, a tunnel from the bus terminal provides a new accessible connection between GO and TTC services.
- 2.3.2.2. Safety and accessibility improvements are being incorporated into bus loops at various GO rail stations (e.g. Ajax, Burlington) and bus terminals (e.g. Finch, Yorkdale) across the network. Examples of improvements include yellow painted lines along the full length of the bus loop, and installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signal controls at select pedestrian crosswalks.
- 2.3.2.3. All GO Trains and Buses include automated stop announcements in English and French. Messages have been added on GO Trains to remind customers to give priority to customers with disabilities to accessibility features such as elevators.
- 2.3.2.4. Next-stop electronic (visual) displays are provided on GO accessible railcars and GO Buses.
- 2.3.2.5. Audio/hearing induction loop systems have been installed at service counters and/or

other intercoms at several GO stations, including Burlington, Cooksville, Oshawa, and Union Stations, among others. This system allows customers who use hearing aids (equipped with a t-coil switch) to clearly hear staff through the intercom system, by filtering out background noise.

2.3.2.6. The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) phone system in the GO Contact Centre launched in November 2015, and includes features such as voice recognition, automated schedules, and several self-serve options. Recent IVR enhancements include: updates to zero out functionality from main menu, streamlining overall structure, improving the Where's My Bus flow and providing trip planning options by arrival time to destination. In addition to these enhancements, there will also be overall improvements for speech recognition, BCP call routing and reconciling code between the development, test, and production environments.

2.3.2.7. Every effort is made to notify customers immediately of any accessibility features (such as elevators) which are temporarily unavailable due to malfunction, construction or repair work. Customers can find this information on the "Service Updates" section of the GO Transit website, or by subscribing to receive status updates via email or text from "On the GO".

If accessibility equipment breaks down on a bus, train or at a station or terminal, GO staff will make arrangements so that customers with disabilities get to their destination. This could involve dispatching another vehicle, or issuing a taxi voucher to provide an accessible transportation alternative.

2.3.3. PRESTO

2.3.3.1. PRESTO completed the device refresh activity to replace the older PRESTO fare payment devices (in stations and on buses) for GO Transit, UP Express and the 905 municipal transit agencies. The refreshed equipment includes the following

accessibility features:

- bright high-contrast screen information featuring large coloured symbols (green checkmark vs. red “X”) as well as black-on-white supplemental information (e.g. fare, balance, time remaining);
- tactile tap region indicators (raised circle);
- tactile barcode region indicator (raised rectangle);
- audio tones to indicate non-visually whether the transit rider’s card was accepted or declined; and
- the in-station devices also include plug-in bilingual audio mode.

2.3.3.2. Onboard (bus/streetcar) self-serve fare payment devices: The PRESTO fare payment devices that customers use to pay their fares as they board a vehicle include: tactile tap region indicators, red/yellow/green lights, and audio tones to indicate non-visually whether the tap was a success or failure and whether a payment concession (e.g. student, senior, etc.) was recognized.

2.3.3.3. Off-board (in-station) self-serve fare payment devices: The PRESTO fare payment and query devices that customers use before they board a vehicle (e.g. in a GO Station) include: tactile tap region indicators, red/yellow/green lights and audio tones to indicate non-visually whether the tap was a success or failure and whether a payment concession was recognized (e.g. student, senior, etc.). These devices also include audio mode which is activated by plugging in headphones.

2.3.3.4. Secondary (lower) PRESTO readers have been added to the wider, accessibility lanes of the modern fare gates installed on the TTC Subway. This will help customers using wheeled mobility aids, who may have difficulty reaching the primary readers located higher up on the fare gates.

- 2.3.3.5. Self-serve sales devices: The PRESTO Self-Serve Reload Machine (TTC and GO Transit stations), Single Ride Vending Machine (TTC streetcars and select stops), and Fare Vending Machine (TTC stations) all include a variety of accessibility features, including:
- Braille labels,
 - high-contrast tactile labels,
 - a plug-in bilingual audio mode,
 - and the ability to operate the device from the keypad instead of the touchscreen.
- 2.3.3.6. PRESTO card services (card vending, card query and adding value to PRESTO cards) are also available on UP Express and GO Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs), which include a bilingual audio mode.
- 2.3.3.7. Handheld transit fare payment: Some specialized transit services make use of the PRESTO handheld Mobile Fare Transaction Processor (MFTP). The device includes a bright, colourful display and includes an audio mode to allow the customer to privately hear their transactions and card query results. Note: the device is always controlled by the vehicle operator. This device is used by TTC, DARTS in Hamilton Street Railway (HSR), Durham Region Transit (DRT), York Region Transit (YRT), Oakville Transit, and Burlington Transit.
- 2.3.3.8. Mobile fare processor app (for taxi operators): Some specialized transit services contract non-dedicated taxis to provide rides to some customers. The PRESTO Mobile Fare Processor App (MFPA) solution includes an app loaded on to a standard Android tablet and an external card reader. The device includes a bright, colourful display and includes an audio mode to allow the customer to hear their transactions and card query results. Note: the device is always controlled by the vehicle operator. This device is used by TTC and DARTS in Hamilton Street Railway (HSR).

- 2.3.3.9. The accessible PRESTO mobile app for iOS/Android devices has been optimized to take advantage of the accessibility features built into modern smartphones, such as screen readers (i.e. iOS VoiceOver, Android TalkBack) and font size control. Both versions now allow loading and querying PRESTO cards via the NFC capability built into most modern smartphones. This means that a customer can load funds to their PRESTO card with their phone as they wait for their bus. Then, once they've boarded, tapped and taken their seat, they can query their card with their phone to review the cost of the fare paid, their transfer window and their balance remaining. Customers can also set their GO default trip from the app and manage contactless credit cards used for fare payment in UP Express.
- 2.3.3.10. PRESTO website: PRESTO maintains an accessible website that allows customers to check their card balances, add funds to their cards, order new cards and more. The website can serve as an alternative, accessible channel if customers have difficulty performing functions using any of the PRESTO self-serve kiosks. The PRESTO website conforms to WCAG 2.0 Level AA. The PRESTO website also includes an accessible web chat help feature.
- 2.3.3.11. PRESTO customer service: PRESTO provides a number of accessible customer contact channels, including: phone, email, accessible web chat or postal mail. While accessibility concerns can be reported via any channel, the Accessibility section on the PRESTO website also provides an email contact channel for accessibility-specific concerns (accessibility@metrolinx.com).
- 2.3.3.12. In-person PRESTO sales: PRESTO customers who are more comfortable receiving service in person can receive this by visiting GO Transit stations, municipal transit agency service locations or any one of a growing network of retail locations around the GTHA and Ottawa. Most of these locations are Shoppers Drug Mart stores, but locations also include select Loblaws, Superstore, and Fortino's locations. These retail locations support buying,

loading and setting up a PRESTO card with a fare type (e.g. senior, student).

- 2.3.3.13. PRESTO cards: PRESTO cards include several accessibility features: High contrast (black-on-white and white-on-black text), text that is as large as practicable, and a Braille “p” in the upper-right corner to help differentiate the card from other cards in a customer’s wallet or purse.
- 2.3.3.14. PRESTO TTC Tickets: PRESTO Tickets are a limited-use product, especially for tourists and occasional customers. They are made of paper containing a lightweight chip, and are tapped like PRESTO cards. The tickets include high contrast (black-on-white) text and customers can query the tickets on TTC Fare Vending Machines (FVM) to reveal how many rides or time remains. The FVM audio mode can be used for this operation.

3. AODA Compliance Status Update

Appendix A of this document outlines the Metrolinx compliance status for in-progress and recently-completed (since the 2020 Status Report) AODA requirements for all services.

4. Accessibility Consultation and Feedback

The Metrolinx Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), along with various ad hoc working and testing groups, provide input into Metrolinx accessibility planning activities. Metrolinx has also sought input into its accessibility planning activities through the annual accessibility public consultation in late-fall and early-winter 2021, which was shifted to virtual consultation again due to COVID-19 and associated variants. Input received through these consultations is considered during the development of the annual Accessibility Status Reports and Multi-Year Accessibility Plans. Additionally, Metrolinx uses the GO Transit Customer Input Tracking system (which systematically tracks customer input provided by email and phone, as well as staff responses) to get input into accessibility planning. A Customer Input Tracking system is the main tool used by Metrolinx to manage, evaluate and take action on customer feedback. Input received through comments from the 2021 virtual accessibility public consultation will be incorporated into a summary document and posted on the Metrolinx website.

Appendix A

Metrolinx AODA Compliance and Dates - Completed / In-Progress since 2020 Status Report

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Clause Number	Accessibility Requirements	Compliance Timeline	Notes
14	Accessible websites and web content - existing content	January 1, 2021	GO Transit, PRESTO, UP Express websites- completed; Metrolinx website- in-progress, remediation plan in development
52	On-board announcements: electronic	January 1, 2017	On-board audible announcements of the route, direction, destination or next major stop are provided on all vehicles, and digital signs on accessible vehicles (including almost all accessible GO railcars) provide visual on-board information of the route, direction, destination or next major stop. Installation of digital signs on the remaining accessible railcars is expected to be completed by early to mid-2022.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Clause Number	Accessibility Requirements	Compliance Timeline	Notes
80.23-80.29, 80.34-80.37, 80.39, 80.41, 80.43	Exterior paths of travel, access aisles, minimum number of accessible parking spaces, signage, on-street parking spaces, service counters, waiting areas	January 1, 2016	Requirements are already implemented for all new construction and major retrofits that have entered into contracts after December 31, 2012. All projects starting design on or after January 1, 2016 will be in compliance.