

City of Greater Sudbury Transit 2025 Annual Accessibility Status Report

With over 6 million annual rides, GOVA Transit understands that accessible community mobility is essential to building a city that serves all residents equitably.

To support this vision, GOVA Transit is committed to continuously developing, enhancing, and expanding accessible transit services, infrastructure, and related facilities across all service areas.

In collaboration with the Accessibility Advisory Panel and key community stakeholders, the voices and needs of persons with disabilities are actively reflected in the planning and review of transit accessibility initiatives, the delivery of inclusive services, and the strategic investment of municipal resources in public transit. Reflective of these investments, the purpose of this Status Report is to inform the public of GOVA Transit's progress with regards to the 2022-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Background

As outlined in the 2022–2027 Strategic Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, the Accessibility Advisory Panel identified five key priorities aligned with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) under Regulation 191/11 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA):

- Accessible Communication
- Accessible Education and Awareness
- Accessibility by Design
- Accessible Community Mobility
- Access to Recreation

These priorities, supported by strategic recommendations from the Panel, serve as a guiding framework for the City of Greater Sudbury in advancing future accessibility initiatives.

Under Priority 4: Accessible Community Mobility, the Accessibility Advisory Panel has identified six areas as being essential to removing barriers and achieving an accessible community. The following Annual Status Report provides an update to the public regarding

GOVA Transit's progress towards achieving success in **Priority 4 - Accessible Community Mobility**.

1. Modern Fare Technology and Fleet Improvements for Barrier-Free Travel

Farebox Upgrades

In January 2025, GOVA Transit launched the first phase of its farebox replacement project with the installation of upgraded fareboxes across the conventional bus fleet. These new fareboxes feature a modernized design that improves usability and supports future integration of app-based and smart card fare payment options.

To ensure barrier-free access and enhance accessibility across transit infrastructure, GOVA Transit consulted with the Accessibility Advisory Panel and representatives from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). Feedback from these consultations helped shape the design to meet accessibility standards and address the needs of riders with visual and physical impairments. Supporting materials and rider guidance were also developed to assist passengers in using the updated fareboxes confidently and independently.

Transit Vehicles

Conventional Fleet (GOVA)

All GOVA conventional buses are equipped with accessible low-floor entries, automated ramps, priority seating, and audio-visual next stop alerts. Buses purchased after 2018—and all future acquisitions—include enhanced accessibility features such as:

Wider aisles in the Priority and Courtesy seating areas to improve maneuverability for passengers using wheelchairs or scooters.

Rear-facing wheelchair seating with a time-saving one-strap safety restraint system for improved safety and efficiency.

Currently, 29 buses in the GOVA Transit fleet include enhanced accessibility and service features, with an additional 6 buses scheduled to enter service by early 2026. As part of the Accelerated Bus Fleet Replacement Project, GOVA Transit is working toward a goal of replacing 53 buses over a ten-year period. To meet this target, a total of 18 more buses will be procured by 2029, ensuring continued modernization of the fleet and improved service for all riders.

Specialized Fleet (GOVA Plus)

To enhance passenger comfort and reduce boarding times, GOVA Plus buses are undergoing significant upgrades. Fifteen new vehicles are expected to be in service by the end of 2025, replacing the existing fleet. All new buses will feature automated ramps in place of lifts, streamlining the boarding process and improving accessibility for all riders.

To maintain service reliability, GOVA and GOVA Plus uphold a 20% spare vehicle ratio, allowing for prompt replacement in the event of equipment failure and minimizing disruption to riders.

2. Improving Wayfinding, Maps and Navigation Technology

Wayfinding

GOVA Transit continues to enhance wayfinding tools to support residents with visual impairments. In collaboration with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and the Accessibility Advisory Panel, standardized bus stop signage has been implemented at all 1,112 bus stops. These signs feature larger bus stop numbers, high contrast colours, and QR codes that link directly to the My Bus app. The app enables users to track buses in real time, plan trips, view route maps and schedules, and access service advisories and detour information that may affect their travel.



Image of new bus stop sign with QR code.



Image of large bus shelter with new QR code bus stop sign and benches.

Technology Enhancements

Specialized Transit (GOVA Plus)

In Fall 2024, GOVA Transit launched the GOVA Plus mobile app, a fully accessible digital tool designed to enhance independence and control for specialized transit clients. The app allows users to book, modify, or cancel rides, select preferred travel times, pay fares digitally, track their bus in real time, receive reminders via text or phone call, and rate their ride after each trip. This initiative reflects GOVA Transit's commitment to inclusive service delivery and technological innovation.

One of the key features of the app is its self-booking capability, which empowers riders to manage their own travel. The app also provides robust real-time tracking features for both riders and care providers. Users can view scheduled pickups and drop-offs, estimated arrival times, and live bus location on a map. Additional details such as the driver's name and bus identifier are also displayed, improving transparency and coordination for those managing care.

A standout feature of the GOVA Plus platform is the Partner Portal, which has seen the highest level of engagement since launch. This portal allows care organizations to manage transportation for their clients through a centralized dispatcher account. Each organization is granted access only to its respective clients, enabling staff to book, cancel, and track rides efficiently. This has significantly reduced the volume of email and phone-based dispatching.

Partner Portals are currently active with several organizations, including March of Dimes Building A and B, Extendicare York, Extendicare Countryside, Pioneer Manor, St. Joseph's Villa, Holland Residence, and Cana Residence, both part of the Sudbury Developmental Services group. These partnerships demonstrate the app's value in streamlining operations and improving service delivery for specialized transit users.

To support the launch of the GOVA Plus app, new booking software was implemented that has significantly improved reporting accuracy and operational efficiency.

The system enables staff to access snapshots of specific days or date ranges without the need for manual data manipulation. It provides detailed insights into daily demand, allowing for proactive scheduling of additional vehicles or arranging taxi transfers. Cancellation and no-show data are now more reliable, and the software tracks how bookings are made, whether through standing orders, the call center, or the app.

New metrics such as direct ride duration, actual ride duration, and shared ride percentage offer a clearer picture of service delivery. Customer experience data, including ride ratings and comments, is now captured alongside trends in new and repeat users.

The system also reports on passengers per vehicle hour (PVH) versus demand PVH, offering better insight across Greater Sudbury's large service area. Real-time booking capabilities allow riders to receive immediate trip times and enable staff to negotiate alternatives when preferred times are unavailable. The system automatically searches all itineraries to minimize travel time, distance, and delays, and adjusts schedules in real time to account for traffic, breakdowns, or other disruptions. Dispatchers receive alerts when a pickup may fall outside the scheduled window, allowing for timely rider communication.

Additional features include tracking rider types (ambulatory, wheelchair, walker users) and flagging abnormal driver behavior, enabling prompt intervention, and improved customer service.

To better anticipate and respond to service demand, GOVA Transit has implemented Key Performance Indicator (KPI) tracking through the RideCo booking system. This enhanced data collection allows for more informed decision-making and continuous improvement in service delivery. With access to real-time and historical performance metrics, GOVA Transit can monitor trends such as prolonged wait times and adjust service levels and operational practices accordingly. This data-driven approach supports a more responsive and efficient transit system, ensuring that resources are aligned with rider needs and service expectations.

Conventional Transit (GOVA)

As part of GOVA Transit's commitment to modernizing fare payment and improving accessibility, the GOVA Pass mobile app is scheduled to launch in Fall 2025. This app will offer conventional transit riders a flexible and secure way to purchase fares and passes virtually—anytime, anywhere. In addition to on-bus fare payment via QR code, the app will allow users to plan trips, view real-time arrivals, and receive service alerts. The app's design and functionality were shaped through consultation with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and the Accessibility Advisory Panel, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of all riders.

In the next phase of the project, GOVA Pass reloadable smart cards will be introduced. These cards will enable riders to tap and pay securely when boarding conventional transit buses. Smart cards will be available for purchase at the Downtown Transit Hub Kiosk, and riders will be able to create and manage their accounts via the GOVA Pass website. Reloading options will be available both online and in person at designated locations, providing greater flexibility and convenience for all users.

3. Commitment to Meeting and Exceeding Accessibility Compliance

GOVA Transit recognizes that accessibility is a multifaceted goal requiring thoughtful planning, continuous improvement, and a commitment to inclusive service delivery. The organization remains dedicated to meeting—and where possible, exceeding—the legislative requirements outlined in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*, *Regulation 191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990*.

In Spring 2025, GOVA Plus services underwent a desk audit conducted by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. The audit assessed compliance across several legislated areas, including accessibility training, accessibility plans, eligibility categories and application processes, emergency or compassionate accommodations, visitor access, origin-to-destination service, coordinated service delivery, booking procedures, trip restrictions, service delays, and policies regarding companions and children. The outcome of the audit concluded that GOVA Plus not only met all requirements but exceeded legislative requirements in several categories.

4. Ongoing Review of Policies and Practices for Specialized Transportation

Demand for GOVA Plus service has steadily increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. As the needs and profiles of clients continue to evolve, GOVA Transit remains committed to regularly evaluating and updating its policies to ensure the specialized service operates efficiently and reflects current legislation, best practices, and industry standards.

In response to shifting demand, several policies are currently under review and may be subject to change. These include:

- The process for accepting applications and determining eligibility for GOVA Plus ridership.

- A revised appeals process for individuals denied access to the service.
- Policies related to late cancellations, no-shows, and standing orders.
- Measures to improve accessibility for individuals sensitive to chemicals or fragrances on both conventional and specialized transit systems, using a harm reduction approach supported by education and awareness initiatives.

These ongoing reviews aim to enhance service delivery, promote equity, and ensure GOVA Plus continues to meet the diverse needs of its riders.

5. Continued Consultation on Best Practices for Community Mobility

The City of Greater Sudbury has adopted an Accessibility Consultation Policy that goes beyond legislative requirements to ensure meaningful engagement with individuals who have lived experience with disability. This policy reinforces the City's commitment to inclusive decision-making and strengthens its approach to accessible service delivery.

GOVA Transit recognizes the critical value of lived experience in shaping equitable and accessible public transit. As such, it will continue to actively consult with the public, passengers, the Accessibility Advisory Panel, and community accessibility stakeholders. Their feedback, experiences, and concerns are integral to the review and refinement of policies and practices across the GOVA Transit family of services.

Representatives from GOVA and GOVA Plus regularly attend Accessibility Advisory Panel meetings and will continue to do so to ensure timely responses to questions and concerns, and to facilitate ongoing consultation. In 2025, GOVA staff presented at three quarterly Accessibility Advisory Panel meetings regarding projects and initiatives that impact accessibility across the system.

Service updates and changes are communicated well in advance of implementation through multiple channels, including social media, the GOVA Transit website, onboard announcements, and digital displays at the Downtown Transit Hub. Multiple feedback options are available via the City of Greater Sudbury website, and GOVA Transit consistently maintains an above-average response rate to inquiries and concerns.

6. Future Expansion and Ongoing Service Improvements

Looking ahead, GOVA Transit is actively working on future service enhancements, including the development of three new major mobility hub locations in New Sudbury, Downtown, and the South End. These hubs are being designed to improve passenger safety and security, ease of use, connections to major destinations, and access to accessible transit services. These priorities were identified in the Transit Action Plan, which continues to guide our efforts to build a more inclusive and user-friendly transit system. Several improvements have already been implemented, with further enhancements planned to support the functionality and accessibility of these major transit hubs.

GOVA Transit service levels have returned to pre-COVID-19 standards, marking a significant milestone in restoring and expanding transit access across Greater Sudbury. As part of this recovery, 11,000 annual service hours were added to the conventional GOVA Transit system. These enhancements include:

- Added peak-time service on Route 1N Main Line New Sudbury
- Increased frequency on post-secondary routes:
 - Route 3 Laurentian via Regent
 - Route 11 Donovan/College Boreal
- Introduced early weekend departures across the network
- Launched a new route: Route 106 Valley-Dominion, servicing Val Caron, Val Therese, and Hanmer via Dominion/Elmview during peak times
- Increased peak-time frequency from 90-minute to 45-minute service on:
 - Route 102 Garson
 - Route 103 Coniston
- Expanded service on Route 1S Main Line South End
- Introduced a new Barrydowne Express morning route

These improvements reflect GOVA Transit's ongoing commitment to enhancing mobility, accessibility, and convenience for all riders.

7. Enhancing Accessibility Beyond Strategic Priorities

In addition to advancing the key priorities outlined in the Multi-Year Strategic Accessibility Plan, GOVA Transit continues to seek new opportunities to improve the accessibility of its services, particularly in how it communicates with passengers and the public. Over the past year, several initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen accessibility across the transit system:

- **National AccessAbility Week Campaigns May 25 – May 31, 2025**
In 2025, GOVA Transit launched two targeted communications campaigns during National AccessAbility Week, one aimed at transit passengers and the other at bus operators to promote and educate users about the accessible features of the conventional transit system. By engaging both the public and frontline staff, these efforts were designed to increase awareness, foster inclusive transit practices, and strengthen service delivery for riders with disabilities.
- **GOVA Plus Website and Rider Guide Redesign**
In September 2024, GOVA Transit completed a redesign of the GOVA Plus website and Rider Guides to enhance clarity, usability, and access to essential information for specialized transit clients. The updated materials provide clearer guidance and improved usability, helping riders better understand the service and its features, navigate booking procedures, and access support resources. This redesign supports GOVA Transit’s ongoing commitment to accessible and user-friendly service delivery.
- **Expanded Public Communications**
In January 2025, GOVA Transit installed two new digital display screens at the Downtown Transit Hub. These screens provide timely updates and important service information to the public in an accessible format, supporting improved communication and enhancing the rider experience for all passengers.
- **Travel Training Programs**
In 2025, GOVA Transit expanded its travel training initiatives through partnerships with CNIB, local libraries, Citizen Service Centres, secondary and post-secondary schools, and other community organizations. These sessions are designed to improve transit literacy and empower riders by covering key topics such as accessible features of the conventional fleet, route navigation, and fare payment

options. To date, staff have completed 11 travel training sessions, helping to build rider confidence and promote independent transit use across the community.

- **Bus Shelter Upgrades**

Work to upgrade and replace bus shelters across the GOVA Transit system is ongoing. In 2025, a strong focus has been placed on improving accessibility and enhancing passenger comfort. Feedback from the Accessibility Advisory Panel has played a key role in guiding the design and placement of both new and retrofitted shelters to ensure they meet accessibility standards and serve the needs of all riders. To date, 15 new shelters have been added to the system, with an additional five expected to be completed by the end of the year.



Image of new large, upgraded bus shelter.



Image of new upgraded bus shelter with benches and new QR code bus stop sign.

Looking Ahead

GOVA Transit recognizes that accessibility is not a destination, but a continuous journey—guided by the evolving needs of our community, changes in legislation, and innovations in transit service delivery. The key priority areas identified in the Multi-Year Strategic Accessibility Plan remain active and ongoing, with regular reviews and updates to ensure they reflect current best practices.

As we move forward, GOVA Transit remains committed to fostering an inclusive transit system that empowers all residents. Through collaboration, innovation, and accountability, we will continue to build a network that is accessible, equitable, and responsive to the diverse needs of our riders.

Resources

Information regarding accessibility at the City of Greater Sudbury, including the Strategic Multi-Year Transit Accessibility Plan, and Annual Status Reports can be found on the City of Greater Sudbury's website: <https://www.greatersudbury.ca/city-hall/accessibility/>

Legislation

[The Accessibility for Ontarians with a Disability Act \(AODA\)](#)

[Regulation 191/11 – The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations](#)

[Human Rights Code, 1990](#)

Contact Information

For more information, comments, questions, or concerns relating to accessibility please contact:

GOVA Transit

311 or 705-674-4455

<mailto:311@greatersudbury.ca>

This information is also available in hard-copy and accessible formats upon request.