

# 2026 - 2028 Universal Accessibility Plan





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**Produced in  
collaboration  
with Transfert  
Environnement  
et Société**



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# 1. Introduction and background

## 1.1 Plan objectives and scope

### Main objective

The Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO) 2026-2028 Universal Accessibility Plan is part of its commitment to inclusive mobility.

This Plan merges the provincial and federal government requirements into a single document. The purpose of this integrated approach is to ensure coherent planning, harmonized accountability and continuous improvement in accessibility throughout the transit system.

The STO drew upon the 2021-2025 Accessibility Plan report to establish an initial diagnostic. The subsequent consultation process helped round out the profile of the current obstacles to accessibility.

These elements were used in determining the action priorities and the resulting action plan.

In order to ensure collaborative and efficient implementation, this plan was prepared in close consultation with customers, specialized associations and institutional partners.

### Scope

The 2026-2028 Universal Accessibility Plan dovetails with the STO's 2026-2035 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan rests on three pillars: customer experience, employee experience and operational excellence.

The *customer experience* pillar sets the foundation for universal accessibility and aims to offer high quality public transit that is safe, reliable and accessible to everyone. This pillar in turn branches off into three axes:

- Customer experience improvement;
- System development and improvement;
- Strengthening of universal accessibility and paratransit.

These intervention axes directly orient the action priorities that the STO defined in its 2026-2035 Strategic Plan to solidify its vision of inclusion and service quality:

- Development, adoption and implementation of a universal accessibility plan;
- Analysis and optimization of the paratransit model;
- Strengthening of the sense of safety, comfort and respect felt by paratransit customers.

## 1.2 Legislative and normative frameworks

### Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration (R.S.Q., C. E-20.1)

In December 2004, the National Assembly of Québec amended the Act to secure disabled persons “in the exercise of the rights and to facilitate their integration into society on the same basis as all other citizens”. Section 1 (paragraph g) defines a person with a disability as follows:

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*“A person with a deficiency causing a significant and persistent disability, who is liable to encounter barriers in performing everyday activities.”*

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Since that amendment, every public transit company in Quebec is required to submit to the ministère des Transports et de la mobilité durable du Québec (MTMD) a development plan aimed at ensuring, within a reasonable timeframe, access to public transit to people with disabilities within its territory (Chapter III, Division V, section 67).

To that end, public transit companies must set up an internal working group, identify the stakeholders in the community and public entities working within the territory, and set up a means of consulting and working with them.



## Accessible Canada Act (S.C. 2019, C. 10) and Accessible Canada Regulations (SOR/2021-241)

This federal legislation applies to the STO because the service it offers crosses the Quebec-Ontario border, extending into the city of Ottawa. As a result, it is an interprovincial service, hence subject to the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, which recognizes that “all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated (...) without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on (...) disability (...)”.

The purpose of that Act extends to the *Accessible Canada Act*, which aims “to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities, (...) particularly by the identification and removal of barriers, and the prevention of new barriers, in the following areas:

- Employment;
- The built environment;
- Information and communication technologies;
- Communication, other than information and communication technologies;
- The procurement of goods, services and facilities;
- The design and delivery of programs and services;
- Transportation (...)”.

The Act requires regulated entities such as public transportation authorities to consult with people with disabilities, establish processes for receiving feedback from them, and publish the manner in which they implement their accessibility plan.

To that end, the STO:

- Adopted and posted a Federal Initial Accessibility Plan on its website on June 1, 2025 to announce its intentions and upcoming consultations;
- Formalized the measures to be taken in that Accessibility Plan, which it posted on its website in 2026.





### 1.3 Universal accessibility principles and approach taken

Over the past 20 years, the STO has been working on universal accessibility for public transit as a key component, in the process tabling three development plans:

- The 2009-2014 Accessibility Plan, adopted by the STO in 2009 and updated in 2011;
- The 2015-2019 Accessibility Plan, adopted by the STO in 2016;
- The 2021-2025 Accessibility Plan, adopted by the STO in 2020.

The 2026-2028 Universal Accessibility Plan is part of the STO's continued efforts related to universal accessibility, marking a new stage adapted to its customers' changing needs and regulatory requirements. Building on solid foundations and lessons learned over the past few years, this Plan aims to consolidate what has been achieved, fill remaining gaps and structure a coherent response to emerging challenges in order to meet the expectations of an increasingly diversified customer base.

## 2. Overview of the STO and its customers

### 2.1 The STO

The STO's mission is to provide an accessible and inclusive public transit service to Gatineau's residents. At July 1, 2024, Gatineau had 305,334 inhabitants<sup>1</sup> spread over 343 km<sup>2</sup>. In order to meet its customers' varied needs, the STO offers regular, paratransit and on demand services to everyone, including people with functional limitations, to enable them to move throughout Gatineau safely and autonomously.

### 2.2 Regular service

#### Fleet

As of late 2025, the STO relies on its fleet of 374 buses, including:

203 regular wheelchair accessible kneeling buses (40 feet long);

75 regular kneeling buses (40 feet long);

96 articulated wheelchair accessible kneeling buses (60 feet long).

#### Ridership

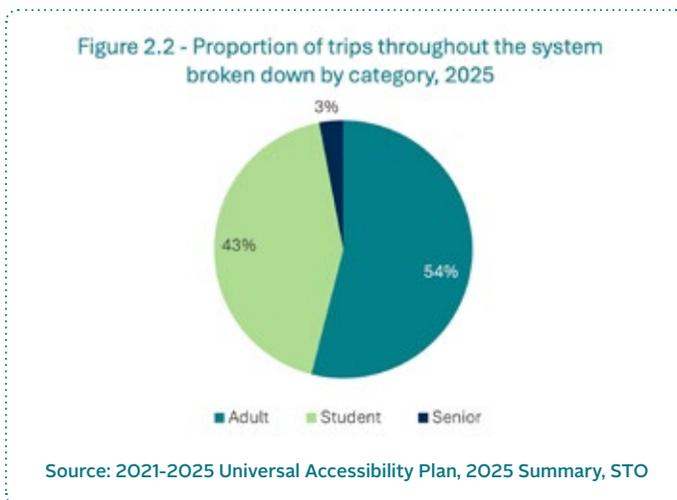
The STO recorded more than 15 million trips in 2025, an increase of slightly over 25% compared to 2023. The following figure shows the change in regular STO ridership between 2020 and 2025.



<sup>1</sup>Institut de la statistique du Québec, Principaux indicateurs sur le Québec et ses régions, 2025.

### Trips by category

Figure 2.2 illustrates the proportion of trips throughout the system in 2025 broken down by customer category as determined by type of STO fare. More than half (54%) of the trips throughout the STO system are by adults. Students account for almost the same proportion (43%) of trips, whereas seniors (aged 65 and over) represent only 3% of trips.

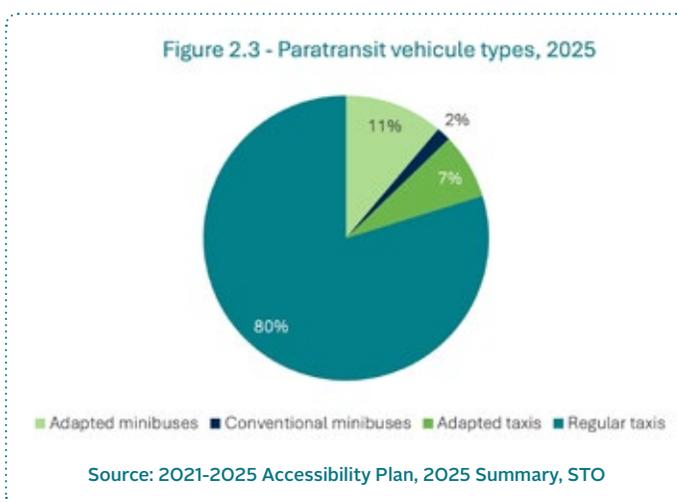


## 2.3 Paratransit service

Paratransit is a door-to-door public transit service accessible to eligible people with limitations who are unable to use the regular transit service. This service is provided by sub-contractors for the STO throughout the territory served.

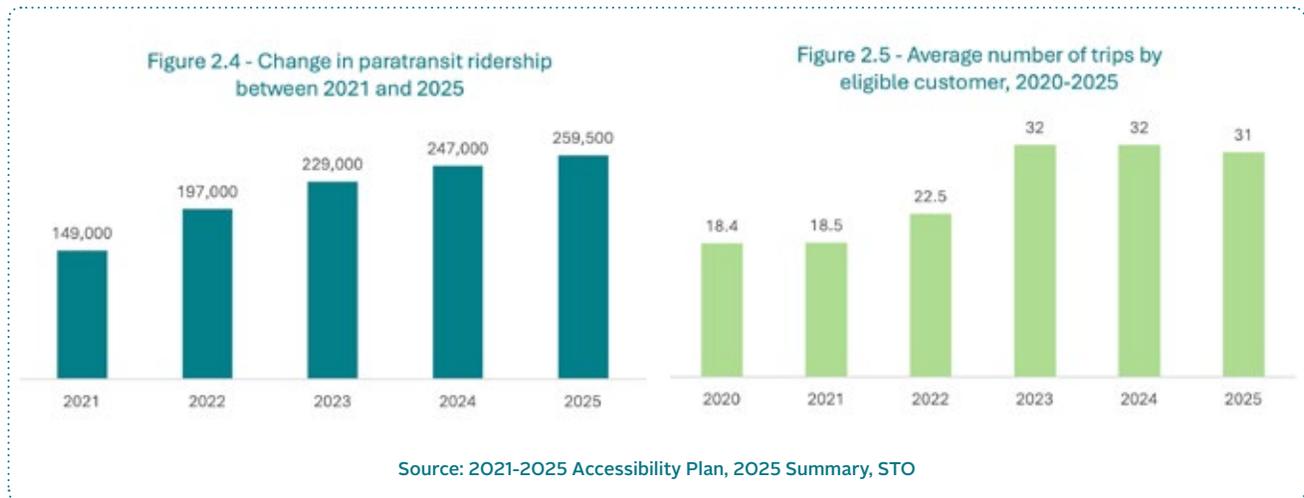
### Fleet

Four different types of vehicles are used, depending on customers' specific needs: adapted minibuses (21), conventional minibuses (3), adapted taxis (14) and regular taxis (150). The STO can assign trips to the regular taxis in real time. This method makes it possible to quickly mobilize available drivers and adjust the service's capacity based on demand, particularly during peak periods.



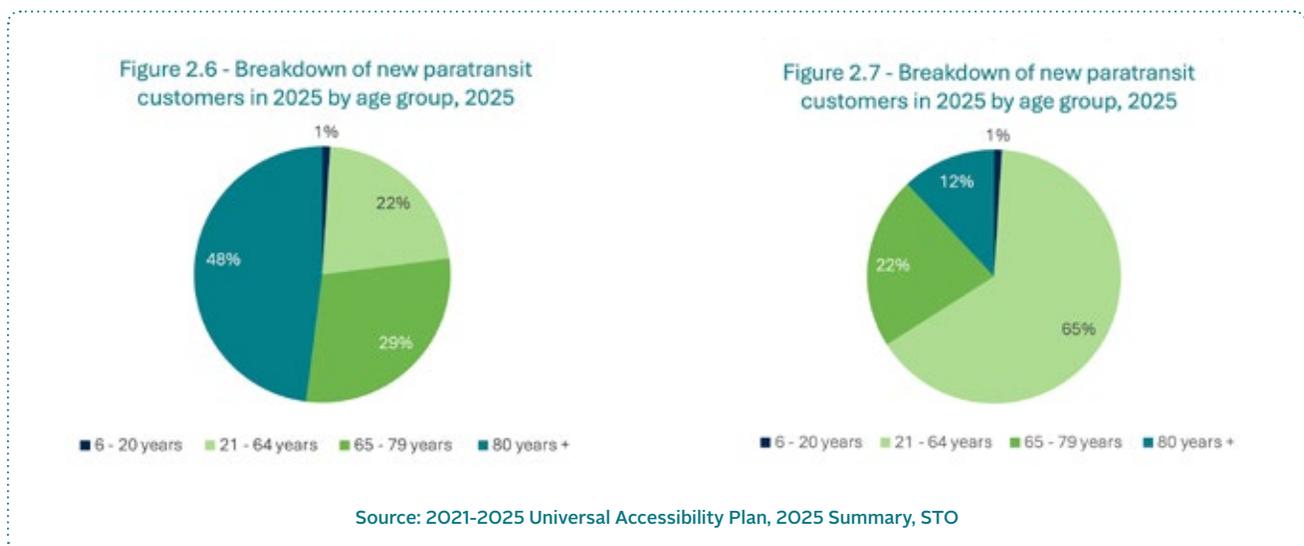
## Ridership

Figure 2.4 illustrates the marked rebound in paratransit ridership in 2024 following a significant drop in 2020-2021 due to COVID-19. The rebound continued in 2025, with ridership almost returning pre-pandemic levels. Figure 2.5 also shows an increase in the average number of trips per eligible customer during the 2020-2025 period.



## Trips by age group

In 2025, 942 new customers were added to the paratransit service, bringing to 8,038 the number of customers eligible for this service throughout the STO territory. Figures 2.6 and 2.7 show that the profile of people eligible for paratransit is quite different from that of the STO's main users. Whereas 65% of trips are made by working age people (aged 21 to 64), the latter represent only 22% of people eligible for paratransit.

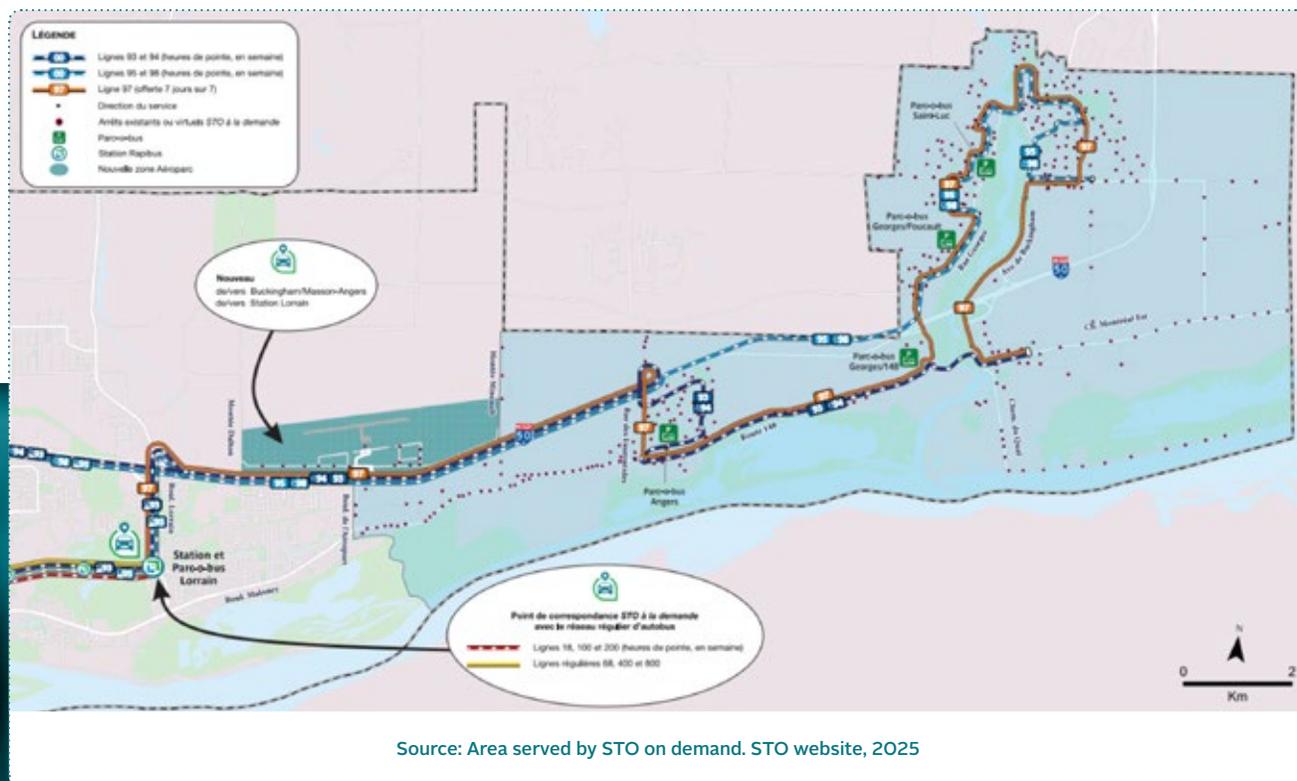


## 2.4 On demand service

STO on demand is a public transit service offered since 2021 in the Buckingham and Masson-Angers sectors, and since 2025 in the Aéroport sector. The purpose of the service is to complement the regular and paratransit services and active transportation modes, and is provided by taxi companies on behalf of the STO.

STO on demand, which is only available with a reservation, currently has 544 existing or virtual stops (reference points, grocery stores, street lights, etc.).

It was the first one in Quebec to be accessible thanks to the use of vans that could accommodate wheelchairs.



Source: Area served by STO on demand. STO website, 2025



## Fleet

In 2025, STO on demand vehicles included:

In the Buckingham/Masson-Angers and Lorrain sectors: two sedans and one accessible minivan;

In the Aéroport sector: two minivans and one accessible minivan.

It should be noted that:

The sedans can carry three passengers;

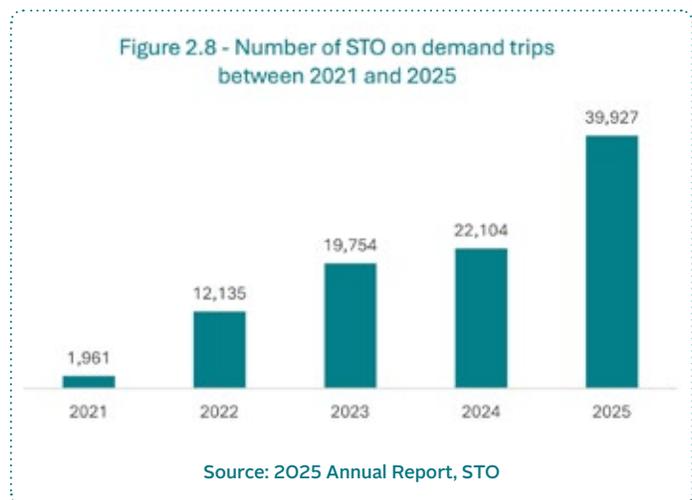
The vans can carry five passengers;

The accessible vans can carry three passengers as the second row of seats has been removed to make room for a wheelchair.

## Ridership

Despite a slow start due to the novelty and the COVID-19 pandemic, 1,961 trips were recorded in 2021. By 2022 this had increased sixfold, followed by a steady rise in ridership, with 39,927 trips by the end of 2025. A comparison of 2025 and 2021 data indicates that within four years, STO on demand ridership increased 20-fold.

Since 2021, STO on demand has recorded 1,438 accessible trips.



## 3. Planning and consultation

### 3.1 Plan development

The 2026-2028 Universal Accessibility Plan was developed based on a series of consultation mechanisms set in place in fall 2025 to ensure a thorough, inclusive and representative process.

#### Internal working group

To begin, an internal working group comprising a representative from each STO department concerned was set up to mobilize all pertinent expertise. The group met three times between August and October 2025 to prepare a full diagnostic of the service offer, identify obstacles faced by customers at every step of the trip, and establish the main objective of the Plan, along with the priorities and actions required for its implementation.

#### Public entities

Targeted discussions were also held with public entities active throughout the territory. A meeting with Ville de Gatineau led to a shared understanding of universal accessibility issues and opportunities for collaboration. The changes to the STO's approach to universal accessibility were presented at a second meeting with the regional advisor from the ministère des Transports et de la Mobilité durable, validating its proposed orientations.





### Community stakeholders

At the same time, three virtual consultations were held with organizations representing different public transit customers. This process helped identify the perspectives of customers with different types of limitations, in particular those related to communication, mobility, vision, cognition and aging. These consultations, held on September 8, 9 and 10, 2025, gave participants the chance to express their views and their perception of the progress made since the 2021-2025 Plan, as well as their priorities for improvements. The consultations were structured around identifying obstacles, analyzing their impact, formulating solutions and prioritizing measures to be implemented.

### Online consultation

A further online consultation took place on the STO website from September 22 to October 26, 2025, with 200 customers participating. Their responses highlighted clear expectations in terms of improvements to accessibility at every stage of the trip, particularly in regard to the quality of information, the condition of the facilities and service predictability.

This participatory approach helped validate internal observations and identify, with the customers, the main obstacles faced during their trips. The detailed results and the list of organizations consulted are presented in the full consultation report, in Annex A, and the summary of findings is presented in Section 4 of this Plan.

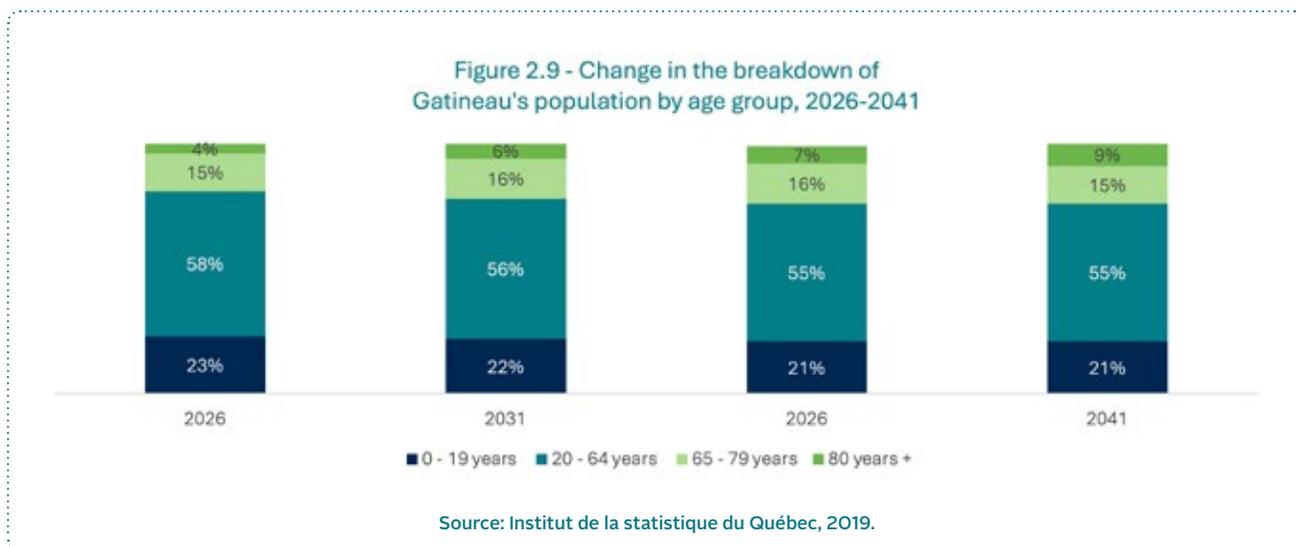
### 3.2 Profile of the target customers throughout the territory

The STO's Universal Accessibility Development Plan aims to facilitate the use of public transit for everyone, in particular for people with mobility issues of any kind. Understanding the system's structure and the profile of its customers is essential to effectively target obstacles to accessibility. Thus, the Plan relies on a detailed analysis of current and future customers in order to ensure the proposed measures truly meet the territory's needs.

This Plan targets everyone affected by one or more functional limitation, seniors, and people traveling with luggage or a stroller. The target customers are described in the following sections.

#### Seniors

The composition of Gatineau's population is projected to keep changing over the coming years, although less significantly than over the past 10 years. It is expected to grow by 8% between 2026 and 2041, with a leveling off of the growth of the different age groups. The working age population (aged 20 to 64) should drop from 58% in 2026 to 55% in 2041, the proportion of people aged 65 to 79 should remain the same around 15%, and the proportion of people aged 80 and over should more than double, rising from 4% to 9%<sup>2</sup>. This aging population will mean more people will need accessible regular public transit.



<sup>2</sup>Institut de la statistique du Québec, Perspectives démographiques du Québec et des régions, 2016-2066, 2019.

## People with disabilities

In Quebec, the proportion of people living with a disability is significant: in 2022, close to one out of five (21%) people aged 15 and over reported at least one disability. In the Outaouais, that proportion was 28%, the highest in the province<sup>3</sup>.

In 2012, 8% of Gatineau's population had a disability. One quarter of the city's residents aged 65 and over reported having a disability<sup>4</sup>. Ten years later, the Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022, indicated that 20% of Gatineau residents reported having at least one disability, 58% being women and 51% being men. The disability rate naturally increases with age: 10.5% among those aged 15 to 34 and 32.8% among those aged 75 and over<sup>5</sup>.

Province-wide, one family out of every four has a child with a disability. In the Outaouais, the disability rate among children aged 0 to 17 is, at 20%, also the highest in the province, with more than 16,000 children counted<sup>6</sup>. These numbers clearly highlight the strategic issues of universal accessibility within the STO territory.

Disabilities in the following categories account for the functional limitations:

.....  
Seeing;

.....  
Hearing;

.....  
Mobility;

.....  
Flexibility or dexterity;

.....  
Mental health-related;

.....  
Sensory or environmental;

.....  
Illness or chronic pain;

.....  
Learning;

.....  
Developmental.  
.....

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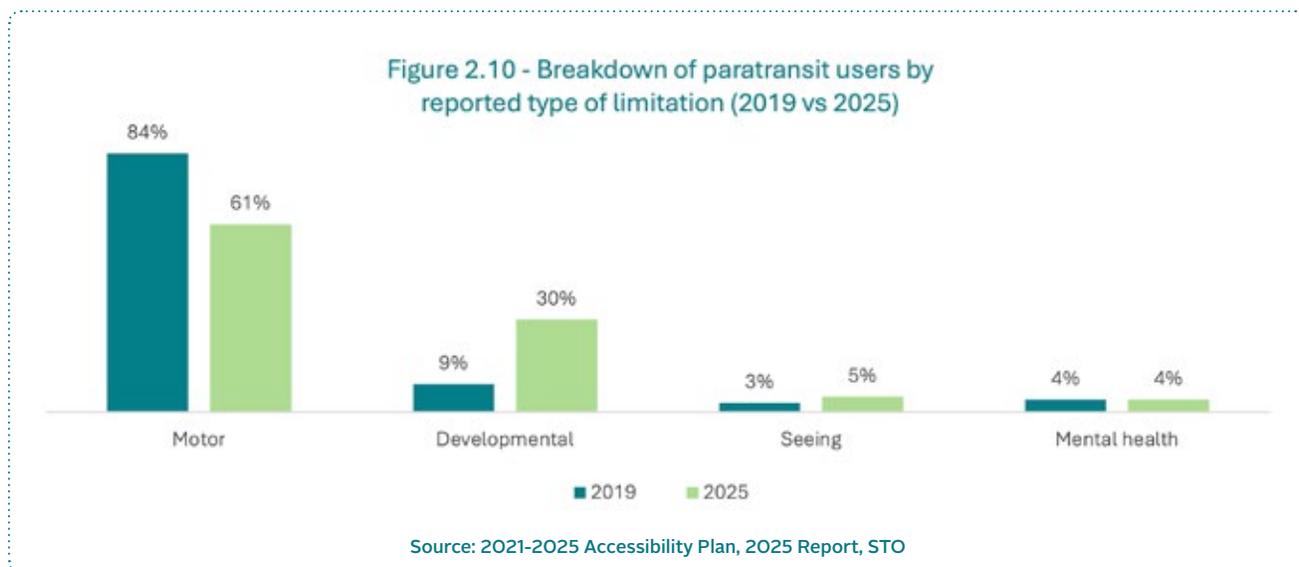
<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, L'incapacité chez les enfants au Québec : portrait selon le Recensement de 2016, 2020.

In Canada, the most common types of limitations across all age groups are those related to pain, mobility and flexibility<sup>7</sup>. The breakdown of regular users of the STO's paratransit service in 2025 reflects this prevalence of motor limitations. The following figure presents the breakdown by reported type of limitation.



The majority (61%) of regular users of paratransit were admitted based on a motor or organic limitation, a significant decrease since 2019 (84%). Next are users with a learning disability, and their proportion increased significantly, from 9% to 30%. Users with a mental health-related disability and seeing issues are the smallest proportions at 5% and 4%, respectively. Providing services for these users once again highlights the importance of adapting to their needs.

Others are also concerned by universal accessibility because of difficulties they may encounter when trying to get around: expectant mothers, people with strollers, people with luggage and people with functional limitations based on ethnocultural factors such as insufficient familiarity with the language and/or culture in Quebec.

Given the constantly growing number of people with a disability, demand for a truly accessible public transit service is bound to rise. Thus, it is essential to accelerate the deployment of universal accessibility in order to meet the needs of an ever more diversified customer base.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2022

## 4. Overview of obstacles to accessibility

### 4.1 Inventory of obstacles identified by people with disabilities

Analyses of the user experience, expanded through the contributions of organizations and customers, helped identify numerous obstacles, in both regular public transit and paratransit services. Those obstacles and the proposed solutions<sup>8</sup> were grouped according to the type of disability in the summary table of the consultation report (Annex A).

#### Summary

For vulnerable people, unforeseen events lead to confusion about reference points, which accentuates their sense of insecurity. Their fundamental need to feel safe and secure is **predictability**. Universal accessibility is not limited to physical infrastructures: it also depends on reliable and stable services. Inasmuch as the response to this need for predictability is not fully met, the most vulnerable customers will avoid the regular service, which offers more possibilities, more freedom and flexibility, and maintain their dependence on public transit.

For these customers, the priorities can be summarized as follows:

.....  
1. Driver training;  
.....

2. Service punctuality, reliability and flexibility;  
.....

3. Improved safety for vulnerable people;  
.....

4. Information and physical accessibility;  
.....

5. Customer service and follow-up on complaints;  
.....

6. Payment methods.  
.....

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<sup>8</sup> Ideal solutions considered by people with limitations, that for the STO are only indicative

## Highlights – obstacles by stage of trip

- When planning trips, customers have to contend with information tools that are at times poorly adapted, mainly provided in digital format, and limit their access to the information. When it comes to paratransit, they encounter further difficulties in terms of the reservation parameters, particularly for online requests;
- When it comes to payment, there are further communication and service point accessibility issues, including the absence of alternatives to cash. With paratransit, the management of payments other than by card remains a problem;
- At stops, accessibility is obstructed by the absence of adequate infrastructure (sidewalks, benches, accessible bus shelters) and insufficient snow removal. Paratransit has to deal with at times non-conforming fares, significant wait times and the absence of follow-up in real time;
- Regarding the vehicles themselves, there are issues of safety and comfort: taking off too fast, missing equipment, heat or voice messages. With paratransit, some of the vehicles are inadequate, driving is at times sketchy, some trips take too long, and the incompatibility of riders sometimes complicate the movement of users. Information management can also pose a challenge in the event of trip adjustments or sensory overload;
- Upon arrival, the accessibility of the immediate environment (stops, sidewalks, intersections) remains a major issue. With paratransit, certain situations leave vulnerable customers without proper assistance, without an emergency number or alternatives in the event of unexpected developments;
- Finally, there are customer service challenges related to reservations and follow-up on complaints, limited service availability and, with paratransit, the inability to travel between provinces.



## 4.2 Online consultation results

As in the case of people with disabilities and organizations consulted, the 200 respondents to the online questionnaire pointed out that service quality depends as much on the physical infrastructure as on interactions with staff. The 746 comments received highlighted the importance of ensuring that the service provided is more attentive to the needs of people with reduced mobility, reliable and stable service, accessible and safe infrastructures, coherence between regular and paratransit services and reliable digital tools.

### Overall satisfaction and perception of accessibility

#### Highlights:

The overall satisfaction rate with accessibility is 66.5%.

38.6% of respondents believe the system's accessibility has improved over the past five years, whereas 32.7% consider that it has remained the same.

Figure 2.11 - Overall satisfaction with accessibility, 2025

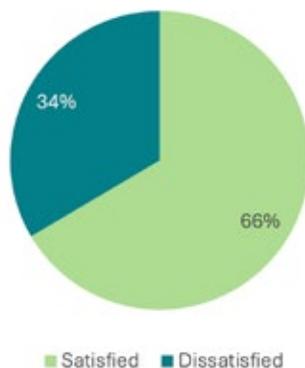
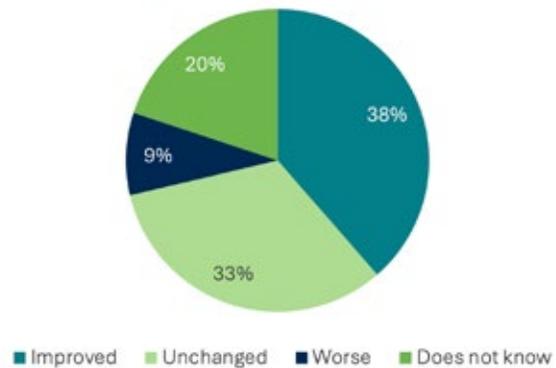


Figure 2.12 - Perception of the change in accessibility, 2025



## Priorities listed by respondents

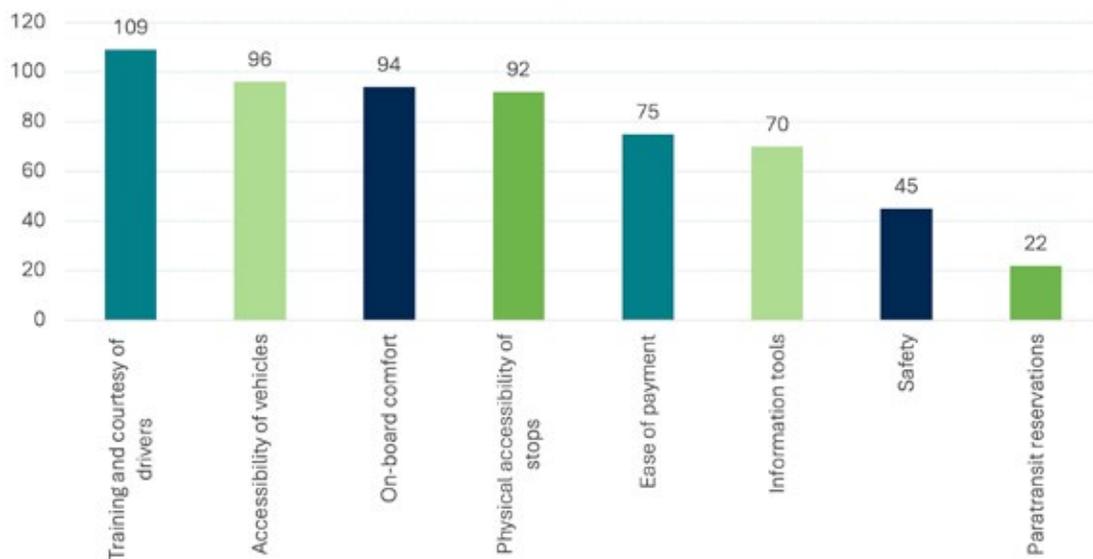
### Highlights:

Respondents clearly identified improvements in the training and courtesy of drivers as the main priority for the coming years;

Accessibility of vehicles and stops is also a top priority, for both the regular and the paratransit systems;

While there is room for improvement in terms of payment and information tools, these elements are not as high priority for respondents.

Figure 2.13 - Priorities indicated by customers  
(based on frequency of mention), 2025



These observations have clear a clear message for the action plan: improving universal accessibility requires acting simultaneously on the infrastructures, access to information, human interactions and internal processes.

### 4.3 Summary of achievements in regard to accessibility

Between 2021 and 2025, the STO moved ahead in modernizing its system and improving universal accessibility. Those major improvements attest to its clear commitment to offer inclusive, safe and adapted services to all users. Thanks to targeted investments, significant progress was made in the Plan's five key objectives.

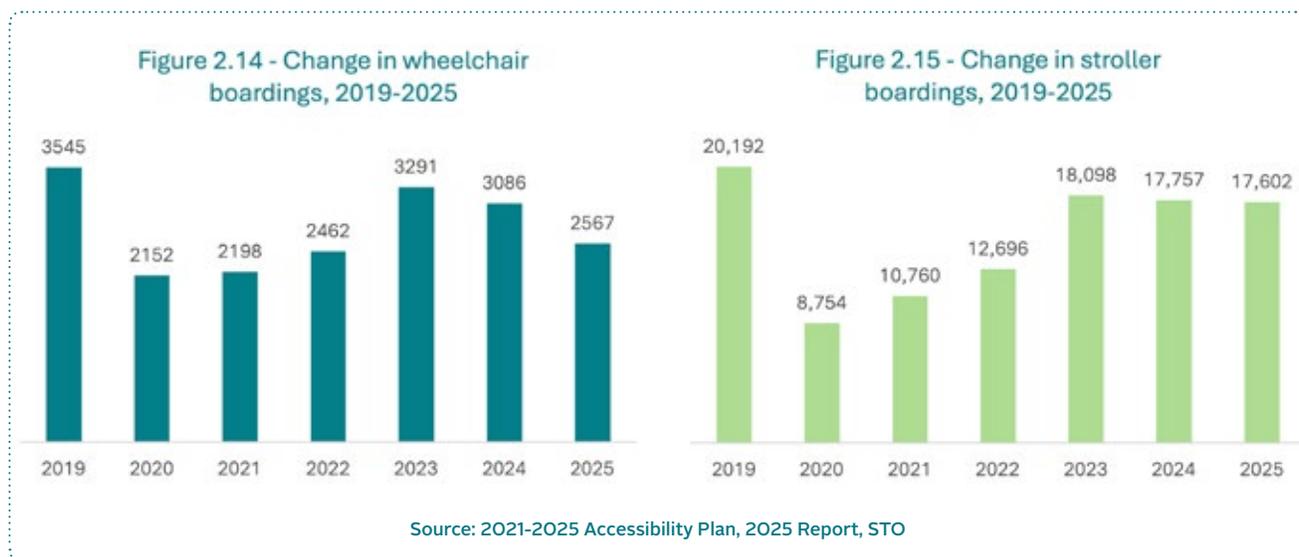
#### Major progress 2021 – 2025

Significant progress helped modernize the system and improve universal accessibility in several areas: equipment, signage, processes, services and information for users.

The actions and tangible results are set out in detail below, dovetailing with the five objectives of the previous plan:

#### Accessibility of vehicles and routes

- The STO is pursuing its efforts to make its **vehicle fleet accessible**, namely through the acquisition of low-floor buses equipped with ramps. This raised the accessibility rate from **69% in 2020 to close to 80% in 2025**. Since 2022, every new vehicle, whether regular or articulated, has two spots reserved for wheelchairs, helping to gradually increase the number of accessible trips;
- In addition, the **boarding of customers in wheelchairs and with strollers** improved significantly between 2022 and 2024, by **36% and 38%** respectively, reflecting the STO's continued efforts to improve its system's accessibility.



## Accessibility of stops and surroundings

- Over the past few years, the STO has made major progress in improving the **system's accessibility and legibility**. Currently, **55.4% of stops are accessible**, compared to 51.5% in 2020, a significant improvement in inclusive mobility;
- A **targeted investment of \$80,754** helped **modernize eight priority stops**, providing users a safer and more comfortable experience;
- The **modernization of stop signage** is another key improvement: **73%** of signs were overhauled, compared to **48% in 2020**. This means improved legibility thanks to better visuals to better guide riders.

## Technological improvements

- In 2023, the STO completed the important step of **fully redesigning its website**, bringing it **up to WCAG 2.0/AA standards**, achieving optimal accessibility for users.

At the same time, the information systems were significantly improved to offer riders a more inclusive and intuitive experience:

- **The Infobus tool**: this telephone and SMS service, accessible via the number posted at each stop, provides complete information (schedule, direction, accessibility, and service interruptions and resumptions), guaranteeing uniform access to the information through two channels;
- **Separate information panels**: scrolling **pictograms dedicated to accessibility** at the front of each bus provide instant recognition of accessible trips;
- **Audio announcements on buses**: ahead of each stop, **an announcement of whether it is accessible**, for the benefit of people with reduced mobility;
- **The Transit and Plani-Bus apps**: these digital tools provide enhanced identification of **accessible stops and trips** for more efficient planning and an optimized experience.

## Service and training

Since 2021, the STO has introduced several measures to improve the customer experience and promote universal accessibility:

- **STO on demand**, launched in 2021, offering a flexible solution to meet mobility needs in the Buckingham and Masson-Angers sectors, as well as in Gatineau's Aéroport industrial sector;
- **Redesigned performance indicators** to more precisely measure actual wait times and optimize service quality;
- **Continuing training for drivers** using a module to strengthen their skills and knowledge to better serve people with motor or developmental limitations;
- **Campaign to increase awareness about snow clearing** and the essential part it plays in maintaining the accessibility of stops and infrastructures.

## Paratransit

The STO introduced strategic initiatives to improve the quality, reliability and accessibility of the paratransit service:

- A **new policy on reservations**: the deadline is now 5 p.m. the day before (instead of noon), with the option of making reservations on Sunday for the Monday;
- An **automated reminder system**: this innovative service, for which 30% of customers are already signed up, helps reduce missed reservations and improve punctuality;
- A **quality assurance program for the call centre**: introduced to guarantee phone services based on effective listening and user satisfaction;
- **Improved punctuality**: the paratransit service reached 92% punctuality in 2025, a significant improvement in its reliability;
- **Specialized training for paratransit drivers**: thanks to a provincial program, 90 minibus and taxi drivers received training to meet the specific needs of people with reduced mobility and ensure safe and inclusive service.

These achievements are part of a long-term effort that started with the very first universal accessibility plans. They have led to the STO's integration of sustainable measures and actions to continuously strengthen inclusion and mobility for everyone.

## Continuity

Since the implementation of the very first universal accessibility plans, the STO has integrated measures falling into the following two categories:

- Internal processes that have become current practices;
- Processes started under previous plans and currently underway.

### **Institutional and continuing:**

.....  
Every year, the STO prepares an annual report on universal accessibility to provide an update on its progress;  
.....

The STO works closely with Ville de Gatineau on issues such as snow clearing and accessibility of stops to improve the safety and accessibility of its infrastructures throughout the territory.  
.....

### **Operational and continuing:**

.....  
The STO maintains its website in line with accessibility standards;  
.....

New panels are installed at stops to improve the visibility of information and signage;  
.....

Audio messages are used in buses and on communication platform to promote courtesy and accessibility;  
.....

Key information on accessibility is integrated into continuing training for staff and in the drivers' guide updates.  
.....

These attest to the organization's sustained commitment to universal accessibility as central to its practices.

## 5. Action plan

### 5.1 Objective and priorities

This action plan opens a new phase in the STO's approach to universal accessibility. It is based on the progress made over the years and introduces solutions adapted to current challenges in order to improve every customer's experience and meet the expectations of a diverse population.

As stated in the introduction, and in order to be as responsive as possible to customers' needs, the STO drew upon the 2021-2025 Accessibility Plan report to establish an initial diagnosis. This was followed by consultations that led to a full overview of current obstacles to universal accessibility. Finally, short- and medium-term priorities were identified based on the findings of this analysis.

Given the findings at the different stages, the STO defined its plan's central objective as follows:

.....  
*Support the autonomy and trust of public transit customers through continued monitoring of their needs, accessible information and adapted facilities.*  
.....

This objective is broken down into five action priorities that structure the action plan while remaining in touch with the customers:

.....  
1. Make the infrastructures accessible and inclusive;  
.....

2. Ensure accessible fares and sales;  
.....

3. Improve customers' autonomy;  
.....

4. Strengthen trust, service quality and safety;  
.....

5. Foster an inclusive work environment.  
.....



Each action priority translates into several measures, for a total of 18. This number, deliberately smaller than those in previous plans, reflects an approach focused on pertinence, coherence and a 360-degree vision. The objective is to cover every area that makes up the STO's activities while ensuring a tangible and sustainable impact.

The actions include:

.....  
Training;

.....  
Partnerships;

.....  
Equipment and furniture;

.....  
Signage;

.....  
Improved processes and service;

.....  
Information for riders;

.....  
Payment methods and sales;

.....  
Employment.  
.....

## 5.2 Proposed measures

The action plan will be implemented around five priorities over a three-year horizon.

Each measure aims to address an obstacle identified in a report or consultations, with a view to continuous improvement.

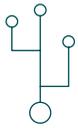
In addition, given that the plan integrates requirements imposed by the provincial and federal governments, the following legend specifies the action plan required by federal law for each intervention.

Icon	Action required under federal law
	Employment
	The built environment
	Information and communication technologies
	Communication, other than information and communication technologies
	The procurement of goods, services and facilities
	The design and delivery of programs and services
	Transportation



# 1. Make infrastructures accessible and inclusive

## Objective: Provide a modern, safe and inclusive system.



### 1. Improve the sound of audio announcements

By 2028, the STO will improve the audio announcements in buses, the solar VMS and audio-equipped stations to ensure optimal sound quality for everyone. The objective is to modernize all of the equipment and increase the level of satisfaction.

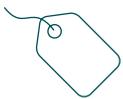
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### 2. Continue installing new benches

Between 2026 and 2028, the STO will continue installing new benches at stops for comfort and accessibility. This initiative will be deployed gradually and continuously to improve the customer experience.

---



### 3. Transform the vehicle fleet into accessible buses

The STO will continue transforming its fleet by acquiring 20 accessible buses in 2026 and 20 more in 2027, each fitted with two spaces for wheelchairs. This initiative, part of a 2026 to 2028 timeline, will help make the system even more inclusive.

---

## 2. Provide accessible fares and sales

Objective: Simplify the customer experience and harmonize payment methods.



### 4. Standardize the option of bank card payments in all vehicles

Possibly by the end of the first quarter of 2028, 100% of STO vehicles should be fitted with scanners allowing credit and debit card payments to simplify the customer experience and improve accessibility in payment methods.

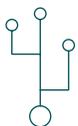
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### 5. Consider harmonization of paratransit, regular transit and on demand service payment methods

By the end of the last quarter of 2028, the feasibility of applying the same payment options as those used for the regular transit system to the paratransit and on demand services will be assessed.

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### 6. Assess the accessibility of all points of sale

By 2028, 100% of points of sale will be assessed and posted on the website, along with regular updates on them.

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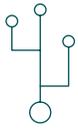
### 7. Review a matrix of accessibility needs

By 2028, a map will be drawn up to identify the areas where customers might have special needs. This tool will help better target interventions at stops located in the sectors identified (adding benches, etc.) and support the transit system's universal accessibility.

---

### 3. Improve customers' autonomy

Objective: Foster inclusion and autonomy in the use of the system.



#### 8. Run user tests with customers having limitations

To optimize its planning and information tools, the STO will run user tests with people having limitations. For its internal development of new tools, two tests will be run for each tool on a continuous basis between 2026 and 2028.

---



#### 9. Maintain regular contact with community organizations

The STO will work more closely with organizations representing people with limitations, specifically through at least one annual survey of those customers. This initiative will run continuously between 2026 and 2028.

---



#### 10. Develop training in the use of public transit

By 2028, the STO will work with at least two specialized organizations on designing adapted training for people with limitations. That training, which could be given by the organizations to the people in question, will be aimed at strengthening their autonomy in the use of public transit.

---

## 4. Strengthen trust, service quality and safety

Objective: Provide a reliable, safe and inclusive service.



### 11. Integrate a “universal accessibility” module into driver training

This module will be designed as a type of universal accessibility focus in collaboration with specialized organizations and integrated at least once by 2028 into the training of the regular transit system drivers so that 80% of them receive it.

---



### 12. Improve training for paratransit drivers in collaboration with external organizations

By 2028, at least three external organizations will be hired to enhance and adapt the training provided to paratransit drivers.

---



### 13. Train frontline employees in diversity

To offer inclusive interactions throughout the system, frontline employees will receive training on diversity. By 2028, at least 85% will receive the training.

---



### 14. Monitor and improve the process of managing comments

By 2026, the STO will strengthen its process for managing comments by improving its procedures, handling and indicators to improve the quality of service received by customers and their trust.

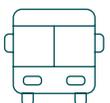
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### 15. Improve the paratransit emergency line

Improve the robustness of the paratransit emergency line to provide full traceability of longer calls, as well as means to respond to one-time needs.

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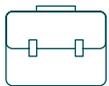
### 16. Make paratransit vehicles easily recognizable

By 2028, every vehicle used by taxi services for paratransit will be identified in order to improve the safety and trust of customers. This initiative will include introducing a customer satisfaction indicator to be deployed over the medium term.

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## 5. Foster an inclusive internal work environment

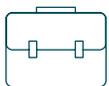
Objective: Promote equity and inclusion internally.



### 17. Train selection committees on inclusion

In order to make selection committee members more aware of equity and inclusion in the recruitment process, the STO will offer a minimum of three annual training sessions between 2027 and 2028.

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### 18. Introduce accommodations for applicants and employees

Accommodations will be available on request for applicants in the selection process and for employees with limitations. This initiative will be deployed continuously starting in 2026 and assessed based on the level of satisfaction of the people concerned.

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## 6. Monitoring, accessibility and feedback

Implementing these action calls for thorough governance and constant commitment on the part of the organization. The following section sets out the mechanisms proposed to ensure transparent monitoring and accountability in line with legal requirements.

### 6.1 Monitoring

For the 2026-2028 cycle, the STO will conduct structured annual monitoring and post progress reports on its website, in accordance with provincial and federal legislation. This approach ensures transparency, accountability and perennity of commitments related to universal accessibility.

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### 6.2 Accessibility of the document

The document is available on the STO website in accessible digital format, in accordance with the universal accessibility principles under the *Accessibility Canada Act*. At the same time, it is disseminated internally to ensure staff and appropriate public communications are up to speed to insure the public is informed.

#### Alternative formats

This plan, along with a detailed version of our feedback process and progress reports are available on request in the format of your choice: print, large characters, Braille or audio.

Please note that Braille and audio formats will be provided within 45 days after requests are received. All other accessible formats will be provided within 15 days after requests are received.

## 6.3 Public feedback progress (Accessible Canada Regulations, s. 9)

In the interest of ensuring thorough and in-depth monitoring, the STO is open to every form of feedback, including any submitted anonymously or with your name and coordinates, using one of the following means:

by calling 819-770-3242 for deaf or hard of hearing people;

by emailing Hugues Charron at [accessibilite@sto.ca](mailto:accessibilite@sto.ca)

by writing to

Service à la clientèle

Société de transport de l'Outaouais

111 rue Jean Proulx, Gatineau, Quebec

J8Z 1T4

Service des relations à la clientèle agents will confirm receipt of your feedback and, if you provided your coordinates, ensure personalized follow-up to answer your questions.





## 7. Conclusion

With this 2026-2028 Universal Accessibility Plan, the STO re-affirms its commitment to truly inclusive, safe and equitable mobility. Through a structured approach, thorough consultations and tangible actions, the organization has developed an ambitious roadmap that meets current needs while anticipating those in the coming years. The STO will continue working in collaboration with the community to ensure continuous improvement for the benefit of the entire Gatineau population.

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## 9. Annexes

### 9.1 Annex A : Summary table of obstacles and proposed solutions

During the public consultations with external organizations, it was decided to review the full user experience with both regular and paratransit services in order to determine users' views of the obstacles and proposed solutions. This information was compiled according to type of disability in the following table:

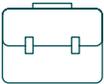
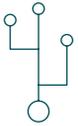
Theme	Type of Disability	Obstacles		Proposed solutions
		Regular Transit	Paratransit	
<b>Trip planning</b>	Deaf and hard of hearing, visually impaired, seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-adapted tools</li> <li>• Tools available only in digital versions</li> <li>• No access to information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-compliance with reservation rules, especially when done online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the tools tested by people with limitations</li> <li>• Provide paper versions</li> <li>• Comply with reservations rules (paratransit)</li> </ul>
<b>Payment</b>	Deaf and hard of hearing, reduced mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to communicate at service points</li> <li>• No parking for people with disabilities at service points</li> <li>• Difference not reimbursed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty managing payments other than by card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted payment tools</li> <li>• Disabled parking</li> <li>• Payment with bank card (paratransit)</li> <li>• Reimburse the difference</li> </ul>
<b>Safety at stops</b>	Seniors, reduced mobility, visually impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of sidewalks, benches or reference points</li> <li>• Non-accessible stops and bus shelters</li> <li>• Inadequate snow clearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to comply with locations specified for picking up riders</li> <li>• Long waits for riders</li> <li>• Drivers unwilling to wait more than 5 minutes</li> <li>• No transportation follow-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility, safety and snow clearing at stops</li> <li>• Comply with reservation rules (paratransit)</li> <li>• Application of geolocation (paratransit)</li> <li>• More flexibility in terms of drivers' wait time</li> </ul>

Theme	Type of Disability	Obstacles		Proposed solutions
		Regular Transit	Paratransit	
Safety in vehicles	Seniors, reduced mobility, visually impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buses taking off too quickly before riders are seated</li> <li>• Removal of reserved seating at the front</li> <li>• No anchors for wheelchairs</li> <li>• No space for guide dogs</li> <li>• Difficulty handling the heat, no air-conditioning</li> <li>• Inadequate audio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicles not adapted and unclean</li> <li>• Unsafe driving and handling</li> <li>• Trip durations do not take into account essential needs</li> <li>• Incompatible mix of disabilities</li> <li>• Vehicle does not comply with specifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in appropriate handling and assistance tools</li> <li>• Adapted vehicles (paratransit)</li> <li>• Trip planning that takes into account the specific needs of different users (paratransit)</li> <li>• Avoid mixing incompatible riders (paratransit)</li> <li>• Qualified drivers (paratransit)</li> </ul>
	Autism spectrum disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overstimulation, noise, close quarters, contact</li> <li>• Inability to handle multiple stimuli</li> </ul>		
	Deaf and hard of hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to communicate and understand trip changes</li> </ul>		

Thèmes	Clientèles spécifiques	Obstacles		Solutions proposées
		Transport régulier	Transport adapté	
<b>Safety upon arrival</b>	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inaccessible stops, unsafe sidewalks and intersections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-autonomous or vulnerable users left to manage on their own</li> <li>Refusal to take designated companions</li> <li>No emergency line</li> <li>No alternatives in the event of unexpected developments and additional costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible stops, safe sidewalks and intersections</li> <li>Possibility of being accompanied (paratransit)</li> <li>Support and care upon arrival (paratransit)</li> <li>Emergency number/staff (paratransit and regular)</li> </ul>
<b>Customer service</b>	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints not believed</li> <li>Complaints not passed on or addressed</li> <li>No follow-up</li> <li>No service after 6 p.m. (creating serious problems)</li> <li>No service outside the Gatineau area (paratransit) – return trips to Transcollines or Ottawa impossible</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take complaints seriously and provide adequate follow-up</li> <li>Set up an emergency number (paratransit)</li> <li>Establish partnerships with nearby transportation companies</li> </ul>

## 9.2 Annex B : Action plan broken down by federal category

Although the STO action plan is based on five distinct priorities, aligning them with the Accessible Canada Act and its action areas makes for better legibility.

Icon	Action areas set out by federal law
 <p><b>Employment</b></p>	<p><b>17. Train selection committees on inclusion</b> In order to make selection committee members more aware of equity and inclusion in the recruitment process, the STO will offer a minimum of three annual training session between 2027 and 2028.</p> <p><b>18. Introduce accommodations for applicants and employees</b> Accommodations will be available on request for applicants in the selection process and for employees with limitations. This initiative will be deployed continuously starting in 2026 and assessed based on the level of satisfaction of the people concerned.</p>
 <p><b>The built environment</b></p>	<p><b>2. Continue installing new benches</b> Between 2026 and 2028, the STO will continue installing new benches at stops for comfort and accessibility. This initiative will be deployed gradually and continuously to improve the customer experience.</p>
 <p><b>Information and communication technologies</b></p>	<p><b>1. Improve the sound of audio announcements</b> By 2028, the STO will improve the audio announcements in buses, the solar VMS and audio-equipped stations to ensure optimal sound quality for everyone. The objective is to modernize all of the equipment and increase the level of satisfaction.</p> <p><b>6. Assess the accessibility of all points of sale</b> By 2028, 100% of points of sale will be assessed and posted on the website, along with regular updates on them.</p> <p><b>8. Run user tests with customers having limitations</b> To optimize its planning and information tools, the STO will run user tests with people having limitations. For its internal development of new tools, two tests will be run for each tool on a continuous basis between 2026 and 2028.</p>



### Communication, other than information and communication technologies

#### 9. Maintain regular contact with community organizations

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#### 10. Develop training in the use of public transit

By 2028, the STO will work with at least two specialized organizations on designing adapted training for people with limitations. That training, which could be given by the organizations to the people in question, will be aimed at strengthening their autonomy in the use of public transit.

#### 14. Monitor and improve the process of managing comments

By 2026, the STO will strengthen its process for managing comments by improving its procedures, handling and indicators to improve the quality of service received by customers and their trust.



### The procurement of goods, services and facilities

#### 3. Transform the vehicle fleet into accessible buses

The STO will continue transforming its fleet by acquiring 20 accessible buses in 2026 and 20 more in 2027, each fitted with two spaces for wheelchairs. This initiative, part of a 2026 to 2028 timeline, will help make the system even more inclusive.



### The design and delivery of programs and services

#### 11. Integrate a “universal accessibility” module into driver training

This module will be designed as a type of universal accessibility focus in collaboration with specialized organizations and integrated at least once by 2028 into the training of the regular transit system drivers so that 80% of them receive it.

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## Transportation

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### 15. Improve the paratransit emergency line

Improve the robustness of the paratransit emergency line to provide full traceability of longer calls, as well as means to respond to one-time needs.

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2026 - 2028  
Universal Accessibility Plan

