



WINDSOR ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Because access equals opportunity

2024 Annual Report

In addition to fulfilling, the ongoing requirements set out in the AODA and the IASR according to the required legislated timelines:

Built Environment

The built environment constitutes one of the broadest areas of responsibility and constitutes the most substantial component of accessibility related initiatives throughout the year. In 2024 much of that work focused on the development of the next generation of facility accessibility design standards. Other work focused on architectural reviews, civil engineering projects, and a range of consultations with departments requesting guidance.

- The first FADS standard was adopted in 2006 which was based on the London 2001 standard at that time. By May 2022, a request was submitted to the City of London that authorized the adoption of their 2021 standard that allows participating municipalities to modify to suit the needs of that city.
- This standard provides technical specifications for engineers, architects, planners, staff, and vendors in a broad range of projects from parks and playgrounds to washrooms, sidewalks, fire stations, and recreational facilities. The goal of the standard is to remove or prevent barriers to accessibility that prevent participation of those with disabilities
- Following a comparison of elements that had changed or remained the same, the FADS subcommittee of WAAC undertook a review of every provision of the standard and provided recommendations based on the lived experience of persons with disabilities. As a result, the new standard will be unprecedented for its inclusion of built-in recommendations based on lived experience.
- The decision was made to propose a motion to council that would provide the authority to conduct the next stage of development expected to commence in 2025. After a period of internal review, the council report was received and heard by the Community Services Standing Committee on December 4th, 2024. It was recommended that the report be sent to full council which will vote on the motion in January 2025.
- Assuming the approval by council, the next stage will focus on a comprehensive review by internal departments responsible for the built environment. All affected departments will be required to review, make comment, and approve of all sections relevant to their scope of authority.
- Once this work is completed, there will be a period of public consultation and the subsequent submission to council for approval. It is expected that public consultation will involve public notification of the consultation, a period not less one month for review of the standard, a mechanism to receive feedback by form or email. This will be

followed by data collection and review of comments and determinations whether changes are warranted.

- WAAC has been studying the challenges of audible pedestrian signals and has met with officials on the difficulties of crossing intersections where APS is installed. While additional intersections are slated for installation, WAAC has expressed concerns that there should be additional installations. However, APS installations are expensive, and budgets constrain a broader deployment.
- Other technical challenges included discussions and presentations to council concerning speed humps and the difficulties they pose for residents with difficulties on streets with one or fewer sidewalks. Members of WAAC spoke as a delegation to council on this matter. A component of the City's traffic calming strategy, speed humps can be contentious and can only be installed if a sufficient percentage of the residents of a given street approve of the addition of speed humps. Discussions with traffic on the design of speedhumps did result in revisions that would provide more space at the edges of the ramp to allow mobility devices to pass through but, to date, there are still challenges.
- Each year, WAAC notifies administration of the funds available for suitable accessibility projects and departments or agencies submit requests for specific equipment requested or anticipated for residents.
 - Windsor Public Library received funding for two (2) additional readers due to increased demand for the devices that assist the visually impaired.
 - Huron Lodge requested and received funding for a sensory projector that is an accessory to the Snozelen cart funded the prior year.
 - Several requests were deferred into January 2025 including a substantial request from Recreation; they will be invited to present to committee on their broader strategy, how needs were assessed, and a recommendation will be given to the full committee meeting in February for a vote. Other projects were deferred due to the need for further information or where projects had not been fully articulated to justify funding.
 - In 2025, WAAC will be examining its terms of reference and revamping its proposal funding process to place a greater emphasis on greater planning, earlier submissions, the need to provide enhanced rationale, and a shift to draw from the capital rather than the operating budget.
- Architectural reviews continued to be a major area of focus in 2024 with an increase in the number of consultations increasing slightly since 2023.
 - Architectural reviews are requested by engineering, facilities, or parks officials when a new facility, feature, or outdoor amenity is being constructed or a retrofit is being considered. In most cases, architectural diagrams are provided, and they are measured against standards within the IASR. Recommendations are provided to administration on changes required to comply with the legislation.
 - A systemic review of the renovated Adie Knox facility was conducted in

concert with the administration. Officials provided the required documentation, met with the Accessibility Officer on several occasions, and presented a walk-through of new renovated facility. Considerable time was spent evaluating key AODA requirements from ramps to washroom and changeroom facilities.

- In a subsequent meeting it was revealed that the facility would have to provide external washrooms adjacent to the rink due to ongoing construction. The modular washrooms were inspected for and passed compliance.
- This spring, administration received multiple requests for sidewalk cafes that have increased in frequency in the last few years. In such cases, administration receives an application coupled with schematics and images for a new site and these are shared with the Accessibility Officer for review. The review focuses on the accessible pathway between the facility and the patio, any ramp and entry requirements, turning radius for mobility device, edge detection and tactile mat placement, height and placement of tables and chairs, and whether there is sufficient room to navigate a mobility device.

Employment

The City of Windsor has and continues to monitor and modernize its Employment policies, practices, and procedures through the lens of accessibility by ensuring both existing employees and candidates with disabilities are afforded every opportunity to participate fully whether they are seeking employment, require accommodations in the course of their employment, or seeking to advance their careers.. The 2024-2027 multi-year accessibility plan enumerated many of the existing best practices including but not limited to a robust framework for ensuring accommodations, the provision of alternative formats, and the provision of return to work processes. Further,

- The JazzHR portal continues to provide accessible access for applicants and may continue to evolve as the driving force behind further development of the platform as needed
- Continuing existing practices, all job descriptions are rendered accessible and tested using PAC 3 to ensure they are PDF/UA compliant. Job descriptions are also manually tested using conventional screen reading tools such as Jaws, PAC, and AxesPDF. Staff have previously and continue to consult with the Accessibility Officer who has provided guidance and testing to ensure the job descriptions are compliance and accessible.
- Human Resources consults with the Accessibility Officer on an a case-by-case basis in the course of determining the most appropriate accommodations. In 2024, there was cases requiring alternative formats for testing materials and operating procedures. Human Resources also has a collection of LanguageLine interpreter devices in the event a candidate or employee requires a different language or must communicate using ASL
- Initial discussions have occurred that may lead to a jurisdictional scan of comparable municipalities that would instruct the corporation of means of improving practices, the adoption of new technologies, and analysis of best practices and milestones.

Information and Communication

Administration, primarily through Information Technology and Communications, undertook an extensive redevelopment of the public website that involved a complex migration to an upgraded Microsoft SharePoint framework. This project included the Accessibility Officer throughout the initiative that ensured ported pages and documents were AODA compliant. Many pages had to be remediated to remove WCAG errors and this continues to be an ongoing process throughout the year.

- There was a significant 50% reduction in pages and PDF documents that has reduced the current population to approximately 2500 pages and 3000 PDF documents.
- A new proposal before the Web Governance Working Group would allow administration to exercise exemption under the legislation for documents for which existing tools or complexities of the document do not permit remediation. This would apply to documents not under our direct control and exceptionally large documents that cannot be effectively addressed even manually.
- The tracking system developed in-house went through new modification that eliminated third party libraries by developing native VBA extensions for checking page lengths, extracting metastreams, and verifying PDF/UA flags.
- The web governance working group received a proposal from the Accessibility Officer requesting that administration evaluate existing WCAG/Web evaluation suites to reduce the manual processes that currently exist for testing compliance.
- The current compliance level, as of December 2024, was 97% compliance on web pages and 80% of PDFs. 2025 will focus on added content management strategies to eliminate time constrained documents such as schedules and event posters and the remediation of forms.
- As part of the migration project, a series of training events provided step by step guidance on navigating and managing web pages and content on the new platform. New accessibility guidelines to comply with the WCAG 2.0 standard were introduced to designated web editors with responsibility for content across the corporation.
- The Accessibility Officer receives multiple requests through the year requiring remediation advice and assistance on time sensitive documents such as holiday and council meeting schedules. In many cases a document can be remediated within 24 hours for uploading.
- Video Remote Interpreting equipment that provides on-demand interpreting sessions in thirty-six languages (video remote) including American Sign Language and 240 languages (audio). These devices are now available in customer service, social services, and provincial offenses courts. In the coming year there will be an initiative to promote Language Line to all front-facing departments to maximize the machines available.

Transportation

Transportation and accessibility have received considerable attention in the past year with latest changes in progress or in discussion at both Transit Windsor and the Windsor International Airport. Although both entities fall under federal accessibility legislation, the work

illustrates a commitment to improving accessibility combined with feedback and improved communications.

- Transit Windsor has been working with Communications to improve how complaints are received and processed. Earlier in the year, changes to notification now include real-time notifications to the Accessibility Officer that allow for faster responses to critical incidents and a direct channel to Transit Windsor leadership. This new change also allows for improved performance monitoring and metrics that will allow the city and transit Windsor to better understand how complaints are grouped, the frequency of complaints by category, and even the ability to agree when complaints turn out to be fleet or operational issues rather than a distinct accessibility complaint.
- A major effort, involving Transit Windsor and other departments, was required to develop a multiyear accessibility plan required under the ACA. Determining longer range targets involved the transit service in addition to purchasing and human resources that articulated new directions for policy development, training, and technological initiatives such as a modernization of bus schedules.
- At the Windsor International Airport, in addition to the installation of new hearing loops, the Accessibility Advisory Committee had the opportunity to conduct a site visit, review operational practices, and outline potential initiatives for 2025 such as the development of alternatives to existing flight information displays for the visually impaired.
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee has also taken a renewed focus on our HandiTrans shuttle service in the coming year in addition to revisiting accessibility Taxis. At ONAP 2024, a forum for accessibility officers, municipalities discussed the challenges and incentives required for taxi companies to provide accessible taxis as well as input from providers who discussed the operational and capital cost challenges.

Note: Our conventional transportation service provider is guided by Federal rather than Provincial legislation under the ACA and CTA. An accessibility plan and updates are required by federal law. Currently, Transit Windsor has submitted their accessibility plan in October of 2024 and will be providing annual updates accordingly

General requirements and Accessible Customer Service

During 2024, the Windsor Accessibility Advisory Committee (WAAC) has been incredibly active and engaged both in terms of its duties as advisors but also in terms of improving governance, accountability, consultation, and feedback. The goal of these reviews is to make the committee more visible and responsive to the constituencies it serves.

- As part of requiring a new structure to undertake the FADS review, WAAC struck the FADS subcommittee consisting of the Accessibility Officer who served as chair and most members of WAAC. This subcommittee met weekly to review every section of the adopted FAD and completed their work in July 2024. Refer to the Built Environment for a more in-depth review.
- In September 2024, the members of WAAC and the Accessibility Officer held a strategic

planning session at the Windsor offices of the Alzheimer's Society hosted by Sally Bennett who serves as the chair of WAAC and CEO of the Alzheimer's Society. The session focused on identifying key accessibility topics that would become the focus of their work for the coming year.

- Peter Best, co-chair of WAAC, was interviewed by the CBC and by radio station AM 800 December 2024 as part of the media's response to the previously mentioned FADS motion before the Community Services Standing Committee.
- The Accessibility Officer assisted a family with Deaf Children to have new signage successfully installed on their street warning drivers of dead children at play.
- The Accessibility Officer assisted a resident with a significant brain injury with acquiring his security license and security clearance. Though generally beyond the scope of responsibility for the administration, the outcome was the resident being able to return to work.
- The administration offered a novel course on serving residents with brain injuries that was provided by the Brain Injury Association of Windsor-Essex. The training was well received and is expected to be offered again in 2025.
- Initial discussion have transpired on WAAC and the Infrastructure Subcommittee on finding ways to make the committee more responsive and visible to community stakeholders. In progress are changes to the existing WAAC web page, new contact channels to let the public reach the committee, biographies of members, and a move to incorporate ongoing updates and achievements that may be easier to read than the more formal minutes and agendas.