

Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee

Date: May 23rd, 2024

Location: Zoom Meeting

Present: Tamara Cooper (Co-Chair), Alyssa Clelland (Co-Chair), Amy Ross (City of Waterloo), Teresa McQuillin, Paula Saunders, Emily Moore (Region of Waterloo), Trevor Tamlin, Heather Clark-Harris, Carrie Speers, Sarah Boghassin, Lolita Paroski (City of Kitchener), Councillor Chantal Huinink (Region of Waterloo), Alex Smyth (Township of Woolwich), Heather Gillespie, Cynthia Hislop (Township of North Dumfries), Kaitlin Bos (Township of Wilmot), Michelle Adams (City of Kitchener, minutes)

Regrets: Janis McKenzie (City of Kitchener), Sandra Hanmer (City of Waterloo), Farshid Sadatsharifi, Christine Nishiwaki, Amy Harron (Township of Wellesley), Kathy Waybrant, Councillor Jason Deneault (City of Kitchener), Robyn Jackson, Jolene MacDonald

Land Acknowledgement

Although we are gathering virtually, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that we are situated on the Haldimand Tract, land that was granted to the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations of the Grand River, and that we are within the territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

To fulfill our vision of an inclusive and equitable community, we must stand in allyship with Indigenous peoples. We commit in our work and our community to hold ourselves accountable to the continuous work of decolonizing, to ensure that we do not perpetuate the harms of colonization and to begin to repair them.

Comments/Feedback

Councillor Chantal Huinink asked that the words “stand in allyship...” be changed to read “practice allyship...” to be more inclusive.

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Approval of April Minutes and May Agenda

Quorum was not met so the approvals will be done at the next meeting.
Meeting continued as per GRAAC Terms of Reference.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests
None

4. City of Waterloo, Variety of Building Project Updates

Mary Cathryn Lawrence, Project Manager, with the City of Waterloo provided updates on various building projects as Koohyar Samiee was not available to attend the meeting.

City Hall Universal Washroom

Construction timeline: Complete within the next 12 months.

- Tactile walking surface indicators.
- Automatic wall mounted vertical power door operator.
- Emergency panic button and associated emergency light visible to public.
- Two recessed paper towel disposal units.
- Ceiling lift.

City discussing addition of a second emergency light above universal washroom door.

Comments/Feedback

- The project will be completed within the next 12 months staff do not have a definite timeline.
- The design of the tactile walking indicators will be like the library at RIM Park
- The path of travel for the tiles with truncated domes that lead to a decision tree, were described and a discussion took place about using half of the strips leading into the washroom.
- It was noted that no tactile markings are likely needed in front of the adult changing table, it was felt if someone was assisting the person it was unlikely the tactile tiles would be needed, and it may create more of an issue getting someone on and off of the changing table.
- It was noted that tactile tiles have not been included in the gender-neutral space.
- Staff are going to speak to the tile vendor about cutting the tiles in half as there is not a product available for purchase for secondary paths and concern was expressed about maintaining the correct spacing.
- The committee was asked to confirm that they wanted to go ahead with the secondary path of travel with the half tiles. Alyssa supported going ahead, Carrie noted that there would be a difference and either a half or full square would indicate to her that something is happening.
- It was noted that at RIM Park there is a decision tree and that it would be helpful to have longer bars for the path of travel as opposed to the decision tree.
- There was a discussion as to whether it would be helpful to have half tiles on the bathroom path instead. It was noted that GRAAC members would know what it meant but other visually impaired people may not understand it.
- Carrie noted that in the washroom in the smaller area in front of the sink a half strip would work because a wayfinding strip takes people there.
- Mary Cathryn is going to leave the decision regarding the tactile indicators with the split tiles off the main path of travel to the committee to decide and asked members to follow up with her for further discussion by phone or by sending her an email.
- It was noted that the City of Waterloo would like to be consistent throughout their facilities and that the universal washroom will have tactile tiles added when it is upgraded.
- Mary Cathryn is going to reach out to the tile supplier to get their opinion on cutting the tiles in half and then share the information from the vendor with the committee.
- It was noted that other requested changes have been made. Staff still need to work out who will be notified then the emergency button is pressed.
- Mary Cathryn is to have an elevation drawing of the button locations made and gather some additional information on the locations of the buttons and how the different type of buttons are differentiated for the committee.
- It was noted that a mockup will be done before the drywall is completed and the buttons are installed, similar to the process that was used for the East Side Library.

Button Factory Universal Washroom

Construction Timeline: Complete within the next 12 months.

- Tactile walking surface indicators.
- Automatic wall mounted vertical power door operator.
- Emergency panic button and associated emergency light visible to public.
- Ceiling lift.
- Surface mounted paper towel disposal unit close to motorized adult change table.
- Barrier-free sink at the new kitchenette.

Comments/Feedback

- Mary Cathryn noted that similar to the City Hall project, this project will be completed within the next 12 months staff do not have a definite timeline.
- The changes that were requested at the last presentation were reviewed.

- Paula agreed that the tactile strips and decision trees should be kept the same as what is being done at City Hall, so the same thing is being done at all locations.
- Currently there are no indicators to get to the washroom they are only inside the washroom. The washroom is a new space the flooring in the other part of the building is not.
- Mary Cathryn is to check the space and follow up with Amy regarding a barrier free sink in the existing location.
- The washroom will have an emergency button with a flashing emergency light. Staff are still figuring out who will receive the alert when the button is pressed.
- Amy requested that a light be installed downstairs so staff could alert the person that help is on its way. It was noted that the alert needs to be a larger conversation and it may be like RIM Park where an alert is also sent to customer service,
- There was a discussion about if there was enough space for a transfer if a mobility device is parked under the track for the life by the adult change table.
- Mary Cathryn is going to ask for elevation drawings to be made to the exact distance from the toilet to the adult change table to check if there is enough space when a mobility device is parked under the lift track. It was noted that this is a historic building and there will need to be structural work done to have the lift installed.
- Mary Cathryn is to provide elevations, change the guiding strips to 2 guiding strips and check to see if the ceiling lift is workable with the distance between the toilet and the track.

City Hall 3rd Floor Renovation

Construction Timeline: September 2024 – February 2025

Design includes:

- Bringing three (3) teams together.
- New (staff only) kitchen.
- Small meeting room.

Key Accessibility Features:

- Automatic Door Operators for all entry doors
- Corridor width design in line with FADS requirements
- High Colour/Tonal contrast in finishes

Comments/Feedback

- Mary Cathryn shared information about the design and asked for comments and concerns. She specifically needed were comments on the kitchen and the turning radius.
- Paula noted that a turning radius is needed that will allow people to be able to reach the microwave and the sink. She also asked that staff ensure all doorways are wide enough.
- Paula requested colour contrast for the trim, walls, and floor.
- Amy asked for a turn radius to be include in offices with doors.
- Mary Cathryn noted that the layout was done a while ago with the standards that were in place and thinks a larger discussion needs to take place to work through potential updates to the standards.

Council Chamber Freshen Up

Construction Timeline: Phase 1: July 2024 – August 2024

Phase 1 Scope:

- Paint Walls and Ceiling
- New Carpet
- New Podium, Staff and Media Table
- Design not completed (installation September/October 2024)

Future Phases (no funding allocated at this time):

- Main Entry Door
- Accessible Ramp
- Seating

Comments/Feedback

- Phase one is to take place in July and August 2024, with new paint, carpet scheduled to be completed.
- Mary Cathryn noted that similar to the other renovation the consultant has been asked to use high tonal contrast, Mary Cathryn will review what comes back with Amy.
- Fall 2024 a new podium, staff and media tables are for be installed. It was noted that accessibility requirements for the furniture have been discussed.
- In the future a new door, ramp and seating will be addressed, there is currently no funding for these items.
- Amy asked that technology be included so hybrid meetings can take place, Mary Cathryn is taking that request back to share with her team.
- Amy asked that podium and furniture elevating requirements be considered, Mary Cathryn will reiterate the request for suitable furniture.
- It was noted that in the City of Guelph council chambers they have recently redesigned the furniture to be able to be lowered and raised.
- Guelph has a tool for high contrast and Sarah can share that with anyone who is interested.
- Mary Cathryn asked if anyone had any questions, they reach out to her she shared her email in the chat, marycathryn.lorentz@waterloo.ca

5. Township of Woolwich, Southpark Wood New Playground

- Blake Miller shared his screen and provided a presentation. He noted that the committee should have received the drawing the day prior to the meeting. The project is in a new subdivision.
- Staff are looking to complete this project in the next couple of months.
- The project includes an extension of a multiuse trail that will eventually join the pad with the basketball and pickleball courts.
- A seating area will be included with benches that do not have back and an accessible component in the seating.
- The concrete pad will be flush with the asphalt and a future extension will connect into the multiuse trail. It was noted that there is an elevation difference between the pad and trail that will need to be ramped.
- Staff have finished the design and, but it has not gone to tender yet.
- Comments were requested.
- Paula asked why the bench does not have a back on it. It was stated that staff have not determined the bench they are going with. Blake asked for recommendations.

- Paula stated that armrests on the ends or in the middle help people who need to push on them to stand up and asked that the area around the benches is clear so people in wheelchairs are able sit with people on the bench.
- Teresa inquired as to what the accessible component was that was referred to in the presentation.
- Blake noted that another park they have used circular seating, but for this project they are still working on what benches would be best to install. To make the playground more accessible they have included swings for adults and infants as well as audible features and a touch feature. They are also ensuring that slopes meet AODA requirements.
- Teresa asked if other cities have seating standards and asked Lolita if Kitchener has information on seating.
- Lolita stated Kitchener does purchase certain benches and encouraged Blake to reach out to Kitchener Parks staff who can share what they use. It was noted Kitchener does have benches with backs and arms so people can independently get on and off the benches.
- Teresa noted that it is often easier for the committee to provide feedback when staff have a specific item in mind.
- Teresa asked Alyssa and Carrie to comment on the tactile options.
- Alyssa asked to make sure there are truncated domes at any potential street crossings.
- Blake shared that for the multiuse trail there are currently no street crossings from an existing sidewalk and noted that for future crosswalks it is part of their criteria to add the truncated dome tile when they add a crossing.

6. Built Environment Sub-Committee Updates, Paula Saunders

Township of Woolwich

- St Jacobs Arena washrooms

Comments/Feedback

- Paula, Carrie, and Heather visited the washrooms and changes rooms and provide Blake with some considerations.
- Mid July to early August is the expected timeline for work on the project. It is going through the design phase and information will be sent to contractors next week for quotations.
- Paula asked to see the plans before the project goes much further.
- Heather was thanked for taking notes at the site visit.

Region of Waterloo

- Washrooms at 150 Frederick

Comments/Feedback

- May 15th Carrie and Paula met with Region of Waterloo staff at 150 Frederick regarding changes to the washrooms on the main level.
- Staff are doing their best to come up with new designs, some washrooms will miss being classed as accessible as there is not a lot of room and example was given of the universal washroom on the second floor.
- It was suggested that the tactile strips from the elevator into the site should be consistent with what is being done in other areas.

7. Region of Waterloo, GRT Specialized and Conventional Business Plans 2025-2030

Project Purpose:

Guide the improvement and expansion of Specialized Transit Services through the next 5 years.

Goals:

1. Improve service levels and identify opportunities for rural and urban integration of Specialized Transit Services.
2. Identify opportunities to re-direct MobilityPLUS ridership to other modes of the “Family of Services” that GRT provides.
3. Improve service quality and customer satisfaction.
4. Conform to AODA Standards (or better where feasible); and maintain a high level of employee and customer satisfaction, and workplace excellence.

GRT Conventional (Bus and Train) Business Plan

Project Purpose:

Operationalize GRT’s role in achieving the Region’s commitment to community climate action, and align GRT services, policies, and programs to the Region’s Strategic Plan.

Tasks:

1. Identify ridership growth targets.
2. Engage and synthesize local transit priorities.
3. Assess route / service opportunities.
4. Develop a 2030 Preferred Transit Network and annual Service Improvement Plans.
5. Develop an overnight service plan.
6. Determine feasible bus fleet options to meet the plan.
7. Determine infrastructure needs to support the plan.
8. Prepare a fares strategy; and
9. Develop a financial model, long-range forecast, and performance monitoring plan.

Summary

- Strategic and operational plans
- Prioritize good transit policy, service, and programs.
- Strategic alignment to Corporate Strategic Plan and Transform Waterloo Region
- Stakeholder / public consultation throughout 2024

Comments/Feedback

- Neil Malcolm and Kevan Marshall presented to the committee.
- This plan has not been announced to the public yet, staff are first going to advisory committees. There will be more opportunities for consultation over the coming months.
- A consultant has been hired to look at the business plans. The plans include MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit
- Staff will be looking for feedback to guide the next 5 years.
- The goals for GRT MobilityPLUS Kiwanis Transit are:
 - Improve service levels and identify opportunities for rural and urban integration of specialized transit services.
 - Identify opportunities to re-direct MobilityPLUS ridership to other modes of the “Family of Services” that GRT provides.
 - Improve service quality and customer satisfaction.
 - Maintain a high level of employee and customer satisfaction and workplace excellence.
 - Conform to AODA standards or better where feasible.
- Neil Malcolm and Kevan Marshall were happy to take questions at the meeting and invited the committee to email them with any other questions.

- Teresa asked for an update on the mobility bus review and the ramps for emergencies on the LRT.
- Neil stated that the consultant is reviewing current practices the eligibility form and any changes that need to be made to the application. Staff recognize that the application has been onerous in the past and the consultant is looking at that. It was also noted that they are comparing what other municipalities are using.
- A pilot is in place to test a ramp that may need to be deployed for passenger use in case of an issue on the LRT. Neil stated they have a ramp, and it did not connect well with the train door, they have to test the ramp and look at creating proper operating procedures, which staff are actively working on.
- Neil stated that undelivered trips and scheduling software are also being looked at.
- Chantal asked about taxis related to MobilityPLUS
- Neil explained that MobilityPLUS rides can be sent to taxis for extra capacity or if there is an issue getting a bus to a person. He noted that there are a limited number of accessible cabs and GRT tries to balance their use of the accessible cabs with the general public's use of the cabs. GRT staff have met with eh cab operators about accessible cabs and they continue to work with them to ensure there are accessible taxis.
- Chantal stated she has heard that there is a perception that an accessible taxi costs more than a MobilityPLUS ride. Neil explained that for GRT a MobilityPLUS door to door trip costs more than an accessible taxi trip.
- Chantal stated that GRT needs to get the message out to the community that GRT are using regional money well by using taxis for some trips.
- Teresa noted that it would be helpful for safety and preparing people to be able to see in the booking software what vehicle is showing up for the pickup. She has had issue when the system has said a bus is coming and then a taxi shows up. She also noted that when booking online for the cabs there is no option to be able to choose if a caregiver or support person will be riding as well, which has led to being told they need to pay for two fares then there was a support person. It would be helpful if there was a way to communicate between both parties.
- Neil is taking away the taxi comments for more training. He noted that in the beginning of the presentation they want more people to use regular transit that are approved for MobilityPLUS and wanted to explain what that will look like. GRT wants to use the right delivery for a trip, so those that need door to door trips will still get them.
- Teresa noted that travel training is part of helping people make the shift to using other forms of transit if they are not able to get a door-to-door trip.
- Chantal asked if the fares and if the PAL card and fare card are integrated and if there is an estimated date when it will be done. Neil stated staff are still working on that, but it is not currently in place, and they do not have a date when it will be.

8. Councillor Reports

Councillor Chantal Huinink (Region of Waterloo)

- She has been working with the Auditorium for people with mobility devices so they can sit at floor level for basketball games.
- She has been working with Mike Morrice (MP) on improving the federal benefits (CDB, CDBA and DTC) that are coming into effect for July 2025. She asked the committee to sign the petition, Amy provided the link to the petition, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/petitions/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-4993>

- Increasing bus routes late at night, was brought to her attention and she has urged GRT to extend MobilityPLUS if they are extending transit between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.
- Teresa asked about the housing increase in the Region and if there is a way to advocate for accessible housing.
- Chantal noted that the Region is going beyond the percentage of accessible housing, but she was unsure if the current building codes abide by AODA. Chantal can bring comments about upgrading the accessible housing portion of the building code to regional council on behalf of GRAAC or GRAAC could appear as a delegate to Regional Council.
- Teresa noted that accessible units are usually only included in high rise developments and other types of housing are not included.
- Chantal is going to investigate the types of accessible housing being built and she will get back to the committee with more information in a month or so.
- Amy noted that the committee members may have received notices or seen announcements about affordable housing. She believes Michelle Lee is planning to come to GRAAC in June to talk about affordable housing for the City of Waterloo. It was also noted that the City of Waterloo will be doing a rental housing review which will be announced in June.
- Carrie asked if a policy or bylaw could be brought in to have housing like what was built for the Commonwealth games and other sporting events that goes up quickly but would provide affordable, sturdy but not fancy housing.

10. Co-chair Reports

- Alyssa - nothing to report.
- Tamara – nothing to report.

11. Staff Reports

- City of Kitchener - Lolita – no report
- Region of Waterloo - Emily– no report
- City of Waterloo – Amy
 - Special Olympic Games start tonight at the Waterloo Memorial Complex and locations are spread out across the region so please check the website if you plan to attend <https://provincialgames.com/>
 - Email shared about National Accessibility Week offerings and happenings for next week. The committee was asked to share the information widely with their networks.
 - Chantal will be speaking at an ableism workshop at Waterloo Region District School Board, she encouraged the committee to check out the workshops.
- Township of Woolwich – Alex - no report
- Township of North Dumfries - Cynthia – no report

Meeting adjourned 3:33 p.m.

Please send regrets to Janis McKenzie – janis.mckenzie@kitchener.ca

Next Regular Meeting – Thursday June 27, 2024, at 1:30pm, ZOOM