



## Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) Agenda

Thursday, December 18, 2025, 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Conestoga Room

City of Kitchener

200 King Street W, Kitchener, ON N2G 407

The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee shall assist the participating municipalities in fulfilling the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act by providing vision and advice regarding the removal of barriers.

People interested in participating in this meeting can email Administrative Coordinator, Janis McKenzie at Janis.McKenzie@kitchener.ca. Please refer to the delegation section on the agenda below for the registration deadline. Written comments received will be circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting and will form part of the public record.

\*Accessible formats and communication supports are available upon request. If you require assistance to take part in a city meeting or event, please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994\*

**Coordinating Municipality - Kitchener**

**Co-Chairs - Tamara Cooper, Alyssa Clelland**

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Pages

### 1. Commencement

#### 1.1 Land Acknowledgement

*We would like to begin by acknowledging the land on which we gather today, recognizing that the land in which we gather today is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishnawbe and Chonnonton peoples. We would also like to acknowledge the enduring knowledge, presence and deep-rooted traditions of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit who continue to enrich our community to this day.*

### 2. Disclosures of Pecuniary Interests

*Members of Council and members of the City's local boards/committees are required to file a written statement when they have a conflict of interest. If a conflict is declared, please visit [www.kitchener.ca/conflict](http://www.kitchener.ca/conflict) to submit your written form.*

**3. Delegations**

*Pursuant to Council's Procedural By-law, delegations are permitted to address the Committee for a maximum of five (5) minutes. All Delegations must register by 10:00 a.m. on December 18th, 2025, in order to participate in the meeting.*

**4. Discussion Items**

**4.1 Roll Call - Introductions**

**4.2 Minutes for Approval**

**4.3 Multi Year Accessibility Plan - City of Waterloo** 20 m

Amy Ross, Accessibility Advocate, City of Waterloo will be in attendance to present this matter.

**5. Recess and Reconvene**

**6. Discussion Items (Cont'd)**

**6.1 Multi Year Accessibility Plan Status Update - Region of Waterloo** 25 m 3

Haley Gienow-McConnell, Accessibility Specialist, Region of Waterloo, will be in attendance to present this matter.

**6.2 TTY Usage - Region of Waterloo** 15 m

Haley Gienow-McConnell, Accessibility Specialist, Region of Waterloo, will be in attendance to present this matter.

**6.3 The Built Environment Sub Committee Report** 10 m

**7. Information Items**

**7.1 None.**

**8. Adjournment**

Please send regrets to Janis McKenzie - [janis.mckenzie@kitchener.ca](mailto:janis.mckenzie@kitchener.ca)

# ROW MYAP Status Updates

2025



Region of Waterloo

# Design of Public Spaces - Updates

- Grant awarded through the Enabling Accessibility Fund to support improvements to the Waterloo Region Housing Sunnydale Community Centre.
- The Provincial Design of Public Spaces Standards Development Committee has completed a review of the accessible built environment standards in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and the barrier-free accessibility requirements under the Ontario Building Code (OBC). Recommendations have been submitted to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Regional staff await any potential regulatory changes.

## Design of Public Spaces – Updates 2

- Accessibility design standards continue to be incorporated into renovations and new construction projects, with Accessibility Lead advising.
- The Region has preventative and emergency maintenance procedures for accessible elements in public spaces.
- The Region has ensured compliance through integrating AODA requirements into relevant standard specifications, updated standard operating procedures, and in consultation with guiding stakeholders such as the Transportation Association of Canada and the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC).
- The Region periodically reviews and updates its standard specifications and standard operating procedures to ensure updated AODA legislation requirements are incorporated, as well as, new products and supports that are integrated into those documents with the goal of continuously improving accessibility in all areas.

# Customer Service – Updates 1

- Partnered with Community Engagement and Corporate Communications to redesign and modernize the Region's website with accessibility as the foundation so people with disabilities can access our website in a way that works for them. We have hired an accessibility consultant to advise on our redesign and refresher training on web accessibility and plain language training was provided to all content creators. We applied the user experience (UX) framework and accessible design principles to build prototypes for the homepage and landing pages, which will allow residents to find and access services quickly and easily. The website will launch in spring 2026.

## Customer Service – Updates 2

- Partnered with Waste to design and redesign the assisted collection and medical exemption services that are for people with disabilities using UX and human-centred design principles. Accessibility and equity are embedded in the designs to ensure people with disabilities can access the services and we reduce barriers.

## Customer Service – Updates 3

- Developed an inventory of our digital services on our website to identify the current state of our services and where there are opportunities to improve the experience and accessibility of our digital services.



## Customer Service – Updates 4

- The WRH 420 Kingscourt building that has 19 accessible units is nearing completion. It is anticipated that an occupancy permit will be attained in December and tenants will begin moving into the building in January 2026.
- The WRH 82 Wilson building for seniors which has 11 accessible units is also nearing completion. It is anticipated that an occupancy permit will be attained in December/January and tenants will begin moving into the building in February 2026.
- The WRH 589 Langs Dr. building is under construction and progressing well. This building will have 29 accessible units. Anticipated construction completion is Spring 2027.
- The design of the WRH Mooregate Cres. building is now complete. There will be 88 accessible units between the two buildings. The construction start date is not yet finalized.
- The WRH Shelley Dr. building has moved into the detailed design stage. The number of accessible units and the construction start date is to be finalized.

## Customer Service – Updates 5

- The interpreter and translation guidelines are updated as needed, when there is new information or changes in processes. The Region uses LanguageLine, which offers on-demand phone interpretation in over 240 languages and video interpretation in over 40 languages, including ASL. This allows people with disabilities to have more equitable access to Regional services.
- The Region continues to review our payment processes to ensure they are secure and accessible for people with disabilities. The digital services inventory allows us to identify which of our services have a payment process so we can monitor and plan for future improvement.

# Information and Communications – Updates 1

- Implemented closed captions in live streams. Social media best practices continue. Social media communications staff have been provided with a refresher on how to create accessible social media posts. The guidelines will be reviewed and updated as necessary in 2026.
- Re: Distribution channels. Work has continued in 2025 following existing communications standards. These standards will be reviewed again in 2026 and updated as necessary.
- Training continued in 2025 with additional training offered to communications staff on plain language, alt text, and creating accessible links.

## Information and Communications Updates -2

- The Region participated in the process of updating the GRAAC terms of reference with local municipalities represented on the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee. As the Committee is currently undergoing restructuring, the new terms of reference have not been adopted and will require revisiting when the best structure for the Committee is determined. The Region is actively participating in investigating options for the future of the Committee, and will participate in updating the terms of reference accordingly. In reviewing the terms of reference, it was determined that honoraria for participation in GRAAC were best practice for consulting with the Committee. And while new terms of reference have not been officially adopted, the Region and its municipal counterparts have made good on the commitment to issuing honoraria for the years 2025 and 2026.

# Employment – Updates 1

- In 2025 the Region hired an Accessibility Lead to advise on and support the implementation of accessibility best practices across the Region's operations and services. Human Resources (HR) and Abilities Management are working with the Accessibility Lead to identify opportunities to incorporate accessibility in each stage of the employee lifecycle, including in the policies and processes that support that cycle. Together, the Accessibility Lead, HR, and Abilities Management are developing a path forward for this work. HR and Abilities Management, with the support of the Accessibility Lead, will work to update relevant policies in 2026.

## Employment – Updates 2

- A modified work pool process was developed in alignment with the AODA Employment Standards. This process provides greater flexibility in temporary work arrangements and expands the range of suitable duties available to support employees who are temporarily unable to perform their regular work due to disability.
- The Abilities Management Team, in collaboration with Talent Acquisition and the Region's Accessibility Lead, is refining the accommodation process for both new hires and existing employees with permanent accessibility needs. This work includes reviewing and strengthening procedures for developing and documenting Individual Accommodation Plans (IAPs) and ensuring that supports are in place during recruitment, onboarding, and employment.
- The objective is to establish an efficient, consistent, and person-centered system that provides timely accommodation, promotes inclusion, and upholds the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

# Employment – Updates 3

Offered a series of one-hour awareness sessions with CNIB focused on equity, accessibility, and inclusion in the workplace:

- Inclusive Language – May 14

Explored the importance of language in fostering respectful and inclusive environments.

- National Accessibility Week: Inclusive Workplaces – May 28

Explored of actionable steps to create a workplace culture that values diversity and inclusion.

- Intersectionality in the Workplace – June 11

Examined how overlapping identities (e.g., race, gender, disability) shape workplace experiences and inclusion efforts

## Employment – Updates 4

- Organizational Health and Wellbeing survey developed and deployed.
- Following up on learnings from survey, including evolving workplace mental health programming.
- 46% of employees have taken Working Mind training to date.
- 57% of managers have completed full-day training.
- Increase in psychological services coverage under employee benefits.



## Employment – Updates 5

- In 2025 the Region hired an Accessibility Lead to advise on and support the implementation of accessibility best practices across the Region's operations and services. Human Resources (HR) has worked with the Accessibility Lead to identify key areas for improvement in hiring processes. Together, the Accessibility Lead and HR have begun brainstorming strategies for an accessible and inclusive end-to-end recruitment, hiring, and onboarding process. HR, with the support of the Accessibility Lead, will work to implement these strategies throughout 2026.

# Transportation – Updates 1

- Published our 2025 Airport Accessibility Progress Report on our website and provided it to the Canadian Transportation Agency and Canadian Human Rights Commission.
- Achieved Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Status for the Region of Waterloo International Airport. The press release is forthcoming.

# Transportation – Updates 2

The GRT Business Plan's MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Plan was approved in June 2025.

This plan will guide the improvement and expansion of specialized transit services within Waterloo Region. The plan focuses on:

- Improving the customer experience
- Introducing new staff resources
- Modernizing technologies
- Increasing fleet to meet growing demand for MobilityPLUS services and work toward the target of no unmet trips.

## Transportation – Updates 3

- A total of 62 accessible stop landing pads were constructed/upgraded in 2025. An expansion of stop upgrades is planned for 2026.
- In late 2025, GRT joined a working group led by the Canadian Standards Agency (CSA) Group, to review and provide feedback on the current design specifications for specialized service vehicles. This review should be completed in 2026.

## Transportation – Updates 4

- Implementation of high-contrast wraps and decals at platform validators and shelter edges at Fairway Station and Conestoga Station have been trialed successfully in collaboration with GRAAC.
- Enhanced tactile paths and stop markers have also been installed to evaluate durability and if they meet community need.
- These measures have been installed through a federal accessibility grant program.