

Intercity Bus Code of Practice



April 1, 2011



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

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Administration

This *Intercity Bus Code of Practice* replaces the first one issued in 1998, and comes into effect on **April 1, 2011**. Section 8.3, concerning web site accessibility, comes into effect on **April 1, 2012**.

Periodic monitoring of progress by Transport Canada and the intercity bus industry will be conducted to support the implementation of and compliance with this Code of Practice.

To assist intercity bus operators in implementing the provisions of this Code, a *Guide to Accessibility for Intercity Bus Services* has been issued. This *Guide* was developed as a source of helpful information, and is not intended to specify any operational decisions to be taken by bus operators in their implementation of this Code.

The *Guide* can be found at: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/policy/acc-accf-menu.htm>.

The Commitment of Bus Operators

Bus operators are committed to enhancing their scheduled intercity network in Canada to provide access, in the spirit of respect and inclusion, to all persons with disabilities. Services will be provided through a combination of accessible equipment and facilities as well as personnel who have been trained to assist passengers with disabilities. There are a number of different methods to ensure the availability of accessible scheduled intercity bus services. The application of these methods will vary from region to region and from bus operator to bus operator.

In general, and if requested by a person with a disability travelling without a personal care attendant, a bus operator will provide assistance with the following:

- ticket purchase and registering at the check-in or ticket counter;
- moving to and from the boarding area;
- public announcements;
- boarding and disembarking;
- assembling and disassembling a mobility aid at bus terminals;
- moving to and from a washroom at a stop;

- transfer to a connecting bus operator; and
- telephone use in a bus terminal for a passenger with a disability in need.

Operators will stow and retrieve baggage, mobility aids and related equipment.

In some instances, it will be necessary for persons with disabilities to provide advance notice to bus operators in order to facilitate the making of travel plans.

This Code of Practice sets out the means by which scheduled intercity bus services will be provided in a safe and dignified manner to travellers with disabilities. There is nothing in this Code that relieves any bus operator from complying with the provisions of any applicable government safety regulation.

The Code

Section 1 - Bus Services Covered by this Code

This Code deals with scheduled intercity bus services. It covers intercity bus operators that transport passengers or passengers and goods by bus between and within the provinces and territories of Canada. Should one route in a bus operator's scheduled service cross a territorial or provincial boundary, the Code covers all routes offered by this bus operator. The Code also applies to the bus terminals and bus stops or bus agencies operated by these bus operators.

This Code relates to scheduled services, that is, to regular services operated in accordance with a timetable over fixed routes, including suburban and airport bus services operated like scheduled intercity bus services. It does not relate to charter and tour services or to urban transit and school transportation.

Section 2 - Definitions

Intercity Bus Operator (Operator): a company that operates regular scheduled bus services in accordance with a timetable over fixed routes for the transportation of passengers or passengers and goods that is within the legislative authority of Parliament.

Bus terminal: facility or premise whose main purpose is the provision of services related to the transportation of passengers or passengers and goods by bus.

Bus stop or bus agency: site for embarking or disembarking passengers, which is not a full service bus terminal.

Flag stop: site for embarking or disembarking passengers, which is usually along a highway route and without an enclosed waiting area. Generally, no ticketing, other than cash fares, or services related to the transportation of passengers or passengers and goods by bus are offered.

Mobility aids: refers to such aids as wheelchairs, scooters, rollators, boarding chairs, walkers, canes, crutches, and braces. Related equipment refers to such items as battery chargers, spare parts, tools and other necessary equipment.

Personal Care Attendant: an individual who accompanies a person with a disability who cannot travel independently. The personal care attendant will assist the person with:

- transactions at the ticket counter;
- moving to and from the boarding area;
- stowing and retrieving any baggage;
- eating;
- administering medication;
- using the facilities of an on-board washroom or a washroom at a stop;
- assembling and disassembling a mobility aid at locations other than bus terminals; and
- making contact for assistance on behalf of a person with a disability.

Service animal: an animal required by a person with a disability for assistance and that is certified, in writing, as having been trained by a professional service animal institution to assist a person with a disability.

Section 3 - Making Reservations and Buying Tickets

3.1 Telecommunication systems for reservations and information

Operators using telephone lines for reservations or information at bus terminals will provide an equal level of service to passengers with disabilities through the use of alternative communication systems, such as a TTY line, e-mail or facsimile.

Operators will offer to describe the services provided to persons with disabilities and any conditions that apply with respect to those services.

3.2 Personal Care Attendants

On request, an operator will provide a personal care attendant with a free transportation ticket to be used by this attendant accompanying a person with a disability on scheduled services. An operator will accept the determination made by or on behalf of a person with a disability that the person does not require a personal care attendant during travel. However, a person wishing to travel with a personal care attendant must provide a letter from a health care professional, or a disability travel card issued by a recognized organization representing consumers with disabilities which uses a health care professional in assessing that a person cannot travel independently.

An operator will acknowledge its acceptance that a person requires a personal care attendant by issuing an entitlement card or some other form of acknowledgement in writing. This acknowledgement can then be used by the person for any future bus travel on scheduled services with any operator covered by this Code.

A person with a disability who requires a personal care attendant when travelling within the province of Québec must submit an application form to l'Association des propriétaires d'autobus du Québec (APAQ) to obtain the Québec Intercity Bus Service Attendant Card. This card is recognized by operators providing intercity bus service within the province of Québec only, and is for the use of persons with significant and permanent disabilities.

3.3 Passengers using non-folding wheelchairs (48-hours advance notice)

A person using a non-folding wheelchair, who wishes to remain in his or her own wheelchair during the trip, must contact the operator **48-hours** in advance of departure to make the requirement known. The operator will ensure that a bus that is mechanically equipped or designed for boarding and disembarking passengers using mobility aids and has a wheelchair securement system is provided.

3.4 Wheelchair securement

One wheelchair securement will be provided on buses that are mechanically equipped or designed for boarding and disembarking passengers using mobility aids. The first passenger requiring the wheelchair securement on a particular bus

48-hours prior to departure will be given preference. If subsequent passengers require a wheelchair securement on the same bus and also give **48-hours** prior notice, they will be offered a regular vehicle seat with boarding and transfer help by the operator and the passenger's personal care attendant, if necessary. If they do not or cannot accept, the operator will provide transportation on a different wheelchair accessible vehicle within a reasonable timeframe, not to exceed **72-hours**.

3.5 Mobility assistance on a trip with a single operator (24-hours advance notice)

A person with a disability requesting assistance in boarding and disembarking a bus or in moving to or from a mobility aid, such as a scooter, must make that request to the operator **24-hours** in advance of departure. Passengers who have given **24-hours** notice of their needs will be pre-boarded.

3.6 A trip involving more than one operator (72-hours advance notice)

If a person with a disability requests assistance and has a trip that involves connecting to a different operator, the operator of the first leg of the journey must be notified **72-hours** in advance of departure on the first leg. The operator of the first leg of the journey will assist with arranging the required accessible services for the entire trip.

If requested by a person with a disability, an operator or its agent will contact the appropriate representative of a connecting operator at a transfer point to assist with the connection.

In all cases, if a person makes a request in less than the required notice period, an operator will make its best efforts to provide the service.

3.7 Confirmation of reservations

When a reservation for a bus with wheelchair securement that is mechanically equipped or designed for boarding and disembarking passengers using mobility aids or other accessible services for persons with disabilities is made, the reservation for these services will be confirmed in a form according to the preference of the passenger requesting the service.

Section 4 - Arrival and Terminal Navigation

4.1 Early arrival

If a passenger uses a mobility aid that requires disassembly, the passenger should arrive at the departure point at least **30 minutes** before the scheduled departure of the bus. Passengers are encouraged to determine ahead of time what conditions apply.

4.2 Passenger assistance in bus terminals

Operators will provide a means for passengers to get information or assistance, during hours of service, once they arrive at bus terminals. The ticket counter will be as close as possible to the terminal entrance. If it is not, signage will provide direction to the location of the ticket counter.

4.3 Signage in bus terminals

Signage in all public areas of bus terminals should be accessible to all passengers and follow the Canadian General Standards Board *Passenger Information Symbols Standard (CAN/CGSB-109.4-2000)* and the Canadian Transportation Agency's Communication Code of Practice. Generally, signs in all areas used by the travelling public, such as washrooms, emergency exits, elevators, stairwells, doors or passageways off main corridors should include Braille and tactile symbols.

4.4 Public telephones in bus terminals

Operators will ensure that at least one public telephone, accessible to persons with visual impairment, speech impairment, or deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and a telephone at appropriate height for a person seated in a mobility aid, will be provided at the ticket counter area or where banks of public telephones are found.

Accessible telephones and TTYs should be clearly identified using the international symbol of access or the TTY symbol. Signs providing direction to public telephones should also provide direction to the nearest accessible telephone and TTY.

4.5 Public announcements in bus terminals

Public announcements should be provided in both audio and visual formats, if possible, in all passenger service areas inside terminals. These announcements include, but are not limited to: information concerning departure delays, gate assignments, and schedule or connection changes. Public announcements should be of good quality, in plain language, with clear enunciation and spoken slowly, as well as repeated.

If only one means of announcement is used (only audio or only visual), the operator will provide the announcement in an appropriate manner to passengers with disabilities who have made such a request.

4.6 Arrival and departure monitors and other electronic signage in bus terminals

Where monitors are placed above eye level, a person seated in a mobility aid will be able to read them easily. The information displayed on the monitors should be in plain language.

4.7 Transportation-related dispensing machines and automated information kiosks

When dispensing machines or automated information kiosks are used to provide a transportation-related product or service, at least one of those machines will allow a person with a disability to use the machine independently. It will be identified with the international symbol of access.

Where a transportation-related dispensing machine or information kiosk has not yet been made accessible, the operator will provide an equivalent level of service to those persons who are unable to use the machines independently.

4.8 Rest areas and courtesy seating in bus terminals

Where queuing systems exist in areas such as ticket sale counters, arrival and departure areas, and long corridors and passages, courtesy seating for persons with disabilities will be provided. To the extent possible, these seats should be within viewing distance of information monitors and staff. Those seats should also be clearly identified by the universal symbol for courtesy seating and include wording such as "Please offer these seats to people with disabilities."

4.9 Relieving areas for service animals at bus terminals

Operators will ensure that an area is available for service animals to relieve themselves, with a safe, accessible path of travel between the terminal and the relieving area. This area will be adequately maintained. Staff and volunteers who interact with the public will be made aware of the location of a relieving area.

Section 5 - Boarding and Disembarking from the Bus

5.1 Carriage of service animals

Operators will accept one certified service animal per passenger with a disability for carriage without charge and will permit the animal, if properly harnessed, to accompany the passenger on the bus. The service animal will remain on the floor at the passenger's feet during travel.

Passengers should note that they are required to produce written proof to the operator that the service animal has been trained and certified by a professional service animal institution.

5.2 Carriage of mobility aids as baggage

Mobility aids and related equipment will be carried at no charge. They may be transported in the baggage or passenger compartment at the operator's discretion where safe stowage is possible.

5.2.1 Carriage of large mobility aids, including scooters, as baggage (24-hours advance notice)

Operators will accept large mobility aids, including scooters, as baggage if **24-hours** advance notice is provided. Each operator will publish its own maximum weight and dimensions for the carriage of mobility aids on its current fleet as of April 1, 2011. Up to two large mobility aids will be accommodated per bus.

For buses purchased after April 1, 2011, baggage compartments will be able to accommodate scooters and other large mobility aids of the following dimensions:

- Width: 43" or 109.2 cm
- Height: 29" or 73.6 cm (with seat and steering column collapsed)

- Length: 89" or 226.06 cm
- Weight: 500 lbs or 227 kg

The operator will provide the means and will load and unload the scooter or other large mobility aid. No fees will be charged for this service and the aid will not count as excess baggage.

Normally, a mobility aid will be collapsed and disassembled or opened and assembled by the passenger or the passenger's personal care attendant. At bus terminals, if the passenger requires assistance to do this, the operator will provide that assistance.

5.2.2 Design load for lifts, ramps and stowage areas

The operator will accommodate lifting the combined weight of the person and wheelchair up to 600 lbs or 272 kg on vehicles purchased after April 1, 2011. Similarly, the operator will be able to store in the baggage compartment mobility aids that weigh up to 500 lbs or 227 kg. A ramp used for boarding and disembarking passengers on low floor buses will be able to bear a combined passenger and mobility aid load of up to 600 lbs or 272 kg.

5.2.3 No standees on lifts

Only passengers seated in their wheelchairs will be carried on lifts for safety reasons.

5.3 Boarding and disembarking at flag stops

Passengers using mobility aids can board or disembark at the flag stop of their choice to the extent possible. A driver is not required to deploy any lift or ramp mechanism at any flag stop that the driver deems to be unsafe.

When the passenger gives **48-hours** advance notice of the need for a lift or ramp equipped bus, the passenger will identify to the operator the boarding and disembarking stops of choice. If at either stop of choice the deployment of the lift or ramp would be unsafe, the passenger and operator will agree on the closest safe deployment site within a reasonable distance from the stop of choice. This stop will be agreed to in advance of the trip.

5.4 Features of accessible buses

5.4.1 Signage

Signage will avoid shadow areas and glare. Letters, numbers, symbols and pictographs will be glare-free and presented in contrasting colours.

5.4.2 Lighting

Lighting, except reading and other lighting under the control of the passenger, will be controlled so as not to create glare, shadows or sharp contrasts, and will be used to accentuate stairs and handrails.

Doorways will have an exterior light that illuminates the bottom stair and the ground area adjacent to the doorway when the door is open.

Aisles will be illuminated on both sides with floor lighting spaced at regular intervals.

5.4.3 Stairs

All stairs will have uniform, closed riser heights and adequate tread depths with a contrasting colour strip marking the top outer edge of each step to allow the safe boarding and disembarking of passengers. Tread surfaces will be firm and non-slippery and will not create glare. Handrails will also be provided.

If structural limitations prevent these requirements, the operator will provide assistance, if requested, to a person with a disability in ascending and descending the stairs. The operator will provide a step box should the height of the first step on and the last step off exceed the uniform riser height.

5.4.4 Handrails

Handrails will be sturdy, rounded and free of any sharp or abrasive elements. They will also be colour contrasted from their surrounding area and will permit easy grasping. They will not have any obstructions that could break a handhold and will return to a wall or floor in a smooth curve.

5.4.5 Floors

Floor surfaces will be slip-resistant and glare will be reduced as far as practicable.

5.4.6 Moveable armrests

All aisle armrests will be movable. If there is a middle seat armrest, it will also be movable or removable.

5.4.7 Emergency window exits

Emergency window exits will be clearly identified by a contrasting colour strip around the perimeter of the window or by a tactile sign if all windows do not serve as emergency exits.

5.4.8 Lifts and ramps

On buses where lifts and ramps are provided, these must be able to accommodate the design loads as outlined in **5.2.2 Design load for lifts, ramps and stowage areas**.

Section 6 - The Journey

6.1 Courtesy seating for persons with disabilities

Operators will designate the first row on both sides of the bus as courtesy seating for persons with disabilities who have difficulty moving within the bus. Signage depicting the universal symbol for courtesy seating and wording such as “Please offer these seats to people with disabilities” will be prominently displayed adjacent to these seats. The use of these seats will not incur any extra cost to the passenger.

6.1.2 Location of personal care attendants

When courtesy seating for a person with a disability is used, the personal care attendant will also be seated in the courtesy area.

6.2 Accessible washrooms

On non-express services, buses without a washroom accessible to persons using non-folding wheelchairs will stop at least every two-and-a half hours at a facility with an accessible washroom. Should such facilities not be available on route, either the passenger and the operator will agree in advance, or the passenger and the driver will agree on the most appropriate rest stops. These stops will allow adequate time to access and use the washroom.

6.3 On-board announcements

Announcements will be made slowly, clearly and precisely and will be repeated at least once:

- at transfer and destination points;
- at unscheduled stops, such as those caused by mechanical breakdowns, weather delays or road blockage;
- at any stop requested to be announced by the passenger with a disability;
- concerning the length of time, including waiting time, at each scheduled or unscheduled stop; and
- concerning any schedule changes.

Upon request, the operator will make alternate arrangements with a passenger who is hard of hearing or deaf to communicate the announcements prior to departure.

Section 7 - Bus Terminals and Equipment

7.1 Building or retrofitting terminals

Bus terminals will meet all of the accessibility requirements specified in any applicable federal, provincial or local building code.

If a contract has been entered into whereby a bus will stop to board and disembark passengers or tickets will be sold at facilities that are not considered to be a terminal, such as a restaurant or a gas station, every effort will be made to ensure that these facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities, particularly those who use mobility aids.

Terminal operators will address the needs of persons with disabilities by referring to the Canadian Standards Association's *CAN/CSA-B651-04 Accessible Design for the Built Environment* standard, which contains requirements for making buildings and other facilities accessible to persons with a variety of disabilities. In addition, operators will apply the seven (7) Principles of Universal Design (included in *The Guide to Accessibility for Intercity Bus Services*) during the planning and design stage of projects, including renovations and new construction.

During the design phase of new construction and renovations, operators should also minimize reliance on directional signage and should incorporate other way-finding methods, such as the positioning of entrances and exits, the use of colour contrasting, pattern direction on floors or walls, tactile markings, acoustics and lighting.

7.2 Purchasing new equipment

In keeping with their commitment to enhance accessibility, operators, in consultation with bus manufacturers, will work to improve accessibility features in those buses used for scheduled services.

As a minimum, operators will ensure that an appropriate number of buses in their fleet are mechanically equipped or designed for boarding or disembarking passengers using mobility aids, and include a wheelchair securement system, in order to provide such a bus on **48-hours** advance notice.

Section 8 - Operator Communication and Employee Training

8.1 Rate schedules and timetables

Rate schedules and timetables published by operators will inform travellers that services provided to persons with disabilities are described in the Intercity Bus Code of Practice and that copies of the Code are available on request.

8.2 Provision of transportation-related information in multiple formats

At bus terminals, operators will ensure that where information related to the successful execution of a trip is required, it is available to all passengers with disabilities in a format that is accessible to them.

8.3 Web site accessibility

By April 1, 2012, web sites of operators or the web site provided on an operator's behalf by an association, are to be made accessible to persons with disabilities. Information provided on the Internet should be linked to text-based options for browsers used by persons with disabilities.

The main page will allow easy navigation to the pages applicable to persons with disabilities. The content of these pages will include, but not be limited to services or policies related to:

- hours of operation;
- company policy and procedures for arranging accessible services;
- telephone number for passenger assistance and accessible services information for persons with disabilities;
- designated parking areas;
- designated embarking and disembarking areas;
- relieving areas for service animals;
- documentation for service animals;
- personal care attendants;
- maximum dimensions accepted for scooters and other large mobility aids as baggage;
- accessibility features of the buses;
- capacity for passengers to provide feedback to an operator on its services for persons with disabilities;
- complaint resolution service; and
- accessible ground transportation

8.4 Training

Operators will ensure that their employees are familiar with the contents of this Code and are trained to assist persons with disabilities. In particular, employees and volunteers who interact with the public or make decisions in respect of services to passengers with disabilities, and employees and volunteers who may be required to provide physical assistance to passengers with disabilities, to handle mobility aids, or to assist with special equipment, will receive a level of training appropriate to the requirements of their functions, including sensitivity awareness training.

Operators will use the Canadian Transportation Agency's *Personnel Training for the Assistance of Persons with Disabilities Regulations* as a guide for their training activities.

8.5 Consultation

Operators will have a means of consulting with persons with disabilities to identify and address their concerns on the accessibility of terminals and the bus services offered. This may be achieved by way of a committee, comment cards, on-line feedback forms or other consultation mechanisms.

Section 9 - Complaints

9.1 Damaged or lost mobility aids

If a mobility aid is damaged during carriage or is lost, the operator will, without charge and as expeditiously as possible, provide a temporary replacement aid suitable to the owner at the destination.

In addition to providing a temporary replacement aid, the operator will, at its expense:

- if the aid can be repaired promptly and adequately, immediately arrange for the prompt and adequate repair of the aid and expedite its return to the person; or
- if the aid is damaged and cannot be repaired or is lost, either replace the aid with one that is identical in all material respects (or with one that is different but satisfactory to the person) or reimburse the person for the full replacement cost of the aid regardless of the limits of liability respecting goods contained in any applicable tariff.

If the operator provides a person with a temporary replacement aid, that person can continue to have the use of the replacement until the time their aid is returned to them (if the aid is to be repaired) or until a reasonable period for the replacement of the aid has elapsed (if the operator has taken steps to replace a damaged or lost aid or has reimbursed the person).

All parties involved in the repair or replacement of the aid shall communicate regularly during this period to ensure that the needs of the passenger are met in a timely and appropriate manner.

If damage to a mobility aid is clearly not due to negligence on the part of the operator, the operator will not be responsible for providing the services set out in this section. The operator will, however, ensure the passenger is not left unattended with a non-functioning mobility aid.

9.2 Resolving complaints

Operators will ensure that complaints by persons with disabilities are treated expeditiously and effectively. If a passenger wishes to file a complaint against an operator, the passenger must complete a complaint form, provide it to the operator and send a copy to Transport Canada. An operator in receipt of a complaint will address the issue directly with the complainant to resolve the dispute within 30 days. The operator will inform its association and Transport Canada of the outcome. It is expected that the majority of complaints will be resolved at this early stage.

If a complaint remains unresolved, the operator's association has 15 days to work with the operator and the complainant to reach an agreement acceptable to both parties. The association will inform Transport Canada of the outcome.

If the complaint still remains unresolved following the intervention of the association, the complainant may contact Transport Canada and request resolution through the services of an independent mediator. Once in receipt of this request, Transport Canada has 20 days to retain a mediator. The mediator has 30 days to work with the complainant and operator to resolve the complaint within the parameters of the Code. Operators will undertake to implement the direction of the mediator.

The mediator will provide copies of the recommendations to all parties regarding resolution of the complaint and, if appropriate, regarding proposed changes to the Code.

The maximum timeframe for the complaints resolution process is 95 days.

Operators will make the complaint form available upon request. The complaint form will also be available on-line at: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/policy/acc-accf-menu.htm>.

Send a copy of the complaint to:

Email: buscode@tc.gc.ca

Phone: 1-800-665-6478

TTY: 1-800-823-3823

Fax: 613-991-6422

Mailing Address:

Transport Canada

Intergovernmental Affairs and Accessibility (ACCF)

330 Sparks Street

Ottawa, Ontario

K1A 0N5

9.3 Accessible scheduled intercity bus services

Complaint Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

E-mail: _____

Telephone Numbers:

Home: () _____ Work: () _____

Cell: () _____

Fax (if applicable): () _____

Date and Time of incident:

Where did the incident occur?

Name of bus operator or terminal:

1. Provide a complete description of what happened. (Use additional pages if necessary.)

2. Give a complete explanation of the obstacle(s) you encountered. (Use additional pages if necessary.)

3. Give a description of the solution you are seeking. (Use additional pages if necessary.)

4. Include any other information or document you think would be helpful or useful in explaining your complaint.

5. I believe that the concern(s) outlined in this complaint constitute(s) a barrier to my mobility. I ask that the matter be resolved in accordance with Section 9.2 of the Intercity Bus Code of Practice.

Signature

Date

