

Detroit Department of Transportation

# 2023 Transit Accessibility Plan



# **Detroit Department of Transportation Mission Statement**

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*“The mission of the Detroit Department of Transportation is to provide public transit services that are reliable, clean, customer-focused, safe and secure.”*

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## Executive Summary

The Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) provides transportation services for the City of Detroit; the cities of Hamtramck and Highland Park which are surrounded by Detroit; and some nearby destinations in neighboring communities. The DDOT fleet, facilities, and services are provided with funds received from the federal and state governments and the City of Detroit general fund. DDOT is a designated recipient of public transportation funds from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

### Accessibility

To build DDOT as a viable transportation option, all customers must have access. The commitment to purchase a fully accessible transit fleet is a significant step in this direction. However, overall system accessibility consists of components beyond accessible transit buses, including, but not limited to, increased service levels, facility access, improved pedestrian connections, bus stop surface pads – shelters – signage, snow clearing standards, wayfinding, availability of accessible transit information and supportive operational programs, policies, and customer service. For many Detroit residents, DDOT is the primary means of travel to and from work, school, medical appointments, community events and social activities. As DDOT accessibility improves, everyone benefits, leading to improved connectivity, increased ridership, and improved quality of life for the Citizens of Detroit.

The Accessibility Plan purpose is to identify barriers, establish strategies to address local accessibility issues, and any regulatory requirements. Consistent with requirements mandated under the US Department of Transportation American with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations, the public will be consulted to assess progress toward full system accessibility.

DDOT is dedicated to:

- developing, improving, and enhancing accessible fixed route and paratransit services and associated facilities/ infrastructure.
- including people with disabilities in developing and reviewing the annual accessibility plan,
- providing accessible services to customers, employees, and contractors; and
- optimizing municipal investments to provide the right service for our customers (e.g., door-to-door paratransit, accessible conventional services, etc.).

# Section 1 - DDOT Transit Services Profile

DDOT is the largest public transit provider in Michigan and is subsidized, in part, by the City of Detroit's general fund. Erosion of Detroit's population has occurred over many years, resulting in lower ridership revenue. The recent 2020 Census clearly verifies that trend, as well as identifying that over 37% of the population has income under the poverty line.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is still unknown. Ridership numbers have been plummeting, and social demographics continue to evolve and change. The kind of public transportation of the immediate, and long term, is still being defined and shaped.

These factors have provided the framework by which DDOT has worked to provide a public transportation system that meets the needs of the citizens of the City of Detroit.

## 1.1 Existing Fixed Route Operations

As of September 2021, DDOT operated 38 fixed routes with a fleet size of 288 buses within the City of Detroit and neighboring jurisdictions.

## 1.2 2019-2021 Service and Demand Review

DDOT fixed route ridership numbers continue to show a decline. The COVID-19 Pandemic exasperated the plummeting ridership levels to 50% less than what was recorded in 2018 and 2019. DDOT is using new technologies to identify ridership so planning for 2022 and beyond will be as accurate as possible.

DDOT recognizes that it must recalibrate the fixed route service. In the first quarter of 2022 DDOT will conduct a Comprehensive Organizational Analysis to determine what service DDOT can provide to meet demand and to be fiscally prudent.

## 1.3 Other Service Providers

Several public transit and passenger transportation services connect with DDOT service. These are described under the following headings:

### **SMART**

The Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) operates regional transit services in Southeast Michigan. Several of its 43 fixed routes supplement DDOT routes along corridors within the City of Detroit. SMART service within Detroit operates primarily during peak commuting hours. Several SMART corridors operate with limited stops, thus providing faster service than DDOT local service in the same corridor. DDOT and SMART connect at several transit centers near the city's borders.

### **Detroit People Mover**

The People Mover is an elevated railway owned and operated by the Detroit Transportation Corporation. This transit circulator operates an automated fixed-guideway service in a one-way loop around the perimeter of downtown Detroit. The People Mover connects with DDOT services at several stations.

### **QLine**

The QLine is a ground-breaking public-private-partnership (PPP) with the operating non-profit, M1 Rail, and its partners: the City of Detroit, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and private entities. The QLine is a 6.6-mile circulating streetcar loop on Woodward Avenue that serves Downtown, Midtown, New Center, and North End. The QLine connects the largest employment and activity centers in central Detroit. It also provides a fixed-guideway transit connection to Detroit's Amtrak intercity passenger rail station. DDOT continues to explore how to best utilize bus service to connect with and supplement QLine service.

### **Windsor Transit Tunnel Bus**

The Tunnel Bus, operated by Transit Windsor (City of Windsor, Ontario, Canada) makes cross-border public transit trips between Windsor and Detroit. It operates throughout the day, 7 days a week, approximately every 30 minutes. The Tunnel Bus stops in Detroit at the TCF Center, Rosa Parks Transit Center, and the Detroit/Windsor platform. This service was suspended in March 2020. A resumption of services is still pending.

### **Intercity Rail and Bus**

Amtrak's intercity rail station is located at Woodward Avenue near Grand Boulevard in the New Center office district. Amtrak's Wolverine service connects at the station. Amtrak operates three daily round trips between Pontiac and Chicago. High activity stations on the line include Detroit, Dearborn, and Ann Arbor. Multiple DDOT routes connect to the Amtrak station, including its two high-ridership routes 4-Woodward and 16- Dexter.

### **Private Transportation**

Several private bus and shuttle operators provide transportation in and around downtown Detroit. The most visible of these are the Opportunity Detroit shuttles connecting key office centers with remote parking and residential areas.

### **Regional Transit Authority (RTA)**

Legislation to establish a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in Southeast Michigan was passed in 2013. The RTA is proceeding with corridor studies for enhanced transit radiating from downtown Detroit and with a plan for coordinated regional transit. DDOT will coordinate with the RTA throughout its transit corridor planning processes. DDOT partnered with RTA on the regional "RefleX" transit service from 2016 to 2018. An RTA millage failed to pass by referendum during the 2016 election cycle. No further plans have been made for additional service because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



## **Commuter Rail**

In addition to MDOT's ongoing intercity service enhancements, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is planning Commuter Rail corridor extending from Ann Arbor to Detroit, with two stops in addition to the existing intercity rail (Amtrak) stops. One of these additional stops would offer connections to Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport. More information on planned Commuter Rail is available at <http://www.semcog.org/AADD.aspx>.

### **1.4 Planned Services**

DDOT will conduct a Comprehensive Operational Analysis during the first quarter of 2022 to determine the correct line of service for the changing demographic the system has experienced because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shifts in population. It is hoped that a "right-sized" bus service will be established by the end of 2022.

Other transit and passenger transportation improvement efforts in the region are in development. Through coordinating with them, these improvements offer DDOT an opportunity to enhance mobility, increase transportation options and improve the environment.

### **1.5 Ongoing Monitoring of Service**

Monitoring of service requirements is a continuous process at DDOT. Except for portions of the Automated Vehicle Locator (AVL) system, many of the latest technologies are in use in the fleet and are integrated to monitor and confirm critical metrics for determining service requirements. Additionally, DDOT collects data through surveys, calls to customer service, input from community groups and individuals to adjust service appropriately.

DDOT employs an CAD/AVL System along with other methods for monitoring on street performance and service, which all are in the process of being upgraded. Some of the technology is in place but other, soon to be replaced items, are listed below:

- APC (Automated Passenger Counter)
- GFI (Fare Collection Unit)
- CSR (Customer Service Request System)
- Direct monitoring (Planning and Scheduling)
- Collection data is now gathered through CAD/AVL
- Clever Reports – Clever Devices reporting tool which allows data to be pulled and analyzed in numerous ways
- Hastus Daily (operational software)
- Annunciator system has been replaced fleet-wide
- New interior LED signage augments the annunciator system
- New IVR system provides customer information in English, Spanish and Arabic.
- Note: manual surveys were put on hold during the Pandemic. They are to resume during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2021.

The new systems have given DDOT capabilities to keep it current and relevant in the new “COVID-19 Impact Era.” Currently, the data systems need refinement so that data can be extracted accurately, and the data can then be useful and relevant to the changing environment. DDOT hopes to make significant strides during 2022, however, DDOT will make sure that all new systems are purposeful and yield the results that are required.

DDOT bus radio system consists of the Michigan Public Safety Communication System for voice radio and cellular communication.

DDOT’s new CAD/AVL system, CleverCad includes real-time vehicle mechanical information and configuration, interface to both the Destination Signs and Fare Revenue Collection equipment (GFI).

In summary, DDOT employs and accesses numerous technologies to support operations and to gather valuable data to monitor service and service requirements. We have made great strides in the past three years despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **1.6 Service Monitoring**

During the COVID-19 pandemic reductions, including several routes, service suspensions were implemented, with decisions based largely on available data. Restoration of service levels is planned to begin in 2022 as operating resources are increased. The shape of the future system will be largely determined by the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) process that will take place in 2022.

### **1.6.1 Fixed Route Service Monitoring**

There has been no in-person monitoring since March 2020 because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. DDOT has monitored its system through data and the complaint system. Beginning in July 2021 DDOT’s Secret Rider program was reinstated. Currently, there are five riders who are riding at least 10 rides a month to evaluate DDOT’s service.

## **Section 2 - Prior Years Accessibility Initiatives**

DDOT has implemented many accessibility initiatives over the last several years with development and enhancement of policies and procedures. As a result, many of the requirements set out in the 49 CFR Part 38 of the US Department of Transportation ADA regulations have been implemented ahead of regulatory compliance dates. DDOT continues to update policies, procedures, and services to improve accessibility, reliability, connectivity and enhance customer mobility options.

The following improvements have been completed to identify and remove accessibility barriers:



## Fixed-Route Service

- Purchased fully accessible buses. All fixed-route transit buses have been 100% accessible since 2009. These buses include accessibility features such as high contrast stanchions, handrails, illuminated external electronic destination signs, stop request buttons/pull cords, slip resistant flooring, clear identification of priority and courtesy seating areas and ramps.
- Installed bus stops, shelters, landing pads at a variety of bus stop locations throughout the service area.
- Installed updated static departure and scheduling information at bus stops.
- Installed and implemented electronic visual and audible annunciation and pre-board annunciation equipment.

## Paratransit Service

DDOT's Detroit MetroLift ridership in 2019 had a passenger annual total of 384,051. By contrast, it carried 268,879 passengers in 2020. There is a 30-percent reduction in annual riders in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ridership from January 2021 to September 27, 2021, was 175,457.

The following will be initiated:

- Upgrading the eligibility process for paratransit applications by implementing an online process.
- Updating DDOT's website design with greater opportunities for increased customer service and accessible display of transit information, policies, and programs.
- Use of DDOT's social media, including Twitter and Facebook.
- Create and implement corporate accessibility policies.
- Implement emergency preparedness, response and evacuation policies and procedures for operators of fixed-route and paratransit.
- Monitor policies and procedures for service used by visitors from other municipalities for paratransit services. If a visitor with a disability does not present such documentation, DDOT may require documentation of the individual's place of residence and of his or her disability if the disability is not apparent.
- Monitor real-time communication between the paratransit, Call Center Staff, Schedulers, Providers and Dispatchers so that routes are adjusted throughout that day as changes or potential delays occur.

## 2021 Work Plan Progress to Date

The 2021 Accessibility work plan consists of administrative, service-related and infrastructure rehabilitation projects. The following table provides a summary of actions and progress to date:

Actions	Progress to Date
Continue to improve infrastructure at bus stops and other related transit infrastructure.	In progress. Ongoing bus stop improvements planned in 2022.
Continue to integrate DDOT bus stop infrastructure with City and Regional roadway improvement programs.	Ongoing.
Continue to implement updated static customer timetable information at all bus stop locations, including trip departure and other relevant information.	Completed. All stops contain static departure information.
Review and update DDOT logo.	Completed. New DDOT brand launched in summer 2018.
Review bus stop sign design, wayfinding and implement fixture standardization, where practicable	Ongoing.
Implement automated next stop announcements, pre boarding announcements and other related real time customer information	Ongoing. Some refinements ongoing to address accuracy, street name pronunciation, sound quality, etc. Real-time customer information was completed in 2018.

### Section 3 - 2022 Accessibility Work Plan

DDOT will ensure that it complies with all DOT-ADA regulations by the stated compliance dates. The following provides a summary of the actions planned that began in 2021 and will be carried over to 2022 that will make DDOT more accessible:

- Continue to improve infrastructure at bus stops and other related transit infrastructure. Install bus pads and shelters at various locations.
- Roll-out DDOT brand on new bus stop signs, ensuring sign visibility and legibility.
- Update transit design guidelines to incorporate best practice bus stop accessibility improvements and other related standards.
- Develop and implement a process to manage static customer timetable information at all bus stop locations, including trip departure and other relevant information.
- Develop and implement a process to manage static map information at all bus shelter locations, including but not limited to system map, route identifiers and customer contact information.
- Implement service growth improvements to enhance coverage and availability, including City of Detroit; the cities of Hamtramck and Highland Park which are surrounded by Detroit; and some nearby destinations in neighboring communities
- Review current and future service requirements
- Comprehensive Organizational Analysis.
- DDOT Bus Tracker app is in the testing stage to be marketed to the public in 2022.

- Monitor and request more accessible vehicles for paratransit services.
- Review opportunities for interregional specialized transit connections with SMART

## **Section 4 - Methodology for Plan Review and Update**

The annual plan will provide an update on accessibility initiatives that reflect US Department of Transportation ADA regulations and compliance as well as forecasting initiatives that support the continuous removal of accessibility barriers. The yearly accessibility plan will be presented to the Local Advisory Council in November of each year and will measure progress and develop subsequent annual work plans.

There are two (2) key inputs to the annual accessibility plan, including:

- Legislative and regulatory requirements and associated compliance timelines
- Customer feedback and annual public consultation

The 2022 Transit Accessibility was developed with consultation of the Department Heads of DDOT to obtain a perspective on the effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

## **Section 5 - Process for Managing, Evaluating and Acting on Customer Feedback**

Feedback from customers can be generated by the customer or transferred internally via the service provider to DDOT. Generally, when DDOT initiates a feedback request, it is related to a specific issue. The methods for evaluating and acting with respect to each method are described below.

### **Receiving Feedback (Customer Generated)**

Feedback from customers (positive, negative, or concerns) serves as key inputs to DDOT service delivery and annual service plans, including those elements dealing specifically with accessibility.

Customer feedback with respect to service operations is directed to customer service representatives at DDOT's service provider facility. Planning and administration related comments are forwarded to DDOT staff for review and response. All customer comments are recorded, and responses are provided to the customers. Comments are received from customers and members of the public via telephone, in person, mail, email, as well as the City of Detroit website and corporate social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) which the Marketing Department manages. ADA complaints and comments are received through customer service, direct mail, or phone contact with the ADA Coordinator.

Where a customer has indicated their desire for a response, and to the extent they have provided valid contact information, DDOT staff contacts the customer in the same manner the comment was received.

In terms of compliments, all DDOT employees (contracted or internal) who are identified in compliments received from customers are acknowledged in the form of an open memo or letter. Additionally, compliments are raised at regular operator meetings and retained in personnel files.

Requests received are generally related to service delivery (actual service operations, new service requests, requests for amenities, etc.) and are forwarded to the appropriate area for review and response. If a request can be acted upon outside of the service planning process, appropriate action is taken, and the customer is advised accordingly. These comments, along with the Transit Master Plan and other corporate strategic plans, help shape annual budgetary requests.

Complaints are recorded, documented, and forwarded for investigation and action as appropriate. Customers will receive a response to their complaint. Complaints are categorized and compared with prior months and years. This summation allows DDOT to determine trends and whether new programs, policies and services have had an impact on customer contacts or require further examination. ADA complaints are likewise reviewed and analyzed to help improve service.

DDOT utilizes several methodologies to gather feedback from customers including:

- Online surveys via DDOT webpage – as required
- On-board surveys – as required
- City Committees – as required
- Peer consultations – ongoing
- Service Plan development and process – annually
- Service Reviews – as required

All data and information collected assist in making decisions with respect to the topic being reviewed and assessed.

## **Section 6 – Process for Estimating Demand for Fixed Route & Paratransit Services**

The process to identify service demand requirements includes an analysis of factors and influences. Those factors might include:

- Historic ridership trends and growth analysis on both fixed route and specialized transit services
- Ridership levels during the Pandemic and other social demographic dynamics related to COVID-19.
- The inability/ability to recruit drivers
- Safety concerns of the riders and drivers
- The level of accessibility of the fixed route transit service offered, including accessible

buses and stops and amenities as well as areas of the city the service covers; this also includes the extent to which the service provider has implemented programs to encourage specialized transit customers to utilize accessible fixed route service, when possible, as well as the level of service integration opportunity that exists between the fixed route and specialized services

- The location of key origins and destinations within the city and their proximity to one another, including the Rosa Parks Transit Center, older adult homes, medical facilities, rehabilitation facilities, medical offices, and major retail areas, all of which tend to be primary origins and destinations for paratransit customers
- Evolving demographic changes as outlined in the 2020 Census
- Other services identified through the Comprehensive Operational Analysis

## **Section 7- Steps to Reduce Wait Times for Paratransit Transportation Services**

Service is classified as a “shared-ride” service, there are several external factors that could influence performance against this target. These factors include, but are not limited to the following:

- Traffic conditions, which can be significantly influenced by weather conditions, road construction, delays caused by train crossings, etc.
- Customers who do not take their scheduled trip and do not cancel in advance triggers the service provider to wait an additional five (5) minutes past a scheduled reservation (policy driven), which may impact future consecutive trips

Additionally, the implementation of scheduling/dispatching software has provided additional information to assist in improving scheduling and subsequent operations, with the ability to measure system performance.

## **Section 8 – Procedures to Address Equipment Failures**

### **Fixed Route Services**

Fixed route transit fleet requirements are determined based on the number of buses required during peak operating periods, including buses that are subject to required inspections and maintenance; referred to as spare fleet ratio. This ratio can vary significantly given factors of age and make/model of the fleet noting that while older buses may require higher levels of maintenance to keep them operating efficiently, newer buses tend to have more electronic related failures. Maintaining a fleet of buses is therefore a complex and detailed process.

There are several actions taken to mitigate in-service breakdowns, including the following:

- Daily bus defect reports are submitted to maintenance staff by the operator at the end of service day for follow-up prior to bus redeployment.
- Developed requirements for vehicle maintenance inspection and reliability with respect to current COVID-19 conditions.
- Every evening when buses are serviced (refueled, farebox emptied, etc.), employees also check that bus functions appear to be in working order. If an issue is identified, the bus is either repaired immediately, or removed from service the following day until it can be repaired.
- Each day, prior to a bus pull out from the garage, operators complete a pre-trip inspection, ensuring that the bus is functioning properly. This check includes the various accessibility features on the bus (i.e., ramp, kneeling feature, mobility device securement equipment, etc.). If any features are found to be not functioning, operators will report it to Maintenance to have it repaired prior to going into service. If the bus cannot be repaired in time, or an alternative equipment solution cannot be employed, a replacement bus is assigned.

While these actions mitigate in-service breakdowns, they do not eliminate them. When a bus defect disables the bus while in service, the following procedures are instituted:

- The bus operator contacts dispatch and relays the defect information.
- Dispatch determines the extent of the defect and identifies a change-off location and estimated time.
- In consultation with maintenance staff, dispatch arranges for a replacement bus to be dispatched.

It should be noted that these procedures may be impacted by severe weather events or other vehicle issues that could result in the inability to replace all buses that experience difficulties in service (i.e., severe weather conditions impacting the functionality of the bus ramp or kneeling features).

## Paratransit Services

Contracted transportation providers are mandated to have quarterly inspection of their vehicles and submit such documentation to the DDOT's Executive Director. Providers are also required to always maintain an agreed upon number of vehicles on the road. Other requirements are outlined in the service agreement document.



## Safety Initiatives

Safety is paramount to DDOT employees, contractors, customers, and the public. DDOT is in the process of upgrading our Bus Operator and Vehicle Maintenance Safety Training. This training will also include:

- Cross-over training between sections.
- Involved in the complaint process to ensure any safety-related complaints, be it service or behavior, are addressed in a timely and efficient manner.
- Ensures there are, at a minimum, monthly Executive and Local Safety meetings to understand safety data, review safety campaigns, and ensure Champions of Safety are recognized.
- Conducts seatbelt inspections, intersection inspections, review of accident videos (where available), and bus inspections to ensure DDOT property is free of safety defects.
- Working with several stakeholders to ensure vehicle camera systems are updated to provide updated technology.

Safety of ADA riders is a customer service expectation on DDOT Fixed Route and contracted Paratransit services. To that end the following is noted. There is a dedicated contracted Paratransit curriculum that focuses on service to and compassion for an ADA rider. The following ADA topics are covered in contracted Paratransit service training:

- Each Driver must complete the “Driver Program” which orients the Driver to all facets of Paratransit Services from Customer Service to ADA and COVID -19 protocols.

There is a dedicated Fixed Route curriculum that focuses on service to and compassion for an ADA rider. The following ADA topics are covered in Bus Operator Training:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, types of disabled individuals who ride the fixed route system, Service Animals, Yellow Mitt Program, FTA regulations related to disabilities and Driver responsibilities when working with ADA riders.
- Drivers receive a full day of training on ADA law, learning about different types of disabilities and how to work with various disabilities on the fixed route.
- Bus Operators are required to provide the following assistance to ADA passengers:
  - providing secure assistance
  - operating ADA ramps
  - determining the needs of ADA passengers
  - ensure ADA areas are available to ADA passengers
  - providing orientation to their present location
- The DDOT Safety Department will assist in Safety Assurance activities to ensure a safe trip for ADA riders.

## Conclusions

DDOT's Fixed Route and contracted Paratransit Services have developed a 2022 Accessibility Plan that appropriately addresses the impact of COVID-19 upon the system, to ensure that all residents of the City of Detroit are able to access transportation services that are: "reliable, clean, customer focused, safe and secure." The goals and activities in this report will direct us to the fulfillment of those goals.

Detroit Department of Transportation