

## **2022 Annual Report**

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

### **Built Environment**

- WAAC Provided detailed accessibility input and recommendations regarding Banwell Road Phase 2 and Roundabout Construction Project. Paul Mourad, Engineer III, City of Windsor and Stephen Brook, BT Engineering to the Banwell Road Phase 2 project and is present to discuss the multi-use trails and the roundabout to determine if there are any accessibility issues or concerns with the project as part of the consultation to WAAC to gain input regarding the Banwell Road Phase 2 and Roundabout project.
- Many municipalities adopt facility accessibility design standards (FAD) for the purpose of developing accessible environments and embracing the principles of universal design. These technical specifications guide engineers, architects, planners, staff, and vendors in the design of everything from parks and playgrounds to sidewalks and seating areas with the aim of removing or preventing barriers that would prevent participation of those with disabilities. Over time, changes in legislation, demographics, and evolving standards lead to a need to update Windsor's current FAD. While developing a new FAD is feasible, it is expensive and time consuming undertaking and it common practice for municipality to adopt the standard of leaders in accessibility including London and Ottawa. The City previously adopted the London standard in the course of developing the Windsor FAD in 2006 with modifications suitable to the City.

In the past year, administration completed a comparative study of municipal standards in cooperation with the Windsor Accessibility Advisory Committee and the FAD Subcommittee. That analysis examined the differences in standards for London, Oakville, Mississauga, Kingston, and Ottawa as well as readability, ease of adoption, layout, and robustness. While some municipalities such as Kingston and Oakville offered smaller, more aesthetically pleasing standards, London provided superior depth and detail. However, London was updating its own FADs in 2021 and the decision was made to wait for the released standard in November 2021 to ensure the most accurate comparison. Analysis of the 2021 standard reinforced the view that London was an appropriate standard to adopt.

In accordance with current policy, the London graciously allows municipalities to adopt and modify their FAD provided that appropriate attribution is noted in the revised standard. Approvals are currently underway and next steps will be for the FAD subcommittee to work with relevant departments to make needed

amendments to the FAD document and then eventually take to Council for approval.

- WAAC requested that that Administration provide a brief update on the city's audio pedestrian signals in terms of what exists and what are the plans for the future. The committee has noted the need to review our current practices regarding Accessible pedestrian signals and has stressed the need for a clear Standard for how we will set up signals across the City. The committee will work to put together some details of needed improvements to provide to appropriate administration for needed follow up.
- A WAAC representative and several advocates for the visually impaired community along with several members of administration did an onsite review of a particular Accessible pedestrian signal (Lauzon and Wyandotte). The purpose was to understand some of the ongoing issues faced by blind and low vision residents. WAAC agreed to provide further detailed info to S. Boakes and I. Day regarding the specific challenges at the various APS corners. They also will attempt to provide some recommendations about priorities. The purpose of providing such information is for Administration responsible for traffic signals to review the information and do appropriate follow-up, tweaks and repairs etc.
- Shawna Boakes, Executive Director Operations appeared before the Committee and provide the following overview and comments:
  - Met with members of WAAC and G. Jones along with Shauna Boghean, CNIB for a site visit at the corner of Lauzon and Wyandotte. The audio pedestrian signal located at this intersection is approximately thirteen years old with seven years of functional life left. The APS signal at this location was a much older model with some functionality in those buttons that have been updated in more recent versions of the APS models that are currently available.
  - The group discussed the location of buttons, locations of crosswalks and accessibility as a whole with respect to traffic signals. Some of the traffic signals were installed well before the provincially legislated requirement was put in place for the APS and the accessibility in general.
  - There have been major upgrades at specific locations as opposed to smaller changes at the intersections. There are currently 293 signals. • The group who attended the site visit were asked for a list of locations and particulars, i.e. highly utilized areas for accessible persons.
  - Any new APS are being installed with the new accessible standards.

- Are in the process of preparing a design standard for accessibility which includes a physical layout of an intersection, where the push buttons are located, where the poles are located, where the crosswalks, ramps and the tactile plates are located and the design standard for the actual audible push button itself.
- The intent is to have a standard for the physical layout and software for the push buttons which will be presented to WAAC for their input.
  - Once the design is installed out into the field, a few members of WAAC will be invited to visit an intersection, and to walk through the installation.
- The WAAC subcommittee regarding Accessible pedestrian signals wants to see urgent matters addressed promptly and for there to be a consistent and appropriate Standard implemented in Windsor so that the APS signals are much more consistent and properly working across the City. WAAC would like to be able to provide input early enough in the process so that the needs of our low vision and blind community can be met. Other potential wayfinding tools such as guidance pavers (as used in Ottawa's Lansdowne redevelopment) are a potential wayfinding tool that could be of assistance in key, identified areas.
  - Ongoing support to engineering in their work to update corporate standards to reflect any changes to accessibility standards.
  - Providing ongoing support--audits and expertise regarding other City Facilities and properties
  - WAAC had a detailed discussion regarding the need for prompt and ongoing accessibility consultation with the Committee on Site Plans and Corporate projects. Requested that appropriate administration attend WAAC meetings to provide information and seek input. WAAC is interested in having a member of the Building Department attend WAAC committee meetings in the coming terms to get input on site plans from the committee.
  - The cement pad was installed, and the commemorative bench with personalized plaque is soon to be installed in Alexander Park to honour Sandra Friesen former long time member of WAAC. An additional cement pad for an accessible picnic table is also in the process of being installed in Alexander Park by Parks. These additions will be enjoyed by the public as well as the many blind and visually impaired residents that live at Lion's Manor that is located across the street from the Park.
  - Provide ongoing input on the accessibility of zoning by-law amendments and site plans.
  - Parks Department reached out to WAAC for input on a new playgrounds being installed . The playground costs are being covered by the Parks budget and they are seeking advice on the accessibility of the designs. The main features that the AODA looks for regarding accessible playgrounds includes:

- incorporate accessibility features, such as sensory and active play components, for children and caregivers with various disabilities into the design of outdoor play spaces; and
- ensure that outdoor play spaces have a ground surface that is firm, stable and has impact attenuating properties for injury prevention and sufficient clearance to provide children and caregivers with various disabilities the ability to move through, in and around the outdoor play space.

The suggestions from the Committee resulted in a number of accessibility enhancements.

- Wadah Al-Yassiri, Manager, Parks Development attended a WAAC meeting and provided the following comments relating to the Stodgell Park accessible pathway and playground projects:
  - Will be adding a multiuse recreational trail beside the Stodgell Park playground and the parking lot with adherence to FADS and the AODA and hoping to exceed those standards relating to the longitudinal slope and cross slope.
  - The multiuse trail will cross into the right-of-way and will be installing tactile tiles.
  - In terms of the playground projects, he refers to a resident living near Alton Park who advocates for accessibility. A meeting was held with this resident and the Project Manager along with the playground supplier and comments were provided by the resident relating to the design and what he would like to see. It was decided to add an additional accessible swing at Alton Park due to the demographics as was advised by the resident.
  - He refers to Alexander Park and suggests the addition of an accessible pathway from the riverfront to the washroom to specifically help people in wheelchairs. Working on cost estimates for this project. In the future, may request funding or cost sharing from WAAC.
  - He suggests purchasing one accessible swing and an accessible “saucer” which can be used by people in wheelchairs and notes that they may reach out to WAAC for funding in the future.

Administration was encouraged to seek thorough and early consultation from WAAC and from the public early in projects to ensure they meet the needs of all.

## Information and Communication

- Administration continued building its expertise in document accessibility and remediation. Purchased additional software to develop internal processes for ongoing website review for pdf accessibility. Ongoing skills development and utilization:
  - Advanced to expert level Microsoft Word and Excel including but not limited to the development of customized extensions to the platform
  - Knowledge of languages including VBA, SQL, Java, and Python
  - Experienced on AbleDocs AxesPDF and Axes4Word, and the Equidox platforms
  - Advanced knowledge and ongoing work with Adobe Acrobat DC Pro including batching, troubleshooting, tagging, forms, and customization of the platform.
- Collaborated with consultants and vendors to solve platform-specific issues ranging from configuration of license managers to detecting, reporting, and resolving technical errors. Extraction and interpretation of Google Analytics data to determine the most frequently accessed documents requiring attention
- Continued ongoing processes to remediate basic to complex documents and replace existing documents on the public and private web spaces.
- Administration provided an overview regarding document accessibility remediation needs for the City of Windsor's website. A tremendous amount of work has already been done remediating documents to meet the requirements under the AODA. Document remediations are an ongoing need given requirements under the legislation. Part of accessibility is ensuring that the documents on the city's website are accessible, however, some documents are exceedingly long, complex, time consuming and/or difficult to make accessible. The City has negotiated some external remediations at a greatly reduced price to address such difficult documents. WAAC approved \$50,000 from the Non-Built Capital Fund 7086008 (Accessibility) for accessibility remediation of eighteen thousand (18,000) pages of complex/difficult to remediate documents for the City of Windsor website.
- Video Remote Interpreting equipment that provides on-demand interpreting sessions in 36 languages (video remote) including American Sign Language and 240 languages (audio). She adds this equipment is now available in the Customer Service area, 1st floor, City Hall and in several other areas in City Hall and in the 400 City Hall Square East building.

## **Transportation**

- Tyson Cragg, Executive Director, Transit Windsor provided an update to the committee regarding the “Transit Windsor 2021 Service Performance Update – City Wide” report which was approved by the Environment, Transportation and Public Safety Standing Committee and City Council. He notes that the scope on the report will expand over the years to include customer perception, and customer surveys on how we are doing as a service delivery agency. • This report looks at ridership, which has not been strong due to COVID, stay-at-homes orders, virtual schooling, people working from home, and capacity restrictions on the buses. • Service enhancement in 2021 included the introduction of the 518X express route from St. Clair College to Tecumseh Mall. The report also includes 311 complaint feedback systems and the nature of those.

The Committee noted that there was no section relating directly to concerns from persons with disabilities. P Best notes that he is blind, rides transit and states that the audio callout is very important to him. He refers to a number of occasions when he reported to the driver that the audio callout was not working to which the driver responded that they were unaware of this and it will be reported. His understanding is that the bus is taken out of service if the audio callout is malfunctioning. He asks that concerns provided by persons with disabilities be provided to WAAC so that the Committee can work with Transit Windsor to correct them. He suggests that a subcommittee of WAAC meet once or twice a year with Transit Windsor to discuss the various accessibility issues and concerns, i.e. bus stop signage which will be reported back to WAAC. T. Cragg responds that he along with his staff would be happy to meet with the WAAC subcommittee once or twice a year to review issues and concerns. T. Cragg responds that the accessibility concerns in the report would fall under the general complaint section, however going forward will separate the accessibility complaints.

Note: Our conventional transportation service provider is guided by Federal rather than Provincial legislation

## **Employment**

- Continued subscription by the Corporation of the City of Windsor to the Discover Ability Network for hiring people with disabilities as they represent an untapped talent pool that can help fuel innovative growth and a measured return on investment.
- A great deal of work went into creating a thorough RFP to seek an experienced consultant with lived experience to assist with an Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination consultation and action plan for the Corporation and community. RFP 89-22 “Anti-Racism and Anti-discrimination Engagement and Strategy Consultant” opened on May 24th and closed on or about July

20th. A diverse Evaluation team is tasked with carefully reviewing the proposals against the set criteria to recommend a skilled and experienced consultant for this important community and corporate project. WAAC was involved in assisting with recommended changes to the draft RFP will had a member on the evaluation committee for this RFP.

At the end of the day, following this consultation, the aim is to come out with an actionable plan with accountability. The engagement process during the Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination consultation will include Indigenous peoples, Black people, racialized people and other equity deserving communities including diverse faith communities, culturally diverse communities, persons with disabilities, women, 2SLGBTQ+ community and diverse staff. The aim is for the consultant to deploy a range of community based engagement tools and methods such as surveys, working with focus groups for engaging those diverse residents and staff to identify the salient issues, challenges and opportunities. Following that, will work with the consultant to provide reporting on the activities completed, data collected along with the findings. Will work with city administration and key members of those communities to develop recommendations and actionable initiatives. Lastly, the proponents will to prepare and present to the Diversity Committee, Standing Committee and City Council on the detailed findings of that strategy. The RFP follows the lead of many of the most progressive communities which will allow for an opportunity to have a thorough conversation done thoroughly and appropriately and also to look at some of the barriers in our Corporation that are could result in systemic racism, discrimination and oppression.

## **General requirements and Accessible Customer Service**

- The Committee had a discussion and planning session regarding accessibility planning priorities for the coming years.
- The Committee discussed their desire to acknowledge long term commitment to the committee and they agreed to the purchase of a Commemorative Bench and a Commemorative Tree to honour two deceased members who had a long term commitment and devoted great deal of time and energy to the Windsor Accessibility Advisory Committee. (Sandra Friesen, former member of WAAC and Wayne Menneguzzi, former chair and member of WAAC). Administration is working with the Senior Manager of Parks and the Senior Manager of Forestry to have both installed/planted in the coming year.

- Ongoing- IASR training as per requirements
- Continue with implementation of Phase one of the Diversity and Inclusion Initiative and Multi-year Accessibility Plan component.
- Commence process for creating Phase 2 of the Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (Community component)
- Annual Windsor Essex Accessibility Awards was cancelled in 2022 due to the global pandemic. WAAC was part of the steering committee that assists with planning, and implementation of the annual event. WAAC will continue with its ongoing support and participation in this event when it resumes in future years.
- One of the co-chairs of WAAC attended council to provide accessibility input and concerns regarding the Adie Knox redevelopment.
- Accessibility is not only a legislative function, it is also an inherently technical and immersive field incorporates traditional engineering such architecture and urban planning to specialized knowledge focused on the digital ecosystem. That knowledge is in constant use, applied to current projects, and subject to continual change as standards are updated, new technologies emerge, and skills are enhanced as new strategies, tactics, and techniques are adopted.