

MEMORANDUM

Subject: JAAC Letter to Councils re: NRT OnDemand App Accessibility

Date: December 2, 2021

To: Area CAOs

From: Matt Robinson, Director – GO Implementation Office

This memo is intended to provide additional information in response to a letter to your Councils from the Chair of the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee, Stephen Barker, dated in and around November 19, 2021 related to the accessibility compliance of the NRT OnDemand app.

Niagara Region takes the needs of individuals living with disabilities seriously, and is committed to ensuring that all of our content meets the standards laid out in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The service provider responsible for the delivery of NRT OnDemand, Via Mobility, is required by contract to adhere to all laws and regulations when delivering the Region's NRT OnDemand service, including the AODA.

During the development of NRT OnDemand and the supporting mobile app, Regional transit staff consulted with Niagara Region's Accessibility Advisory Committee – a Regional advisory committee composed of members of the public living with disabilities, their caregivers, community and professional stakeholders, and a Regional councillor.

While the JAAC was not among those initially consulted, subsequent discussion was had with the JAAC via a presentation. The NRT team remains open to continued discussion with these and any other local municipal advisory committees when requested.

The Chair of the JAAC did reach out to transit staff outlining his concerns, which were relayed to the NRT OnDemand service provider. Staff directed a full review of the NRT OnDemand app be conducted, with the help of Ontario accessibility verification specialists. That review uncovered a number of items that prevented the Region from attaining full WCAG 2.0AA compliance. The service provider has subsequently taken action to address those issues, and confirm the current version of the NRT OnDemand app now meets Ontario's AODA WCAG 2.0 AA requirements and is well on its way to exceed those requirements and to achieve WCAG 2.1 AA compliance.

From the inception of the NRT OnDemand app, the alternative option to phone in requests for those who did not have smartphones or credit cards has existed. Payments

and trip requests using the customer care phone line has seen significant uptake and remains a commitment for those who need it to make full use of the transit service.

We regret the difficulties these issues have caused for individuals in our community living with disabilities, and are committed to improving service for these individuals. NRT staff can commit that, along with the service provider's Community Engagement team, we welcome additional dialogue and review with the JAAC and the Region's AAC to hear their concerns directly, and aspire to be better than simply the WCAG 2.0 AA compliance, as well as to better understand how we can incorporate that feedback into our NRT OnDemand product and ensure that people of all abilities can use the app.

It is important to make a distinction between the current NRT OnDemand service, which is a Regional service currently in operation, and the proposed Niagara-wide consolidated transit proposal, which is still in development. The approval of the new Commission must still be approved by Niagara's local municipalities. Should the establishment of the new Commission proceed, there are two seats on the 20-person Transit Advisory Committee dedicated to representatives specifically from Niagara's accessibility advocates. It is here where the JAAC could be able to provide transit-specific insights to the new Commission on a go-forward basis, should they be selected by Regional Council to represent one of the two Accessibility sector seats.

Respectfully submitted and signed by,



Matt Robinson
Director | GO Implementation Office

C: Niagara Region Accessibility Advisory Committee