

Title: Proposed Amendments to Ontario Regulation 629, Vehicles for the Transportation of Physically Disabled Passengers.

Description (one line): The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is proposing to amend Ontario Regulation 629, Vehicles for the Transportation of Physically Disabled Passengers (O. Reg. 629) to modernize the technical requirements for highway vehicles (e.g. buses, transit buses, motor coaches, taxis, physically-disabled-passenger vehicles, and school buses). This initiative is part of the government's proposed accessibility standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005. The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) is the lead ministry on the AODA and is proposing that an Accessible Transportation Standard be part of an Integrated Accessibility Regulation (IAR). The IAR also deals with information and communication and employment requirements.

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Instrument Type: Regulation

Regulation Number: N/A

Bill or Act: Highway Traffic Act

Summary of Proposal:

MCSS is developing an Accessible Transportation Standard for inclusion in the IAR, under the AODA. The Accessible Transportation Standard will prevent and remove barriers so that people with disabilities are able to more easily access transportation services across the province by the year 2025.

The following areas comprise the key elements of the Accessible Transportation Standard:

1. Accessibility Plans
2. Route and Stop Announcements
3. Boarding/De-Boarding
4. Fares
5. Specialized Transportation Services
6. Technical Vehicle Specifications (i.e. vehicle equipment standards)

As MTO already has a fairly comprehensive set of vehicle equipment standards for highway vehicles transporting individuals with disabilities, the government is proposing that the IAR build on the existing standards. To accomplish that goal, as part of the broader IAR proposal, the IAR will reference O. Reg. 629 for

technical requirements applicable to highway vehicles (e.g. buses, transit buses, motor coaches, school buses, taxis and physically-disabled-passenger vehicles).

MTO is proposing to update some of the current vehicle standards as well as modernize some of the language in O. Reg. 629 as a result of the feed back received to date from the Transportation Standard Development Committee which met from 2006 to 2008, to develop the proposed Accessible Transportation Standard. Existing requirements contained within the regulation will continue to apply to all vehicles currently subject to O. Reg 629.

Where applicable, MTO is proposing to incorporate the following proposed technical requirements into O. Reg. 629. These examples are general in nature and may become more specific as the regulation is developed and in some cases, are already incorporated in O. Reg. 629.

Boarding/De-Boarding Lifting Devices, Ramps, Portable Bridge Plates

- On a go-forward basis, lifting devices, ramps, or portable bridge plates shall have:
 - A colour strip that runs the full width of the device or plate, and is high colour-contrasted with its background to assist with visual recognition;
 - A platform surface that is slip resistant; and
 - Safety wheel guards along all exposed edges.

Indicators

- On a go-forward basis, a visual amber warning lamp indicator shall be mounted on the exterior near the accessible entrance door(s).
- The visual indicator shall be coupled with an audible warning alarm.
- The visual indicator and the warning alarm must function when the vehicle is kneeling, when the ramp is deployed, or when the lift is in operation.
- A door opening and closing visual indicator and audible alarm system shall also be available.

Steps

- On a go-forward basis, the top outer edge of each step and all interior edges at raised floors shall be marked by a colour strip that is high colour-contrasted with its background to assist with visual recognition, that runs the full width of the leading edge of the step and is readily apparent from both directions of travel;
- Step surfaces shall be slip resistant and produce minimal glare; and
- Steps shall have uniform, closed riser heights and tread depths, subject to the structural limitations of the vehicle.

Grab Bars, Handholds, Handrails, Stanchions

- On a go-forward basis, transportation providers will be required to ensure that grab bars, handholds, handrails, and stanchions:
 - Are located in specific locations throughout the vehicle to support passengers with disabilities;

- Do not interfere with the manoeuvring space required for transportable mobility aids;
- Are high colour-contrasted with their background to assist with visual recognition; and
- Are sturdy, permit easy grasping, have a slip resistant surface.

Floor Surfaces

- On a go-forward basis, floor surfaces shall produce minimal glare and be slip resistant.
- Where provided, carpeted surfaces shall have a low, firm, and level pile or loop and be securely fastened.

Lighting and Colour Contrasting

- On a go-forward basis vehicles shall incorporate colour contrasting and lighting features to promote independent boarding, on-board circulation, and de-boarding for passengers with visual disabilities.
- Any step well or doorway immediately adjacent to the driver shall have, when the door is open, an illuminance of at least 20 lux when measured on the step tread or lift platform.
- Other step wells and doorways, including doorways in which lifts or ramps are installed, shall have, at all times, an illuminance of at least 20 lux when measured on the step tread, or lift or ramp, when deployed.
- The vehicle doorways, including doorways in which lifts or ramps are installed, shall have outside light(s) which, when the door is open, provide an illuminance of at least 10 lux when measured on the street surface for a distance of 0.9 m perpendicular to the bottom step tread or lift outer edge. Such light(s) shall be shielded to protect the eyes of entering and exiting passengers.
- Accessibility equipment and features shall be high colour-contrasted with its background to assist with visual recognition.

It should be noted that Regulation 629 only speaks to the technical requirements related to highway vehicles. All requirements for vehicles beyond the scope of the Highway Traffic Act, such as trains, streetcars, subways, intercity rail, and ferries will be contained within the Accessible Transportation Standard. All service-related requirements, including but not limited to route and destination announcements, signage, fare parity, hours of service, service disruption, and storage of assistive devices for all vehicles including highway vehicles will also be contained within the Accessible Transportation Standard in the IAR. Please refer to the IAR Regulatory Registry posting for further details.

MTO staff encourage stakeholder feedback through the Regulatory Registry on this important proposal to modernize O. Reg. 629. Once the initial round of feedback has been received and analyzed, further opportunity for feedback will be provided in winter 2010-2011.

Comments Due Date: October 16, 2010

