

STATUS REPORT

AND

ACTION PLAN

FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS DU QUÉBEC

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Note from the Minister of Transport	4
2. Note from the Deputy Minister on the Action Plan	4
3. Overview of the ministère des Transports du Québec	5
Mission	5
Staff	6
Partners	6
Clients	6
Declaration of Services to the Public	7
Legislation, policies and programs.....	7
4. Accessibility of facilities and infrastructures	8
4.1 Access to buildings, evacuation procedures and workplace layout	8
4.2 Infrastructure design, development and operation	9
Road infrastructures	9
La Route verte – Bike paths	10
Rest areas.....	11
5. Reception services, communications and documentation	11
5.1 Information services	11
5.2 Website.....	12
5.3 Communications.....	13
5.4 Documentation	13
6. Availability and adaptation of transport services	14
6.1 Land transport	14
Paratransit services	15
Taxi services.....	16
Urban buses	17
Subway	18
Commuter trains.....	20
Motor coaches	20
Other MTQ commitments	21
6.2 Rail, maritime and air transport.....	21
6.3 Transportation safety.....	22
7. Recruitment and employment support	23
8. Research and development	23
9. Planning	24
10. Conclusion	24

Appendix 1: Members of the working group

Appendix 2: List of acronyms and abbreviations

Appendix 3: Action Plan

1. Note from the Minister of Transport

I am pleased to present the Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities of the ministère des Transports.

This plan stems from the Ministère's willingness to foster the well-being and integration of persons with disabilities within their environment. It also gives new momentum to efforts that the Ministère has been making for over 30 years to fully integrate these persons within the workplace.

This long-standing commitment is reflected in the funding that has been allocated over the years to meet the transportation needs of persons with disabilities. On several occasions, this commitment also led to legislative and organizational changes that were favourable to the development of these persons.

As for myself, I fully support the implementation of this action plan, which was developed pursuant to the *Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of their Rights with a View to Achieving Social, School and Workplace Integration*. I invite all those who are involved to cooperate in the implementation of this plan, so that the initiatives of the Ministère and its partners can be better harmonized.

In short, it is up to us to ensure that this action plan results in concrete actions that will benefit persons with disabilities.

Michel Després
Minister of Transport and
Minister responsible for the Capitale-Nationale region

2. Note from the Deputy Minister on the Action Plan

In December 2004, the government made amendments to the *Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of their Rights with a View to Achieving Social, School and Workplace Integration*. Since then, every ministry and public agency with at least 50 employees must publicly release an annual action plan to reduce barriers to the integration of these persons within their respective fields of activity.

Within the ministère des Transports, this important task was assigned to a multidisciplinary working group, which met for the first time in February 2006. I want to congratulate the members of this group who took a sensitive and responsive approach to address the integration of persons with disabilities within the Ministère.

Their action plan gives an overview of the Ministère and explores targeted fields of activity, including: accessibility of facilities and infrastructures; reception services, communications and documentation; availability and adaptation of transport services; recruitment and employment support; research and development; planning.

The document identifies initiatives that have already been taken by the Ministère. It also lists the main barriers to the integration of persons with disabilities, and identifies the critical links that need to be established between the different actors of the transportation system to fill those gaps. A summary table highlights the initiatives that the Ministère intends to take during the reference period (from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007).

I invite you to read this action plan and to facilitate, to the extent possible, the measures proposed in this plan for the integration of persons with disabilities within the workplace.

Denys Jean
Deputy Minister of Transport

3. Overview of the ministère des Transports du Québec

Mission

The mission of the ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ) is to ensure the mobility of people and goods throughout Québec on safe and efficient transportation systems that contribute to the sustainable development of Québec.

The MTQ is also a leader in the planning and integration of transportation systems within Québec. It relies on the expertise of its employees and on the cooperation of its partners to carry out its mission, which includes developing policies on

transportation services, systems and networks for the government. Communicating relevant information to the public is another priority of the MTQ.

Staff

The MTQ has the largest team of employees within the transportation sector in Québec. This team is made up of 7,243 employees, of which about a third are casual employees. Close to 70% of employees are assigned to the 14 territorial divisions and 58 service centres to ensure the MTQ's presence throughout Québec. The MTQ's annual expenditure budget totals approximately \$2 billion.

Partners

The MTQ relies on the support, cooperation and participation of many public and private sector partners to provide the population and businesses with appropriate and functional transportation systems. To this effect, the MTQ has close ties with the Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT), Commission des transports du Québec (CTQ), Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) and Société des traversiers du Québec (STQ), other ministries and agencies of the Government of Québec, public transit authorities (*sociétés de transport en commun*, STC), intermunicipal transit boards (*conseils intermunicipaux de transport*, CIT), and municipal and intermunicipal transit organizations (*organismes municipaux et intermunicipaux de transport*, OMIT). The MTQ also maintains relationships with the governments of other states and provinces, universities and research centres, transportation companies, consulting engineering, construction and operations firms, and multiple associations, including associations representing carriers, entrepreneurs, cyclists and persons with disabilities.

Clients

The MTQ's clients include any person or business that may use the road, maritime, air and rail transportation systems that are under the responsibility of the Government of Québec.

Declaration of Services to the Public

According to this Declaration, providing quality services to the public is an everyday priority for the MTQ's employees. This commitment is reflected in these employees' professionalism and interest in public and community concerns; this means that public input is encouraged, and that the level of public satisfaction with services is periodically assessed. The financial support programs that have been developed by the MTQ to ensure the mobility of people and goods are also specified in this Declaration.

In addition to promoting actions aimed at improving road user safety, the MTQ has committed to consistently providing the most up-to-date information possible on major roads and highways under its jurisdiction, including information on road conditions and traffic obstructions. To this effect, the MTQ uses several means, such as its Website, a broad network of information providers, and a telephone service available throughout Québec. The MTQ has also committed to ensuring a diligent follow-up on complaints.

Legislation, policies and programs

Several pieces of legislation assign various obligations to the MTQ. In relation to persons with disabilities, specifically, the MTQ has obligations under the *Act Respecting Public Transit Authorities* (R.S.Q., ch. S-30.01), the *Act Respecting Intermunicipal Boards of Transport in the Area of Montréal* (R.S.Q., ch. C-60.01), the *Highway Safety Code* (R.S.Q., ch. C-24-.2), the *Act Respecting Transportation Services by Taxi* (R.S.Q., ch. S-6.01), and the *Regulation Respecting Road Vehicles Adapted for the Transportation of Handicapped Persons* (O.C. 1058-93). The MTQ also develops different policies and directions to fulfil its mission and guide the actions of its partners, such as the *Politique québécoise du transport collectif* (policy on public transit), the Paratransit Eligibility Policy and the Transportation Safety Policy. To ensure the mobility of persons with disabilities, the MTQ has also implemented assistance programs in a number of areas, such as: public transit and

paratransit, adaptation of taxis, contribution to the SAAQ's program for the adaptation of privately owned vehicles, maintenance of road network and rest areas, development of bike paths, air and maritime service to isolated areas.

4. Accessibility of facilities and infrastructures

4.1 Access to buildings, evacuation procedures and workplace layout

All buildings where the MTQ has offices are in compliance with the applicable regulations, including the *Regulation Respecting Safety in Public Buildings* or the *National Building Code*, as the case may be. These regulations contain a universal access obligation to promote the autonomy of persons using wheelchairs. As a result, buildings are equipped with wheelchair access ramps, at their entrances, and with adapted washrooms. Some elevators have lowered control panels and raised numbers for persons with visual disabilities. In addition, special layouts can be arranged in some cases to meet specific needs. For example, meeting rooms were set up on the ground floor in some buildings where there are no elevators, which is often the case in two-storey buildings. Nevertheless, certain "irritants" continue to limit the movements of persons with disabilities within several spaces occupied by the MTQ.

All buildings of the MTQ that are subject to the *National Fire Code* have an emergency plan for the evacuation of those buildings in the event of a fire or other alert. This plan outlines the evacuation procedure, and contains a section dealing specifically with mobility-impaired persons, with appropriate instructions. On each floor, these persons are each assigned an attendant, and the building's Emergency Measures Coordinator is notified accordingly. Each year, an evacuation exercise must be carried out to ensure the safety of occupants in the event of an emergency.

For each individual request made within the buildings occupied by the MTQ, an adapted workstation with adequate office furniture can be installed to meet a person's specific needs. Workstations are therefore adapted to the disabilities of the employees who request it. To date, the MTQ was able to respond to all requests that

were submitted in this regard. The procurement process of the MTQ for office furniture comes under each administrative unit or the Direction des contrats et ressources matérielles. Pursuant to section 61.3 of the *Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of their Rights with a View to Achieving Social, School and Workplace Integration*, this procurement process must consider the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities, and the MTQ intends to specify the procedure to this effect in its administrative manual. Employees responsible for the procurement and management of office furniture will therefore have a greater awareness of this aspect of universal accessibility.

4.2 Infrastructure design, development and operation

All construction projects that are carried out by the MTQ must comply with the directions set out in the MTQ's standards. In addition, the implementation of these projects is generally based on the guidelines of the MTQ's *Guide de préparation des projets routiers*.

Road infrastructures

The planning, development and implementation of the MTQ's road projects are generally carried out according to the guidelines set out in the above-mentioned guide. This document does not specifically invite project leaders to consider the needs of persons with disabilities. Therefore, some projects might fail to meet these persons' needs.

As for road design and construction, some of the MTQ's standards reflect the needs of persons with disabilities, especially with regard to sidewalks, parking lots and signage. In addition, the *Guide sur les carrefours giratoires* informs designers of the possibility of developing safe crossings that are adapted to the needs of persons with visual disabilities and persons using wheelchairs. However, these standards and their application could be further clarified.

Tunnels, bridges, overpasses, walkways and pedestrian crossings form an integral part of road infrastructures. A sidewalk is generally required on a bridge only when a

sidewalk has been built, or is planned, on the road leading to that bridge. The same rule applies to other structures. This ensures the continuity of equipment placed between the approaches and the structures, in order to reduce obstacles for persons with disabilities. When a sidewalk has a guardrail, this rail is designed so that a child could not fall through it. This type of rail must prevent falls, and must not have any protruding elements that would hinder the passage of a person using a wheelchair or a person with a visual disability. However, the construction of sidewalks is sometimes required on some structures even when the approaches to this structure do not have sidewalks. In these cases, the gap between these sidewalks and the shoulder of the road might make it very difficult for persons with disabilities to get around.

Efforts made by the MTQ to reduce obstacles for persons with disabilities are also reflected in the standardization of road signage adapted to their needs. These efforts can be grouped into three categories: standardization of signs used to indicate a crossing for persons with disabilities, creation of a standard on audible pedestrian signals used at intersections, and standardization of parking lot layouts, including parking lot signage. The standardization of signs used to identify parking spaces for persons with disabilities will apply, from now on, to private roads and shopping centre parking lots throughout Québec.

La Route verte – Bike paths

The MTQ adapted its standards on bike path design for the first time in 1996. The concern of ensuring access for persons with disabilities is not clearly reflected within the MTQ's standards. However, due to the potential presence of wheelchair users on bike paths, the standards require designers to ensure that access points are wide enough and levelled off, for example. This adaptation of the standards is more evident in the third edition of *the Technical Handbook of Bikeway Design* from Vélo Québec (2003). The MTQ and Kéroul, an organization that represents persons with disabilities, actively participated in the development of this guide.

This document respond to the needs of persons with disabilities by recommending reduced slopes, a minimum width for openings in access gates, and the removal of obstacles at road intersections and railway crossings. Nevertheless, some stretches

remain inaccessible to persons with disabilities, due to the land topography or the presence of certain obstacles, such as stairs with bike ramps or railway ties. Access to rest areas for cyclists along the bike paths (toilets, lookouts) can also be difficult.

Rest areas

The MTQ operates 107 rest areas, which are all technically accessible to persons with disabilities. However, most of the buildings located in these areas were built in the 70's or 80's. Therefore, some of them do not comply with the current version of the *Québec Building Code*, which contains several new measures to reduce barriers to the integration of persons with disabilities. Among the new generation of rest areas, the Saint-Nicholas, Saint-Michel-de-Bellechasse and Saint-Jérôme rest areas, as well as the Saint-Jérôme tourist information office, comply with this Code.

Under the program for the modernization of rest areas, various sites will be upgraded and renovated. New indoor and outdoor facilities will also be built according to the provisions of the *Québec Building Code* on universal access.

5. Reception services, communications and documentation

5.1 Information services

The MTQ provide the population with an essential information service to assist in the planning of safe trips on Québec's road network. The Inforoutière service was launched for this purpose. Through this service, which can be accessed by phone or online, the public can obtain information on road conditions and construction projects, report an incident, file a complaint, or obtain information on any other topic related to the MTQ's mandate, such as the legislation, regulations, policies or programs that the MTQ administers.

The Inforoutière phone service is available in touch-tone mode or vocal mode. Callers can also reach an information agent during normal business hours, between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Information agents receive training on specific amendments

made to the legislation and regulations, as well as training on client services. However, employees who respond to enquiries from external clients, or receive and forward telephone calls within the MTQ, have not received specific directions regarding services to persons with disabilities, as part of their training.

5.2 Website

To make its Website more accessible to persons with disabilities, the MTQ made several changes to its site, according to the basic standards of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), including the use of pre-defined fonts, removal of tables within documents, and addition of text equivalents for images, photos and graphs. Other measures will be taken in the short, medium and long term to make the Website more accessible, including: limited use of animations, removal of blinking images for persons with epilepsy, and research to make multimedia elements and forms consistent with applicable standards. Further, information on road conditions that is posted on the Website was made more accessible for persons with colour blindness, by representing the colours with different geometrical shapes. However, making the entire Website consistent with WAI standards would require the removal of products that are of great interest to the general population. For example, current technologies do not make it possible to adjust the *Atlas des transports* section to these standards.

To help the public and businesses within Québec to communicate and exchange information safely with the MTQ through its Website, the MTQ is currently reviewing its Web-based services. This initiative forms part of the directions set out for online government services, and will allow the MTQ's clients to access the information they need more quickly and more easily. This review will result in a reconfiguration of the Website. In addition to general sections (home page, information on the MTQ, Inforoutière, etc.), the Website will regroup information into three categories: General Public, Businesses and Partners. However, the Website does not currently have a specific section that regroups useful information for persons with disabilities.

5.3 Communications

The MTQ undertakes a wide range of activities as part of its mission. It designs and distributes various promotional materials using different mediums. Over the years, the MTQ has conducted many information campaigns for the general public. The MTQ also supports various national conferences and congresses. When participating in such events, the MTQ pays special attention to the needs of the targeted audience, and when required, adjusts its communication tools and the logistics of the event. Among other events, the MTQ has participated in the Access Awareness Week, has supported the Colloque annuel sur le transport des personnes à mobilité réduite, and will participate in the 11th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons (TRANSED) in 2007.

With regard to internal communications, the MTQ uses tools such as its internal information bulletin (*L'Équipe*) or its intranet to keep its staff informed. Some aspects of the social integration of persons with disabilities and paratransit services were the subject of several articles published in *L'Équipe*. Nevertheless, building greater awareness among the MTQ's staff regarding the abilities and limitations of persons with disabilities could help the MTQ to better meet the needs of these persons.

The implementation of this action plan will require the use of the following communication tools to inform the general public and staff: publication of articles in *L'Équipe*, and creation of new sections focusing on services to persons with disabilities within the MTQ's Website and intranet site.

5.4 Documentation

The MTQ has one of the largest publication collections on transportation within Québec. In addition to holding publications produced by the MTQ, the documentation centres hold documents published by various worldwide organizations specializing in transportation. These centres have 55,000 volumes and 800 periodicals, as well as a video collection. The main documentation centre also has a photo library with approximately 46,000 film slides and 40,000 photographs. The MTQ's three documentation centres are partially accessible to persons with disabilities. The

spaces reserved for the consultation of resources—computers, Internet access, CD-Roms and VCRs—are accessible to persons with motor disabilities. However, the same cannot be said for persons with visual disabilities, for whom access to documentation is more difficult.

The MTQ regularly issues press releases to announce subsidies for paratransit services. It also publishes different documents on its subsidy programs. The *Guide à l'intention des municipalités du Québec*, the *Paratransit Eligibility Policy*, and *Le Transport par taxi de personnes handicapées* are some of the publications that the MTQ publishes to inform its partners. More recently, the MTQ designed and issued the *Code de pratique en transport adapté* for the Eastern Montérégie region.

It would be impossible to adapt all printed and audio-visual materials produced by the MTQ to the needs of persons with disabilities. However, some attention has been devoted to this issue. The documentation centre's catalogue, which is available online, contains several publications that are available in PDF format. Persons with visual disabilities that have a special reading device on their computer can therefore consult these documents. The brochure titled *Virage à droite au feu rouge* was translated in Braille. Efforts were also made to make it easier for persons with mild presbyopia to read documents such as the *Cahier des distances routières* or road maps. Fonts and background colours were also changed to facilitate reading in reduced lighting. The adaptation of other MTQ productions, over time, could allow us to better meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

6. Availability and adaptation of transport services

6.1 Land transport

The MTQ administers several financial assistance programs to help public transit operating authorities (*autorités organisatrices de transport*, AOT) invest in paratransit services, accessible taxis and public transit. The MTQ also provides substantial financial assistance for the adaptation of privately owned vehicles, through the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec.

With the introduction of its *Politique québécoise du transport collectif*, in June 2006, the MTQ made the commitment to ensure an increased use of public transit throughout Québec's urban and rural communities. The objective of this policy is to increase the mobility of the entire population.

Paratransit services

The government's assistance program for paratransit was introduced in 1979. In 2005, over 850 municipalities were offering paratransit services within their territories. Over 65,000 persons were deemed eligible for one of the 93 active services, and close to 5.5 million passengers were transported in 2006. Considerable funding was also allocated to help paratransit organizations (*organismes de transport adapté*, OTA) to improve their information services. The MTQ's financial assistance for these transport services will total more than \$60 million in 2006-2007.

However, current services have some shortfalls, in terms of the territory covered and weekly schedules, reservation timeframes for these services, budgetary approval mechanisms, and awareness building and training for partners. These shortfalls will be addressed. Since last year, the new provisions of the *Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of their Rights* require that all municipalities within Québec implement services for these persons. The MTQ also made provisions in its 2005-2007 assistance program to ensure that these services are offered on a minimum basis of 35 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. This measure will be applied throughout Québec in 2006.

In addition, the MTQ is currently focusing on the following measures: greater awareness building among all paratransit authorities to reduce the reservation timeframe to a period of 8 to 24 hours, with the possibility of reducing this timeframe in particular cases; improvement of approval mechanisms for different initiatives under the *Règlement sur la délégation de signature*; development of tools to educate partners, and allow them to access the required training to better perform their tasks. The *Regulation Respecting Road Vehicles Adapted for the Transportation of*

Handicapped Persons is currently under review. Provisions on the design and use of accessible taxis should also be added to this regulation.

One component of the government's assistance program deals with teaching persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual or visual disabilities, how to use public transit. For the period 2005-2007, an annual budget of \$200,000 was allocated to this component for the entire province of Québec.

Additional funding allocated under the paratransit program and the different above-mentioned measures will allow the consolidation of paratransit services within Québec over the next two years, in terms of quality and level of service.

Taxi services

Following the reform of the *Act Respecting Transportation Services by Taxi*, a subsidy program for the adaptation of taxis was implemented in 2001 for owners of such vehicles. Approximately 280 accessible taxis are currently in operation within Québec. It should be noted that the taxi industry ensures the transportation of over 40% of paratransit clients, including persons with intellectual or physical disabilities. It is therefore critical that training be given to taxi drivers to help them adapt their behaviour to the needs of different clients. Significant efforts were made in this regard with the cooperation of the taxi industry, professional training centres and associations for persons with disabilities. Eventually, all drivers will be required to take this training.

Further, in some regions, there are not enough vehicles to transport persons using a wheelchair. In major urban centres, accessible taxis are in greater number, but these vehicles are not as easily accessible than services available to the general population, which are generally available 24/7 with 10-minute notice. There are cases where some drivers charge excessive rates to clients with disabilities, under the pretext that they require more assistance and support. The *Act Respecting Transportation Services by Taxi* prohibits this practice, but this prohibition is difficult to enforce because clients do not file complaints for fear of being subsequently left without services.

As mentioned in the *Politique québécoise du transport collectif*, the assistance program for the adaptation of taxis will be extended. The objective is to have 325 vehicles adapted by the end of 2007. Regional quotas are currently being considered for this program, which is under review. The MTQ invites the taxi industry to participate further in the development of this market, which has a very interesting potential. The MTQ does not wish to use other types of methods to ensure that services are adequately provided.

Urban buses

As part of the MTQ's review of the *Act Respecting Public Transit Authorities*, two users must now sit on the board of directors of each public transit authority, one representing public transit users, and the other representing paratransit users. The same rule also applies to intermunicipal transit boards (*conseils intermunicipaux de transport*, CIT) and regional transit boards (*conseils régionaux de transport*, CRT). In addition, under the government assistance program for public transit, which is available to public transit authorities (*sociétés de transport en commun*, STC), the Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT) and the City of Montréal, the MTQ funded 50% of vehicle purchases made by STCs. Sixty-eight percent of these organizations' vehicle fleet is currently composed of low-floor buses (2,122 buses out of 3,129). The MTQ also educated these organizations on the importance of allowing persons with disabilities to use the platform lifts that are included with these vehicles and subsidized by the government. As for CITs that do not own buses, the government assistance program available to them does not cover the purchase of vehicles. However, an increasing number of municipal and intermunicipal transit organizations (*organismes municipaux et intermunicipaux de transport*, OMIT) now require, or are considering requiring, that their carriers provide their services using low-floor buses.

The extent to which persons with disabilities can access regular transportation networks varies greatly from one region to the next. For example, persons who use a wheelchair can use the platform lifts of low-floor buses only within the territory of the Société de transport de Montréal (STM).

With the 2005 implementation of the capital assistance program for public transit of the Société de financement des infrastructures locales du Québec (SOFIL), and the improvements made to the assistance program for public transit under the *Politique québécoise du transport collectif*, AOTs can now receive financial assistance covering up to 84.5% of the purchase price of their buses and other subsidized assets. This reinforcement of government assistance for equipment and infrastructures should increase the number of low-floor buses used by AOTs, and give them an incentive to use the platform lifts that are provided for persons with disabilities. Since this assistance also covers other types of changes to make regular networks more accessible to persons with reduced mobility, STCs and the AMT will be able to benefit from government subsidies to provide easier access to bus terminals and parking lots.

In addition, under the *Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of their Rights with a View to Achieving Social, School and Workplace Integration*, AOTs are required to make further adaptations to their networks to make them more accessible to the entire population, including seniors and persons with disabilities. By ensuring the use of accessible vehicles, more people will be able to use these networks. The entire population will need to be educated on the presence of seniors and persons with disabilities on urban buses, and STCs will have to better train their staff to help these clients. Municipal action plans and development plans for regular transport services will need to be harmonized, which will require extensive coordination between municipalities and STCs. The Minister of Transport will have to approve the development plans filed by AOTs and the funding of proposed measures through its assistance programs.

Subway

The program component that focuses on persons with disabilities, under the government's assistance program for public transit, covered 75% of expenses associated with improvements geared towards making subway stations and cars more accessible. Under this funding, certain adaptations were made to this transport mode to allow more people to use it. For instance, support ramps were installed for seniors, and warning tiles were installed for persons with visual disabilities.

However, the subway remains inaccessible to persons who use wheelchairs. The absence of elevators and the presence of other equipment, such as doors and payment machines, constitute major obstacles. Except for a few MR-73 cars that were recently renovated, there are no reserved spaces on subway cars that would allow disabled persons to travel safely. The subway is virtually inaccessible to mobile persons with severe motor disabilities, due to the long corridors, stairways, and frequent escalator malfunctions. Accessing the subway is also difficult for persons with visual, auditory or cognitive disabilities, due to the lighting, signage and communication means used in the subway.

Presided by the MTQ, the Comité sur l'accessibilité du métro de Montréal regroups representatives of persons and organizations affected by this issue, including the Alliance des regroupements des usagers du transport adapté du Québec, AMT, Kéroul, OPHQ, Regroupement des usagers du transport adapté de Montréal, STM and Table de concertation des aînés de l'île de Montréal. This committee has identified five stations of the existing network as priorities: Henri-Bourassa, Berri-UQAM, Bonaventure, Lionel-Groulx and Côte-Vertu. In June 2006, the STM submitted to the members of this committee a status report on the feasibility study carried out to make three to five stations universally accessible.

The main obstacles that need to be tackled are financial and technical in nature. An amount of \$30 million has already been allocated under the Réno-Systèmes 2 program for the retrofitting of elevators and other related work. On a technical level, these construction projects are much harder to carry out than when elevators are installed during the construction of a station. In cases of retrofitting, the entire facilities of the station need to be renovated. We also need to ensure convergence with other networks, such as those of the Société de transport de Laval, the Réseau de transport de Longueuil and the CITs. In addition, we need to establish links with three new stations within the City of Laval that were fully funded by the government and will be universally accessible as of June 2007.

Finally, the accessibility of the subway must be considered in the context of the harmonization of this mode of transport with the terrestrial network, which will be

served by an increased number of low-floor buses. Under *the Politique québécoise du transport collectif*, the government clearly expressed its intention to pursue the adaptation of this mode of transport so that the entire population may use it.

Commuter trains

With regard to commuter trains, spaces for persons with wheelchairs have been set up on the rolling stock of the Montréal/Deux-Montagnes line, and 2 of its 14 stations are accessible: the Gare Centrale and Roxboro stations. The rolling stock of the future Montréal-Repentigny line will be universally accessible; however, the issue of the adaptation of train stations and platforms is still under review. The AMT is responsible for this activity sector and benefits from government subsidies for these investments.

Motor coaches

Motor coach operators have made significant adaptations since 1995, including: platform lifts and reserved spaces on vehicles, accessible stops and terminals, staff training, and issuance of complementary tickets to personal attendants. Over 20 accessible motor coaches currently serve virtually all lines within Québec. This number is insufficient to adequately meet the demand, and equipment currently used will need to be gradually replaced. In addition, there is generally no consultation and coordination between the different local transportation services and motor coach operators.

At the request of the Council of Ministers, the MTQ will propose an action plan on accessible inter-city transportation. In cooperation with the motor coach industry, the OPHQ and associations for persons with disabilities, the MTQ is currently developing measures to maintain improvements made within the network, improve motor coach services available to the entire population, including persons with disabilities, and encourage partners in this field of activity to consult with each other. The *Politique québécoise du transport collectif* also includes assistance for this industry.

Other MTQ commitments

The Minister of Transport mandated the Société de l'assurance automobile to offer a vehicle adaptation program to all disabled persons who wish to drive or ride in their own vehicle. The MTQ ensures this program's funding and establishes its standards. Since January 2004, \$11 million were allocated for the adaptation or repair of such vehicles. The SAAQ was also given the mandate to issue parking stickers for these vehicles; this costs \$1.3 million each year.

Finally, the MTQ maintains relationships with several associations that represent persons with disabilities, including the Alliance des regroupements des usagers du transport adapté du Québec (ARUTAQ), Alliance québécoise des regroupements régionaux pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées (AQRIPH), Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN) and Kéroul. These organizations carry out effective awareness campaigns and cooperate closely with different partners in the transportation sector.

6.2 Rail, maritime and air transport

The interventions of the MTQ with regard to rail, maritime and air transport modes are generally limited. Many services and facilities are under the exclusive jurisdiction of Transport Canada, including those of Via Rail, inter-provincial ferries such as the Magdalen Islands and Sainte-Barbe/Blanc-Sablon ferries, and all air carriers. Further, the legislation that governs these transport modes generally comes under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

With regard to rail transport, the MTQ is mainly responsible for supervising and funding the urban and peri-urban transport of passengers by subway or commuter train, as mentioned earlier. The MTQ also provides technical and financial support to improve the safety of railway crossings, especially crossings located on roads falling under its authority. Railway crossings can be difficult to manoeuvre for persons who use a wheelchair because of ruts along the track. Wheelchairs and other similar devices can remain stuck in the ruts if they are too wide. The MTQ's standard on railway crossings will therefore be reviewed to include a provision dealing with wheelchairs.

Another problem for many persons with disabilities is the inaccessibility of the rolling stock used by the tourist train industry. The MTQ regularly attempts to raise awareness among the Association des propriétaires de trains touristiques on this issue.

Maritime transport relies on port infrastructures, which are generally public property, and a fleet of vessels that belong to private companies. Ferry services are operated by private companies or the Société des traversiers du Québec (STQ). This organization, which is also funded by the MTQ, gave an overview of the adaptations made to its services and facilities in the 2006-2007 action plan that it filed with the OPHQ. Maritime and air transport services are also available from the MTQ where the STQ cannot provide ferry services. The MTQ is the owner of 27 airports and 8 heliports, which are managed by the relevant territorial divisions.

6.3 Transportation safety

The objective of the Transportation Safety Policy is to reduce the number and severity of road accidents, while preserving the mobility of people. The 2001-2005 policy defined several issues and potential initiatives to improve road safety. The issues addressed by this policy include the development of bike paths, new standards for road signage, numerical-countdown pedestrian signals, restraint systems, school-based education campaigns on road safety and safety in school transportation, and the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, rollerbladers and senior drivers.

The issues identified and the initiatives taken by the MTQ and its partners also have an impact on persons with disabilities in several respects. The MTQ therefore intends to respond to the concerns expressed by these persons in the third edition of its Transportation Safety Policy, which is currently being developed. This new version of the policy will be based on an approach that is responsive to the needs of these persons and will focus on reducing obstacles to their mobility while preventing accidents.

7. Recruitment and employment support

In 1984, the Government of Québec implemented its plan to ensure the hiring of persons with disabilities and facilitate their integration within the public service. The measures proposed in this plan aim to remove barriers to the recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities, and to increase their representation within the ministries and public agencies. The objective established in this plan is to achieve a 2% representation rate among all permanent staff.

The MTQ undertook several initiatives to provide equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Each year, internship projects under the Programme de développement de l'employabilité à l'intention des personnes handicapées (PDEIPH) are submitted to the Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor. In 2005, 12 projects were submitted, and 5 of them received the required funding for their implementation within different units of the MTQ in 2006. Conditional to the success of their internships, candidates become eligible to a competition that is reserved for them, after 12 months. Their names are then added to an eligibility list that will allow them to occupy a similar position anywhere within the public service.

To date, 36 permanent employees indicated on their hiring forms that they have a severe and prolonged disability. This represents a 0.8% representation rate of persons with disabilities within the MTQ. The rate is about the same in the rest of the public service. In addition, the government requires that ministries and public agencies recruit 25% of their staff among various groups subject to employment discrimination, including persons with disabilities. In 2005-2006, eight persons with disabilities were recruited by the MTQ, including one permanent employee, three casual employees and four interns under the PDEIPH.

8. Research and development

Over the past few years, the MTQ carried out research on the mobility of persons with disabilities and various transport means that could meet their needs. This research focused, among other things, on the development of minimum safety

standards for adapted minivans, the assessment of low-floor buses, forecasts on reduced-mobility clients for transportation services, the impact of visual or attention disorders on driver performance, and the satisfaction of clients with paratransit services. The results of most research projects are posted on the MTQ's Website. Moreover, the MTQ intends to add thematic information on paratransit initiatives undertaken within Québec on its Website.

9. Planning

Strategic directions

The MTQ's strategic plan does not contain any measure aimed specifically at meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. The Declaration of Services to the Public does not contain any similar measure either. However, the annual report gives an update on initiatives that are underway regarding public transit and other transport modes, and identifies changes made to indicators used for human resources recruitment within the MTQ. These initiatives fall under the responsibility of the affected units.

10. Conclusion

The production of this first action plan gave all branches of the MTQ the opportunity to exchange information on the obstacles that persons with disabilities face in accessing transport services. This exercise allowed us to take stock of the efforts made so far by the MTQ and its partners to help these persons travel around freely and be more fully integrated. It also allowed us to identify several shortfalls that we should work together to address, so that persons with disabilities may benefit from the same services than the general public. To this effect, the actions proposed in this plan should allow persons with disabilities to feel included in our society and develop to their full potential. Just like Québec's new policy on public transit, this action plan provides support for the continuous efforts made by the MTQ regarding this issue.

Appendix 1

Members of the working group

Monsieur Steve Arsenault, Direction du soutien à l'exploitation des infrastructures,
Direction générale des infrastructures et des technologies (DGIT)

Madame Joceline Béland, Direction de l'Ouest-de-la-Montérégie,
Direction générale de Montréal et de l'Ouest (DGMO)

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Direction générale de Québec et de l'Est (DGQE)

Monsieur Pierre Cloutier, Bureau des relations extérieures,
Direction générale des politiques et de la sécurité en transport (DGPST)

Monsieur Christian Dufour,
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Madame Andrée Préfontaine, Direction des ressources humaines,
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Madame Josée Séguin,
Direction des communications

Monsieur Alain Simard,
Bureau du sous-ministre

Appendix 2

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AMT:	Agence métropolitaine de transport
AOT:	Autorités organisatrices de transport (public transit operating authorities)
AQRIPH:	Alliance québécoise des regroupements régionaux pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées
ARUTAQ:	Alliance des regroupements des usagers du transport adapté du Québec
CIT:	Conseils intermunicipaux de transport (intermunicipal transit boards)
CRT:	Conseil régional de transport (regional transit board)
COPHAN:	Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec
CTQ:	Commission des transports du Québec
MTQ:	Ministère des Transports du Québec
OMIT:	Organismes municipaux et intermunicipaux de transport (municipal and intermunicipal transit organizations)
OPHQ:	Office des personnes handicapées du Québec
OTA:	Organisme de transport adapté (paratransit organization)
PDEIPH:	Programme de développement de l'employabilité à l'intention des personnes handicapées
SAAQ:	Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec
SOFIL:	Société de financement des infrastructures locales du Québec
STC:	Sociétés de transport en commun (public transit authorities)
STM:	Société de transport de Montréal
STQ:	Société des traversiers du Québec

Appendix 3

Action Plan

THE MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS ACTION PLAN FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007

SECTOR	2006–2007 ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2008 AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION
Accessibility of sites and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to respond to individual requests for improvements from persons with limited abilities. • Prepare a list of the accessibility gaps preventing these persons from moving in a completely autonomous fashion throughout areas occupied by the MTQ. • Update the MTQ's <i>Manuel administratif</i> to account for universal accessibility during the procurement process when improvements are made to offices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All requests satisfied • June 2007 • April 2007 		<p style="text-align: center;">DCRM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DT, DCRM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DCRM</p>
Infrastructure accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the MTQ "geometric design" technical standards table, suggest that the MTQ <i>Standards Volume 1</i> be revised. Various accommodation principles should be included and certain clauses of the documents should be modified to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities are considered. • Make project managers aware that it is very important to consider these needs when designing road projects. • Develop an appropriate plan for eliminating the sidewalk access problems at some buildings and incorporate this plan into the set of MTQ standards. • Revise the <i>Guide de préparation des projets routiers</i> so that it includes a reference to "persons with reduced mobility" when pedestrians and cyclists are mentioned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards revised • Measures applied • Standard developed • April 2007 		<p style="text-align: center;">DSEI</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DSEI</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DSEI</p>

SECTOR	2006–2007 ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2008 AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue efforts to amend section 308 of the Highway Safety Code: standardization of signs in parking spaces. At the MTQ "geometric design" technical standards table, propose that Chapter 15 of the MTQ <i>Standards Volume 1</i> be adapted: lowering curbs from 15 mm to 5 mm away from the pavement at bicycle trail access points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 308 amended <i>Volume 1</i> adapted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the future plans for improving the Route verte, include permission to periodically intervene to help improve accessibility for persons with limited abilities: rest areas, stairs, railway ties, paving surfaces 	<p>MTQ</p> <p>DSEI</p>
Rest areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gradually update rest areas to ensure they comply with new measures set out in the most recent version of the Quebec Construction Code. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of improved rest areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous updates 	DPR
Reception, communication and documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop training tools that focus specifically on the characteristics of persons with disabilities. These tools should be targeted particularly at staff members who have contact with the public, such as those who work at a reception desk or take phone calls. Whenever possible, ensure that that website adheres to WAI standards. Add a section entitled "Persons with limited abilities" when the MTQ website is redesigned. Following a request by an organization or a person with limited abilities, explore the possibility of making the content of certain MTQ publications accessible in an adapted, alternate format. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2007 Extent to which website meets the standards April 2007 All requests satisfied 		<p>DC, DRH, DT</p> <p>DC</p> <p>DC</p> <p>DC</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information and make staff aware of the realities and needs of persons with disabilities employed by the MTQ. Accomplish this task by publishing articles in the internal newsletter and adding a section on the intranet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of articles written 		DC, DRH

SECTOR	2006–2007 ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2008 AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the needs of persons with limited abilities when the MTQ participates in public events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodations made to meet the needs of clients 		DC
Land transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply the 2005-2007 three-year program to accessible transportation agencies. Help municipalities finish implementing accessible transportation services throughout their territories. Providing funding to these services. Design additional information and training tools to maximize the effects of the financial aid program for accessible transportation agencies. Revise the Regulation respecting road vehicles adapted for the transportation of persons with disabilities and include a clause for universally accessible taxis. Revise and renew the Programme de subvention à l'adaptation des taxis. Ensure that the training sessions offered to taxi drivers are attended. Implement measures to ensure that the equipment available in low-floor busses is brought into service as soon as it is acquired. Help those in charge of organizing transportation adapt their regular transportation services and produce their action plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services offered 52 weeks/year and 35 hours/week All municipalities supported June 2007 September 2007 Fall 2006 Start date of courses and number of drivers affected Number of organizations that use the platforms on their busses Measures applied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up external training sessions Enforce this regulation 	DTTP, DT DTTP, DT DTTP DTTP DTTP DTTP, DT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the STM and AMT, follow up on the work of the Comité sur l'accessibilité du métro de Montréal. Work with the AMT to eliminate obstacles in the future Montréal-Repentigny suburban train line. With the bus industry and its partners, establish a plan of action to maintain the network's achievements, improve the bus services offered to persons with limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of universally accessible stations Degree to which this line is accessible Fall 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement measures 	DIM, DTTP DIM, MTQ DTTP

SECTOR	2006–2007 ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2008 AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION
	abilities and encourage better collaboration among relevant partners.			
Rail transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the MTO standards table, propose that characteristics of assistive devices be included in grade crossings standards. In the grade crossings safety analyses, include a point about assistive devices when these grade crossings are likely to be used by someone with an assistive device. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New MTO standard Modified grade crossing safety analysis form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the responsible authorities to eliminate most of these obstacles 	DTMFA (STF)
Sea and air transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the steps that need to be taken to eliminate obstacles at MTO facilities. Ensure users have the information and tools needed to make complaints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2007 Measures developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct problem situations, depending on feasibility, pertinence and budget constraints 	DTMAF (STA, STMMVSL) DGQE, DT
Transportation safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate the "Persons with disabilities" section into the 2006 Transportation Safety Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall 2007 		DST
Hiring and job support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to enforce the requirements of the Plan d'embauche du gouvernement du Québec pour les personnes handicapées. In the annual report, publish hiring results to demonstrate the efforts that have been made. Use a questionnaire to determine the level of satisfaction of persons with disabilities employed by the MTQ. This will help determine possible ways to improve their integration within the organization. Offer work internships as part of the Programme gouvernemental de développement de l'employabilité à l'intention des personnes handicapées. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of representativeness achieved April 2007 Study conducted and results analyzed Number of internships offered 		DRH DRH DRH, DT

SECTOR	2006–2007 ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2008 AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION
Research and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the MTQ website, post thematic information about steps taken in Québec with respect to transportation for persons with disabilities. • During the MTQ's annual call for research projects, invite MTQ staff to submit research projects that aim to reduce obstacles to the integration of persons with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section about this added to the MTQ website • Fall 2007 		<p style="text-align: center;">DRE, DC</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DRE</p>
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a "Persons with limitations" section in the Declaration of Services to the Public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the 2008-2011 strategic planning, include precise measures to adequately meet the needs of persons with limited abilities 	<p style="text-align: center;">DP</p>

Acronyms

DC : Direction des communications

DCRM : Direction des contrats et des ressources matérielles

DGOE : Direction générale de Québec et de l'Est

DGIT : Direction générale des infrastructures et des technologies

DP : Direction de la planification

DIM : Direction de l'Île-de-Montréal

DPR : Direction des parcs routiers

DRH : Direction des ressources humaines

DRE : Direction de la recherche et de l'environnement

DSEI : Direction du soutien à l'exploitation des infrastructures

DST : Direction de la sécurité en transport

DT : Direction territoriale

DTMAF : Direction du transport maritime, aérien et ferroviaire

DTTP : Direction du transport terrestre des personnes

MTQ : Ministère des Transports du Québec

STA : Service du transport aérien

STMMVSL : Secrétariat au transport maritime et à la mise en valeur du Saint-Laurent

STF : Service du transport ferroviaire