2012 Annual Report

Access Advisory Committee

Winnipeg

WHAT DO WE DO...

...we advise City of Winnipeg leaders on accessibility for civic properties, information and services and recommend best practices in Universal Design while building relationships with the community.

A Message from Councillor Eadie



It's amazing to think that an accessible City of Winnipeg has been a priority for our civic leaders for 18 years. At the time that an Ad Hoc committee made recommendations to city council to start an Access Advisory Committee (AAC), the only city in Canada doing this kind of work was Edmonton.

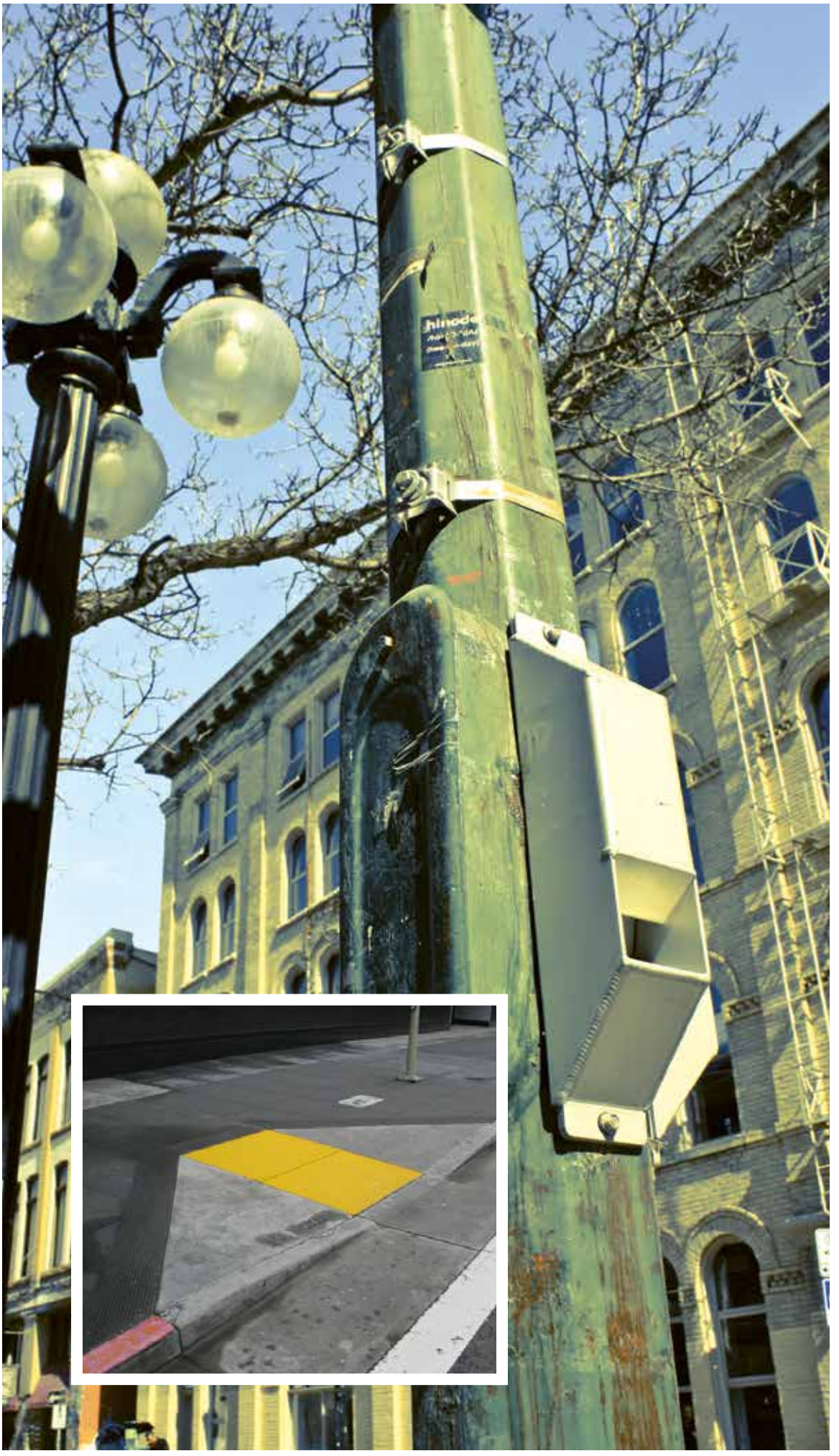
With the introduction of the Universal Design policy, Winnipeg established a reputation as a leader in accessibility. It's a momentum we've built upon. Today Winnipeg is the city in North America with the most audible pedestrian signals, with the numbers well over 300. Over the next 10 years, that number will only continue to grow. With every new intersection, costs are built in for audible pedestrian signals. One day, every intersection will include this feature, enhancing safety for the citizens of our city.

A shift to make a city accessible for a variety of abilities – and therefore safer and age friendly – doesn't happen overnight. Nor does it come without its challenges. As every Winnipegger knows, snow in the winter makes mobility a challenge. We continue to work with Public Works to address the mobility issues snow clearing creates.

Because of the AAC's work, and the support of city council and the Mayor, barrier-free access is a priority for a wide variety of City of Winnipeg projects that impact how users access information, properties and services. Leadership has acknowledged the need and importance of making the city accessible and looked at how we can do the right thing.

While we have much more work to do, if we hadn't started this work, we'd have much further to go. Because of the firm foundation of accessibility upon which to build, the stage has been set for good things to happen. Commitment and continued work ensure that the future is good for accessibility, to the benefit of all people. That's something to be proud of, because having accessible communities to live and work in enhances safety, health and quality of life. ■





How do you manoeuvre on multi-use pathways or traffic circles if you have a **VISUAL** Impairment?



Accessibility by design

It was a historic moment when the City of Winnipeg introduced Accessibility Design Standards in 2006. There were new parameters developed to offer concrete suggestions for the designing and building of civic projects that allowed for barrier free access for a variety of users.

The AAC contributed to the review of this initial document, which has since been updated. New categories and redefined measurements contributed to creating a more functional, user-friendly document for all. Executive Policy Committee adopted these changes to the new 2010 edition. The committee is now working on the next amendments and updates for the 2014 edition.

From a design perspective, having a clear understanding of what best practices are is helpful, says Greg Hasiuk, a Partner at Number TEN Architectural Group. “We use those design standards a lot. To understand the big picture, you need to know the details first – what you can and can’t do. The standards help us understand the details, because when it comes to the review of a building for accessibility, the smallest details can have a big impact for the user.”

Details like proper height and position for accessibility – and getting those right – can mean the difference between a pleasant experience or a frustrating one. “On paper



you might meet code but the smallest detail can make it frustrating for a person with a disability to actually use," he explains.

Building projects start with a blank page and incorporating best practices for universal design mean everyone can have the same experience of entering and using a building. Entering on the same path, instead of going to a different location to access a ramp, for example, means even with a cane or wheelchair, a person can have a less stressful experience in that environment.

"A well designed universal building should allow everyone to experience that environment as much as possible without endangering themselves, or feeling anxiety or frustration," says Hasiuk.

Advocacy and changing building codes have helped accessibility be at the forefront of design discussions. So have the Accessibility Awards, which help raise the profile and celebrate what works in universal design.

It's something Hasiuk is grateful for, because accessibility is now a personal issue for him. After an accident two years ago, his dad is now in a power chair. "I've always thought accessibility was important but now it just makes it more real," he says. "To put time and energy into making something beautiful and wonderful and not have everyone share that is a real shame." ■

Best of the best
Celebrating Accessible Design

It was the eleventh year of celebrating excellence in universal design with the Accessibility Awards. Special guest was Professor Marcus Ormerod, a universal design expert from Manchester, England.

Along with having the chance to tour the facilities which received awards, Ormerod led an accessibility workshop and was guest speaker at the awards, where he praised Winnipeg's efforts. ■



"I've travelled the world to see what inclusion looks like and the City of Winnipeg is up there with the best. These projects are very inclusive developments."

- Professor Marcus Ormerod




he Winnipeg
SIBILITY AWARD
ing the Spirit of Universal Design
ugh the creation and design of
oming and Inclusive Environments"
Glen Manning
derman Thomas Frank Cram Landscape
Architects
Steinkopf Gardens
October 2012

Accessibility

Award Winners

Adventure Playground at the Forks

Features appealing to all ages that stimulate the senses, soft rollable surfacing, tactile and accessible signage, sensorial play structures are just some of the elements that create accessible play for children with a wide variety of abilities.

Richardson Environment and Science Complex, University of Winnipeg

Colour contrasting, height adjustable lab tables, reduced glare windows, strobe emergency lighting, tile floor indicators and tactile signage are just some elements incorporated into this project, which went above and beyond the building code with respect to universal design.

2012 Accessibility Award winners







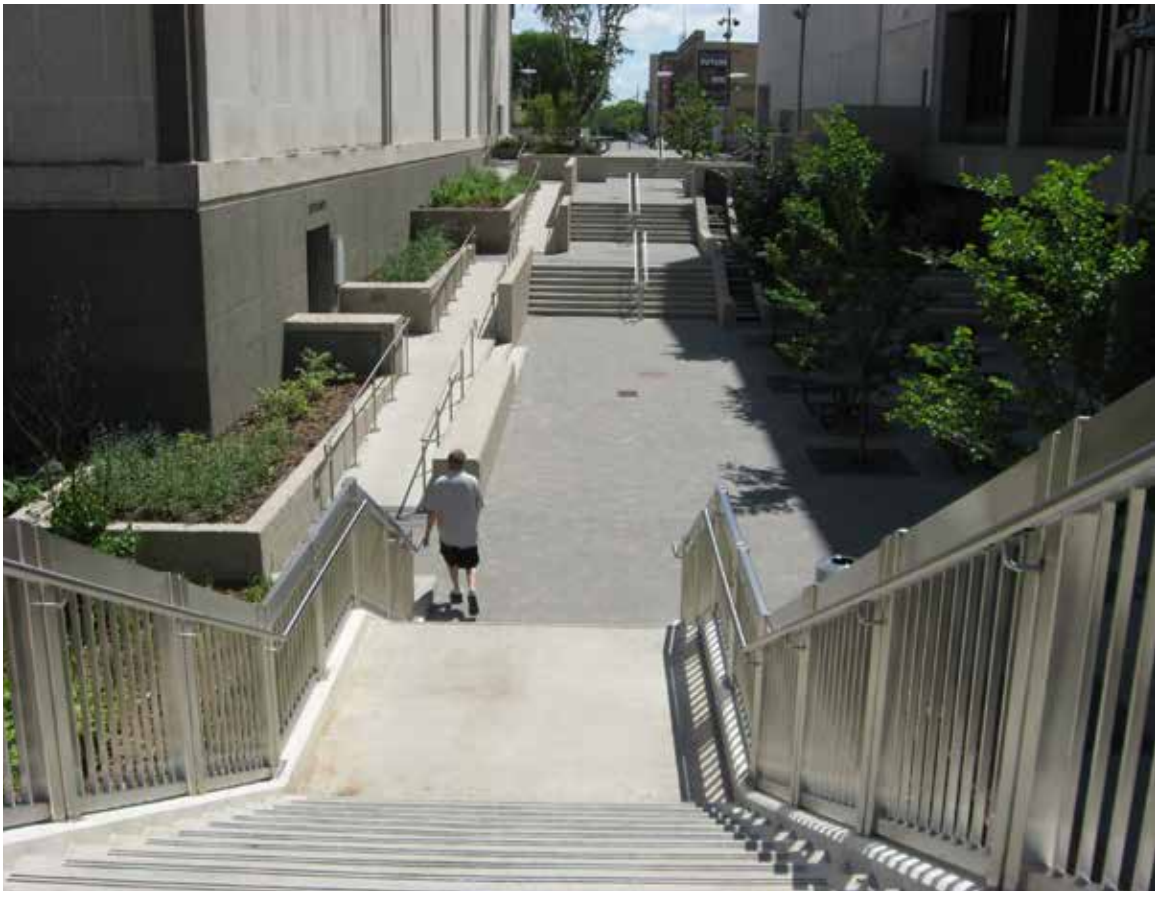


Manitoba Centennial Centre Steinkopf Gardens

This multi-level park offers low sloped ramps, colour contrasting and tactile warnings at all stairs, and a water feature with a sensory experience for every visitor.

Birthing Centre

A special ventilation system allows for prayer circles, bariatric considerations and birthing areas fully accessible for every age and physical ability, along with the use of colour and texture allow birthing to be a comfortable experience for a mother and her family.



Honourable Mentions

James Richardson International Airport

This large project impressed the committee as it included the developing of the airport's own accessibility advisory committee. Compared with other airports in the country, Winnipeg's airport makes flying comfortable for a wide variety of user abilities.

University of Manitoba

Kelly Beaverford, a professor at the University of Manitoba was recognized with a special award for her commitment to universal design with her students and the community at large. ■



Did you KNOW?

- The AAC has consulted with the Manitoba Association of Landscape Architects, the Manitoba Association of Architects and the Professional Interior Designers in Manitoba to discover how to further the value and identity of the Access Advisory Awards.

- The criteria for the awards was updated in 2012.




LIVE
PLAY



Easy



Moderate



Difficult



Hazardous

Surefoot: a falls prevention tool

Winter walking conditions bulletin helps enhance safety

Every year, about one-third of seniors who live in the community have at least one fall. Injuries due to falls are the leading reason for hospitalizations (85 per cent in seniors) and 40 per cent of nursing home admissions can be directly attributed to a senior having a fall.

Half of the people who experience a fall experience a minor injury but as many as 25 per cent sustain a more serious injury. Sometimes an individual becomes so fearful of falling they stop doing their typical activities. Their health can decline, putting them at greater risk for falls – along with the fact that some never fully recover from a fall.

Most falls are preventable. Enter Surefoot, a website launched in 2012. It's purpose? To advise people of the conditions of Winnipeg sidewalks.

"Surefoot is a tool that helps people make safer choices about travel," says Gina Sylvestre, Assistant Professor with the Department of Geography at the University of Winnipeg, who was instrumental in developing and focus testing Surefoot. "Our findings are that the most dangerous time for sidewalks is in the spring when it's freezing and thawing everyday."

The website offers a rating for Winnipeg sidewalks with four levels of difficulty: easy, moderate, difficult or hazardous.

While the assumption is that seniors and those with mobility or vision challenges would benefit most from a resource like Surefoot, the truth is that runners, and people using active transportation also benefit from an understanding of the condition of Winnipeg sidewalks.

It all started with recommendations from engineers from the City of Winnipeg's street maintenance

department, who identified the need for a resource to understand what conditions streets were in.

Development and focus testing began in 2009. Sylvestre recruited undergrad students to take buses around Winnipeg and look at rating instruction for sidewalks. Together with engineers from street maintenance, the four categories were created.

Partnerships included the City of Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, both the University of Manitoba and Winnipeg, Age Friendly Manitoba, the Manitoba Arthritis Society, the Active Living Coalition for Older Adults, Canadian Footwear, the Manitoba Falls Prevention Network, the Winnipeg Committee for Safety and Velocity Branding.

If the dream is to have sidewalk ratings with numbers as familiar to the general public as UV index ratings, that will take some more time. As will anecdotal evidence, impact statements and a thorough evaluation of the resource.

Currently the streets maintenance night supervisor is responsible for creating the sidewalk rating. It's not a very scientific approach, something Sylvestre hopes to change. "There is a connection with climate and sidewalk conditions and there's a lot to be learned. We did rigorous testing, with subjective/qualitative perspectives informing the tool the most. The aim of Surefoot is to provide a general rating of level of difficulty of the winter walkways along with condition description and safety messaging," she says. "I intend to pursue further research that will explore more quantitative methods, along with the perspective of more user groups including children."

The trend toward active transportation could push the need for Surefoot in a different direction. "There is more need to have good conditions on whatever type of trail or pathway is being used," says Sylvestre. "It's just the beginning. A lot more could be done to improve the tool."

Additional resources would be helpful for the project, and help engineers to test friction and attach a number to how icy sidewalks are. It would also help project organizers look at wider marketing the tool not only to persons with disabilities, but also to the environmentally friendly community and people using active transportation. ■



Changes make intersections safer, more accessible

Audible pedestrian signals, detectable surfaces and more

The chirping sound while you're waiting to cross at an intersection is now a familiar one for Winnipeggers. It's amazing to think it has only been a few years since this tool was piloted, a process the AAC was instrumental in.

Today, 50 per cent of downtown area signalized intersections have audible pedestrian signals (APS). Outside the downtown area, 42 per cent of intersections have them. That's nearly half of the total signalized intersections in Winnipeg. In 2012 alone, 23 new APS were installed.

"We're advanced compared to other cities in North America. None of the major cities across Canada have the extensive installation of APS the way we have," says Luis Escobar, Manager of Transportation for the City of Winnipeg. "We're leading the charge across Canada."

Other major cities, for example, have only between 50 and 100 accessible signalized intersections with APS.

The introduction of APS hasn't been easy. Initial design had nearby residents complaining about the noise. Over time, the City working together with the University of Manitoba, redesigned the speaker housing to create a more directional sound. This has helped reduce the sound pollution caused by APS without major impacts to pedestrians who depend on APS.

It was always part of the City's plan to transition APS into intersections throughout Winnipeg but the process escalated as a result of a human rights complaint which was settled in 2008. "To date, roughly half of the City's signalized intersections have audible pedestrian signals – just over 300," says Escobar.

The goal? By 2023, the city needs to have all traffic signals equipped with APS.

The Human Rights agreement also involves removing push buttons. This means that pedestrians do not need to do anything when approaching intersections without pushbuttons. The traffic signal always assumes there is a pedestrian wishing to cross the street and provides the required time for pedestrians accordingly.

To date, 89 per cent of push buttons have been deactivated in



the downtown area, representing 128 intersections of 143. Outside of the downtown area, 12 per cent of push buttons have been removed and 58 per cent deactivated. In 2011, every new audible pedestrian signal was installed without pushbuttons where it was not needed.

“Outside of the downtown area, we were asked to remove the push buttons that were not needed for operational purposes,” explains Escobar.

The installation of APS also requires major changes to how traffic signals equipment is installed. This new installation also needs to meet universal design requirements, which is not an easy task. This requires reinstalling above and below ground equipment. “The location of all infrastructure is more consistent and useful for visually impaired pedestrians,” says Escobar.

It’s a long way from curb cuts being the only accessible feature at an intersection - other changes have helped intersections be more user-friendly for a wide variety of abilities. LED displays are brighter and help those with limited vision. That also applies to the traffic lights for motorists, which are now 12 inches in diameter instead of eight inches.

“Traffic signals are brighter which are easier to see by motorists and pedestrians, but also the equipment is lighter, which makes them easier to maintain by field staff,” says Escobar. “We’re all aging and these changes help make the transportation system more equitable so more people can safely use it.”

The font that we use for traffic signs has also changed. This is to make them easier to read. White letters on a green background in a clearer font are best seen and understood at a glance.

Detectable surfaces are another feature of accessible intersections. Given Winnipeg’s snowy winters and the need for snow clearing, a number of potential products were evaluated. The current yellow detectable warning surfaces are able to stand out, even in the snow, and withstand snow clearing equipment. They’ve been introduced over the past four years and are now installed in every new capital project. ■



the Accessibility Awards Committee invites you to attend:

Professor Marcus Ormerod

School for the Built Environment, Accessibility and Inclusive Design, University of Salford, U.K.

Universal Design – An Inclusive Approach to Design and City Building

Rapid Transit makes travel safer and more accessible

After much anticipation and extensive planning, Rapid Transit (RT) officially launched April 8th, 2012. Along with making a trip faster and more reliable for many Winnipeggers, their trips are also safer, thanks to careful consideration to details that enhance accessibility for a wide variety of users.

"Over the last 10 years or so, Winnipeg Transit has worked really hard at creating accessibility guides for stops and stations. The RT corridor is the best practices of all the planning that's gone on in the past 10 years," says Jonathan Borland, Transit Information Supervisor with Winnipeg Transit.

Chimes at the Osborne station announce when buses are entering the station, and the tone indicates which direction. It happens at the same time a light flashes. This helps those who are plugged into their ipods know it's not safe to cross.

In fact, Osborne Station is the pride of the project, encompassing many accessibility features: detectable pavers so people don't get too close to the roadway, designated walking areas with handrails, ramps on both sides of Osborne. "We're most proud of Osborne Station. It encompasses all we try to do in one location," says Borland. "Every accessible design feature we've worked on in the past decade is built into that station."

The platforms at the RT stations are five inches higher than other city stops, allowing for near-level boarding. This also helps parents with strollers or someone who walks with a shuffle quickly board without waiting for the bus to lower.

RT buses are the latest model, with low floors for easy access. Next-Stop announcers and digital displays help both people with hearing and visual challenges understand when it's their stop. External announcers also tell where the bus is going to.

One big benefit of RT is many trips can be completed with only one ride…fewer transfers means less chance of waiting in bone chilling winds for a connecting bus. "One-ride trips improve accessibility," says Borland.

Accessible information is also part of the RT system so it's easier for people to understand what to do and where to go. "We built things in a way that makes sense to people," says Borland, who notes the website is also where a wide variety of users can access information. Screen readers can use the mobile site (m.winnipegtransit.com).

Telebus is now voice activated, a feature that people with limited range of motion with their hands, or dexterity issues, appreciate. If the outdoor wind makes the voice activation feature frustrating, you can use BUStxt (just type in your intersection) to get schedules based on your next stop.

Features like this help people with cognitive disabilities travel safely. The option to print information about your trip using Navigo includes detailed information like what time to leave, where to stand and even a map to take with you.

"It's a nice feature that allows people to travel safely. It's great if you don't know where you're going," he says.

While standardizing bus stops isn't possible – variables like buildings, fire hydrants, underground wiring or a light post aren't consistent – making bus stops as predictable as possible by where the shelters and benches are located is a start. A consistent look and detectable paver in the ground will help someone who is using a cane know they're at the head of the bus stop.

Safety by design is a technical term, but it also tells how Transit approaches things. "We try to design our stops to be free of as many objects – newspaper boxes for example – as possible. We want people to have clear access to their bus stop and work hard to not put barriers up for people," he says. While benches and shelters are standard, avoiding objects that could be tripping hazards or difficult to get around is a priority.

While the Osborne station is fully accessible, not every one of the 5,200 bus stops in Winnipeg offers the same features. That's why Transit evaluates its stops every year and upgrades to enhance accessibility. These enhancements are supported both by Transit budgeting and applications to the accessibility program. ■

Borland says, "We want everyone to have safe access on their travels."


OSBOR
OSBORNE STATION
NORTHBOUND
STAND BEHIND YELLOW LINE


OSBORNE
NORTHBOUND
11030
64 65 66 137
160 161 162 163
170 180 181 183
185
NE

A work in progress

The Accessibility Program helps to retrofit existing city properties to help enhance accessibility. Every year, $350,000 is earmarked for projects. This past year, automatic door openers, the addition of an elevator and ramp upgrades helped eliminate barriers to accessibility for city offices and a variety of recreational facilities throughout Winnipeg. ■





We're on track

The AAC completed a strategic plan for 2011/12 and has accomplished much of what we set out to do.

Raising awareness through education

Along with formal training sessions, we've also held informal sessions with groups on how to raise the profile of Universal Design. We've also participated in conferences and upgraded our display unit, allowing us to further engage people around accessibility issues. A mandatory course for key City of Winnipeg staff to raise disability awareness and inform staff around the Universal Design Policy is a priority on the minds of the Access Advisory Committee. The committee is working on getting this implemented.

Building partnership with the Province of Manitoba

Over the past year, we've strengthened our relationship with the province through discussions, information sessions and public forums and contributing to conferences.

Input on major City of Winnipeg Projects

The projects that made the news – like garbage collection, Rapid Transit, the Millennium Park at the Library and accessible street parking – and the ones that didn't – like playgrounds, HandiTransit, residential bus stops, Winnipeg Housing Policy and recommending an increase in funding for the Accessibility Grant Program – included input through recommendations from the AAC on accessibility and barrier-free access.

Development

We've continued to reduce administrative costs while making our website more user-friendly and encouraged a conversation with stakeholders through a vibrant, interactive and fully accessible site. We've also expanded our relationships with key stakeholders through information sharing.

Our Winnipeg

This action plan is at the heart of AAC conversations, planning and how we approach making sure accessibility is a focus in civic projects. ■



Up ahead...

We'll continue to expand awareness around Universal Design and accessibility by providing recommendations to city projects and the Accessibility Awards. We will plan a community consultation in 2013 to engage the community in the conversation about accessibility. We'll also continue to develop our existing resources – like the website, relationships and the expertise on the AAC – to further accessibility issues. ■

Budget:

Financial Report 2012

Revenues

Council Funding	$69,000.00

Expenditures

Meeting Costs	$6,582.08
Administrative Support	$40,000.00
Administrative Supplies	$2,792.57
Special Projects	$1,537.30
Communication	$11,981.51
Total	**$63,503.08**

Surplus/Balance $5,496.92



2012 Access Advisory Committee:

Ross Eadie	**Chair**
Devi Sharma	**Councillor**
Shannon Keys	
Sandy Popham	
Liz Mitchell	
Natalie Pirson	
Larry Baillie	
Louis Gaudry	
Brenda Sklar	
Janet Hunt	
Kenneth Anderson	
Judy Herscovitch	
Colleen Watters	

Chris Sobkowicz
Committee Coordinator

Judy Redmond
Universal Design Coordinator

Rochelle Viray
City Clerks Department

Andrea Bodie
Annual Report
Words… A Little Touch of Magic!



This annual report is available in French, in Braille, and electronically on our website at www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca. Please contact us to receive your copy in alternate formatting.

Contact Us

Access Advisory Committee
510 Main Street
Council Building, Lower Level
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9
Phone: 204-986-8345
Fax: 204-947-3452
TTY: 204-261-7424
www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca

ONE DAY...

we're all going to benefit from the enhancements to ACCESSIBILITY.