



# TRANSPORTING QUÉBEC TOWARDS MODERNITY

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY POLICY - 2030

Paratransit Intervention  
Framework

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## 1. Paratransit in Québec

This document is an integral part of the Sustainable Mobility Policy to 2030. It presents an overall portrait of the paratransit sector in Québec, its issues and all measures related to the 2018-2023 Paratransit Action Plan. The most promising and cross-sectional measures in this sectoral action plan also appear in the Sustainable Mobility Policy Comprehensive Action Plan.

The Paratransit Intervention Framework is a key component of the Sustainable Mobility Policy vision: In 2030, Québec will be a North American leader in 21<sup>st</sup>-century sustainable and integrated mobility. In a territory planned with a view to sustainable mobility, it will have a high-performance, safe, connected and low-carbon transport ecosystem that contributes to Québec's prosperity and meets the needs of people and businesses.

This framework provides measures specifically for handicapped persons<sup>1</sup>, including municipal paratransit, the modification of personal and private transportation vehicles (taxis, buses) and parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons.

### Current situation

Municipal paratransit is a kind of local or regional public transit, under the responsibility of public transit organizations or participating municipalities, that meets the specific needs of handicapped persons who are eligible.

It was introduced at the end of the 1970s. In 1980, nine paratransit services covered the territory of 66 municipalities. Nearly 40 years later, there are 102 paratransit organizations in Québec, serving nearly 99% of the population. Over 116,000 people are eligible for paratransit and they take over 8 million trips each year.

PORTRAIT OF ELIGIBLE PERSONS AND TRIPS TAKEN, BY AGE – 2015				
Age	Number of eligible persons as of December 31, 2015	Proportion	Trips by eligible persons in 2015	Proportion
0-5	549	0.5%	9,270	0.1%
6-20	4,951	4.3%	230,326	2.7%
21-64	40,234	34.6%	5,372,753	63.8%
65-79	30,445	26.2%	1,681,457	20.0%
80+	40,221	34.6%	1,125,035	13.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>116,400</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,418,841</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Under the Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration, a handicapped person is defined as “a person with a deficiency causing a significant and persistent disability, who is liable to encounter barriers in performing everyday activities.”

For handicapped persons, access to “regular” modes of transportation (such as urban public transit and taxi transportation) would offer more flexible movements than municipal paratransit which, due to the customized nature of its services, generally requires a reservation.

Actions can be taken to facilitate the use of public transit by handicapped persons. For example, many public transit corporations offer free passage to the person accompanying the handicapped person.

With regard to taxi transportation, it is estimated that 8% of the current fleet (8,050 vehicles) is accessible to people who use a wheelchair. The distribution by region is shown in the table below:

Administrative region	Number of taxi vehicles – restricted permit	Number of taxi vehicles – regular permit	Total taxi fleet (regular and accessible)	% accessible vehicles / region
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	2	3	112	4%
Bas-Saint-Laurent	3	12	112	13%
Capitale-Nationale	18	18	692	5%
Centre-du-Québec	2	7	79	11%
Chaudière-Appalaches	6	27	183	18%
Côte-Nord	-	3	75	4%
Estrie	3	3	122	5%
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	-	9	38	24%
Lanaudière	2	18	163	12%
Laurentides	9	22	241	13%
Laval	-	11	213	5%
Mauricie	4	7	136	8%
Montérégie	18	76	859	11%
Montréal	238	109	4,667	7%
Nord-du-Québec	-	2	22	9%
Outaouais	2	23	210	12%
Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	5	4	126	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>8,050</b>	<b>8%</b>

As for intercity transportation, buses are also accessible to people in wheelchairs, which means they can use all intercity transportation routes, on reservation.

Although advances have been made in recent years, complementarity between municipal paratransit and regular transportation services needs to improve further, particularly by increasing the number of accessible vehicles.

Modified personal vehicles and reserved parking spaces also facilitate the movements of handicapped persons, as either drivers or passengers. To this end, the Programme d’adaptation de véhicule (vehicle modification program) supports the modification of about 800 vehicles annually, and in 2016, 161,018 identification stickers for parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons were in use.

## **The importance of paratransit for sustainable mobility in Québec**

The government policy “Equals in Every Respect: Because Rights Are Meant to Be Exercised,” adopted in 2009, made the development of accessible environments a priority. In practical terms, this meant eliminating obstacles to mobility for handicapped persons by improving access to places and transportation infrastructures. The possibility of being mobile without added accessibility, time or cost constraints, no matter the place or the means used, and the reduction of social isolation for handicapped persons were two of the expected outcomes of this policy.

For handicapped persons, access to various modes of travel is a basic condition for social participation. It is important, therefore, for them to be able to access a variety of transportation services that meet their needs, as, otherwise, their social participation (such as access to education services, the job markets, recreation or health care) and the exercise of their rights may be compromised.

## **The Québec government’s role in paratransit**

Over the years, Québec has acquired a variety of means to facilitate travel and transportation for handicapped persons and to protect their safety.

With regard to municipal paratransit, the ministère des Transports, de la Mobilité durable et de l’Électrification des transports (MTMDET) developed the Politique d’admissibilité au transport adapté pour les personnes handicapées (paratransit eligibility policy for handicapped persons). This policy defines the clients who are eligible for paratransit. It also ensures fair, uniform treatment of requests by admission committees and makes the paratransit eligibility process accessible to all handicapped persons living in Québec.

On the legal front, section 48.39 of the Transport Act states that every local municipality that is not served by a public transit corporation or another public transit organization must provide paratransit services for handicapped persons in its territory. Similar provisions are included in the incorporating acts of the public transit corporations and the Réseau de transport métropolitain.

Under section 6 of the incorporating act of the Autorité régionale de transport métropolitain, it must establish a transportation offer that meets the needs of public transit users, including users with reduced mobility.

On the regulatory level, the Regulation respecting road vehicles adapted for the transportation of handicapped persons, adopted under the Highway Safety Code, governs the transportation of handicapped persons on adapted minibuses and buses, to ensure their safety in light of their specific situation. This regulation sets out minimum standards for the construction, design and use of such vehicles.

Finally, the Regulation respecting identification stickers for parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons, adopted under the Highway Safety Code, specifies the terms and conditions for receiving a identification sticker.

## Financial aid programs for paratransit

The MTMDET supports the mobility of handicapped persons through several financial aid programs:

> **Programme de subvention au transport adapté (PSTA or paratransit subsidy program)**

This program supports municipal authorities in the creation, consolidation and development of paratransit services. Each designated paratransit organization (public transit corporation, municipality, RCM, etc.) is allotted a basic contribution, which may be made adjusted based on increases in traffic and budget availability. The program also has a flexible component that supports municipalities of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants that are not served by a paratransit organization. One of the eligibility conditions for the PSTA is compliance with the MTMDET Politique d'admissibilité au transport adapté (paratransit eligibility policy).

For 2017, the budget for this program was \$95.78 million. This provided financial aid for 102 paratransit organizations and some twenty municipalities under the flexible component of the program.

> **Programme de subvention aux véhicules collectifs accessibles (PSVCA or accessible public vehicle subsidy program)**

This program provides financial aid to modify vehicles (taxis and rental vehicles) and buses, to make them accessible to people in wheelchairs.

In 2017, the basic budget of \$2 million was increased to \$2.55 million to modify 158 vehicles and 5 buses.

> **Programme d'adaptation de véhicule pour les personnes handicapées (PAV or vehicle modification program for handicapped persons)**

This program supports modifications to private vehicles to allow handicapped persons to drive or be driven in them. The modifications must be made on the recommendation of an occupational therapist. The program also reimburses the cost of repairing the modifications. Under an agreement with the MTMDET, this program is run by the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec.

For 2017-2018, its budget was \$10.25 million.

In addition to these programs, the MTMDET provides financial support, with an annual budget of \$1.1 million, to the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec to issue identification stickers for parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons.

## Trends and outlook to 2030

The number of people eligible for paratransit and the number of trips they take are increasing steadily. The ageing of the population, which leads to an increased risk of disabilities, and government policies to keep handicapped persons living at home and support their social integration are expected to increase pressure on these services in the years ahead.

CHANGE IN TRIPS TAKEN BY ELIGIBLE PERSONS				
Year	Number of trips	Δ	Number of eligible persons	Δ
2002	4,632,753		62,786	
2003	4,874,846	5%	64,916	3%
2004	5,230,949	7%	67,488	4%
2005	5,523,347	6%	65,723	-3%
2006	5,929,402	7%	71,732	9%
2007	6,164,755	4%	76,303	6%
2008	6,484,866	5%	81,832	7%
2009	6,718,611	4%	85,755	5%
2010	7,126,259	6%	90,012	5%
2011	7,397,000	4%	95,071	6%
2012	7,657,640	4%	97,048	2%
2013	7,878,202	3%	104,054	7%
2014	8,208,115	4%	111,323	7%
<b>Δ 2002-2014</b>		<b>77%</b>		<b>77%</b>

In this context, it is important to note that people 65 and over account for an increasingly large portion of the people eligible for paratransit. Between 2010 and 2014, the proportion of eligible people who were 65 and over rose from 54% to 60%. Their share of trips taken rose from 27% to 33%. Furthermore, in 2015, 70% of new admissions were people 65 or over.

For regular transportation services, the world trend is toward universal accessibility. For the last few decades, there has been consensus on the need to consider the role of environmental factors in the creation of a situation of handicap. The obstacles or enablers encountered in the living environment, in interaction with the person's disabilities, have a negative or positive influence on their capacity to accomplish their daily activities and fulfil their social roles. A person with disabilities may be in a situation of full social participation or, on the contrary, in a situation of handicap, depending on their environment.

## 2. Sustainable Mobility Issues Related to Paratransit

Handicapped people need access to different modes of transportation in order to have mobility comparable to that of the general public and, by extension, equal access to places and services.

We must take action, on one hand, on the environmental obstacles that create situations of handicap and, on the other, on services and programs for handicapped persons.

The issues related to the sustainable mobility of handicapped persons can be divided as follows:

- Aid programs for handicapped transportation;
- Service offers to meet the needs of handicapped persons.

## **Issue 1: Improvement of aid programs for handicapped transportation**

Financial aid programs for handicapped transportation (that is, the PSTA, the PSVCA and the PAV, see below) support interventions of the community related to municipal paratransit, transportation by taxi and intercity transportation and also support handicapped persons who want to modify their private vehicles. It is important for these programs to be adequately funded, in order to meet the various needs of handicapped people.

Beyond the issue of funding, there is an opportunity to examine all aspects of the programs, to ensure that the needs of handicapped persons are being adequately met. We also need to improve the management and control of the programs, to protect their long-term future and the sound management of public funds.

To improve access to a variety of modes of transportation, practices should be adopted that promote the use of public transit by handicapped people.

### **Programme de subvention au transport adapté (PSTA - Paratransit Grant Program)**

The stagnation of the PSTA budget between 2013 and 2016 raised concerns from many stakeholders. Although the budget increased in 2017 (from \$90 million to \$96 million), it is important to guarantee the long-term financial foundation of the organizations, in light of the constant increase in the number of eligible people and the number of trips taken.

Many paratransit organizations have noted a reduction in the transportation services offered through the health care network to its clients – to go for treatment, take part in day centre activities or receive rehabilitation services, for example – leading to an increase in the demand for their services. The distances travelled for health reasons are also increasing, due to the specialization of various health care institutions. These issues put additional pressure on paratransit organizations, which are not always able to meet demand.

The customized nature of paratransit, which generally offers door-to-door service, can also reduce the capacity to organize services collectively, and this has an effect on costs, especially in regions where longer distances must be travelled.

Finally, the annual renewal of the program makes it hard to plan for the long term and creates financial instability for the hundred or so paratransit organizations in Québec. The nature of financial aid for paratransit (operating subsidy) requires a recurring and predictable financial commitment from the government.

### **Programme de subvention aux véhicules collectifs accessibles (PSVCA - Grant Program for Accessible Public Transit Vehicles)**

More accessible taxis are required to increase the travel opportunities of people in wheelchairs. For intercity transportation, although accessible buses can be available for all routes, reservations are required in advance, so a carrier that does not have a paratransit vehicle can rent one from another carrier. Efforts must be pursued to make more accessible buses available to meet demand.

## **Programme d'adaptation des véhicules pour personnes handicapées (PAV – Vehicle Adaptation Program for Persons with Disabilities)**

With regard to the modification of private vehicles under the PAV, the budget for this program is limited, leading to delays in acceptance.

### **Issue 2: A service offer that meets the needs of handicapped persons**

Taxis are an important component of the transportation offer for everyone, but the service offer by accessible taxis is not always sufficient to meet demand. It varies from region to region and is very limited in some areas. Currently, there are no guidelines enforcing minimal taxi service for people in wheelchairs. The lack or scarcity of accessible taxis limits the travel alternatives and autonomy of handicapped people. Most accessible taxis are used on contract by municipal paratransit services or health care and education networks, which means they are not available for private taxi trips.

With regard to municipal paratransit, the service offer does not always meet the needs of the eligible handicapped persons, particularly when trips outside the territory are not offered. The legal obligation for public transit organizations and municipalities to offer paratransit services to handicapped persons does not apply to trips outside the territory. But clients eligible for paratransit often have major disabilities and are limited to this mode of transportation. Furthermore, the interconnection between different services is not guaranteed and may entail specific logistical challenges, depending on the disabilities of the passengers, who, in some cases, cannot be left alone at their destination.

The Politique d'admissibilité au transport adapté has not been reviewed since 1998. It is important to ensure that it still meet the needs of handicapped persons. Some handicapped persons may also have trouble accessing a health care professional to complete the Attestation of Disability on the paratransit application form. Since applications for paratransit are increasing and handicapped persons are obliged to undergo evaluation processes that can be lengthy and repetitive, it would be appropriate to examine whether the process for accessing paratransit services could be simplified, to reduce bureaucracy, delays and costs, for both the handicapped person and the other people involved in the admission process.

Finally, with regard to the use of parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons, the provisions of the current regulation, which dates back to 1998, do not allow these spaces to be used by motorcycles. Over 2,000 handicapped persons with a identification sticker also have a driver's licence that includes a motorcycle permit, however.

### 3. 2018-2023 Paratransit Action Plan

Paratransit interventions must increase the service offer for handicapped persons so they can access a variety of accessible transportation modes suited to their needs.

This objective reflects one of the outcomes expected from the “Equals in Every Respect: Because Rights Are Meant to Be Exercised” policy, which is to offer handicapped persons the possibility of being mobile without added accessibility, time or cost constraints, no matter the place or the means used.

#### Issue 1: Improvement of aid programs for transportation of handicapped persons

##### **INTERVENTION PRIORITY 1.1: IMPROVE THE FUNDING RELATED TO AID PROGRAMS FOR TRANSPORTATION OF HANDICAPPED PERSONS**

###### **Measure 1: Increase government financial support for paratransit**

The goal of this measure is to adequately meet the needs of handicapped persons by ensuring that the budgets allocated for the financial aid programs are sufficient to meet demand.

The following programs are targeted by this measure:

- > Programme de subventions aux véhicules collectifs accessibles (PSVCA)
- > Programme de subvention au transport adapté (PSTA)
- > Programme d’adaptation de véhicules pour les personnes handicapées (PAV)

**Indicator:** Improved program

**Target:** Programs improved in 2018

**Budget:** PSVCA: \$10M (funds already planned); \$7.5M over five years (additional funds)  
PSTA: \$476M (funds already planned); \$84.8M over five years (additional funds)  
PAV: \$51M (funds already planned); \$12.5M over five years (additional funds)

##### **INTERVENTION PRIORITY 1.2: OPTIMIZE AID PROGRAMS FOR TRANSPORTATION OF HANDICAPPED PERSONS**

###### **Measure 2: Review the conditions of paratransit programs**

This measure is to evaluate all aspects of the financial aid programs (conditions, management, control) to ensure they meet the needs of handicapped persons. The evaluation will also include aspects related to the delivery of identification stickers for parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons.

One of the objectives is to establish a multi-year financial framework for the aid programs to allow for better service planning by paratransit organizations.

This measure could also assess the possibility of adding various actions to existing programs to support practices that facilitate the use of public transit by handicapped persons. These may be public transit awareness or familiarization programs, measures to ensure free passage for the person accompanying the handicapped person, etc.

**Indicator:** Report submitted

**Target:** Evaluation report submitted in 2019

## Issue 2: A service offer that meets the needs of handicapped persons

### INTERVENTION PRIORITY 2.1: IMPROVE THE MUNICIPAL PARATRANSIT SERVICE OFFER

#### Measure 3: Provide additional financial assistance for trips outside the territory

The objective of this measure is to allow trips outside the territory under the Programme de subvention au transport adapté, to meet the clients' needs.

Since there is no legal obligation for paratransit organizations to offer this type of trip, enhanced financing would provide an incentive to meet the travel needs of people eligible for paratransit. These people often need to go outside their territory, particularly for health care services.

Trips outside the territory made by paratransit organizations based on the current terms of the PSTA are considered to be the same as trips inside the territory. Measure 3 will therefore allow all paratransit organizations to receive additional funding for trips outside their territory.

**Indicator:** Increase in the number of trips outside the territory in comparison to the previous year

**Target:** Increase in the number of trips outside the territory in 2023 in comparison to 2017

**Budget:** \$5.3 million over five years (additional funds)

#### Measure 4: Review the Politique d'admissibilité au transport adapté

Measure 4 will evaluate the application of the policy to ensure that it still meets the needs of handicapped persons and make any necessary adjustments. Special attention will be paid to the admission process, to simplify it for handicapped persons, admissions committees and health care workers.

For this process, a consultation will be required with all stakeholders (paratransit users, designated organizations, associations representing handicapped persons, government departments and organizations, etc.).

**Indicator:** Policy published

**Target:** Publication of the new eligibility policy in 2020

## **INTERVENTION PRIORITY 2.2: IMPROVE THE MOBILITY FRAMEWORK FOR HANDICAPPED PERSONS**

### **Measure 5: Evaluate the opportunity to review the legal framework in order to improve the service offer**

In 2004, the National Assembly adopted the Act to amend the Act to secure the handicapped in the exercise of their rights and other legislative provisions (2004, c. 31), which contains provisions on paratransit. This law obliged all municipalities not yet served by a public paratransit service to enter into a contract to make paratransit available within its territory. It may be appropriate to consider extending the legal obligations to include service outside the territory. The issues related to trips outside the territory should be assessed now that paratransit services are available to almost the entire population of Québec.

As concerns the private transportation offer by accessible taxis, many stakeholders are requesting that the services of taxis accessible to people in wheelchairs be available on the same terms as regular taxi services, in all regions of Québec.

To support the MTMDET in its recommendations to the government, a working group of government departments, organizations and stakeholders will be created.

**Indicator:** Recommendations formulated by the MTMDET

**Target:** Government decision on recommendations by 2020

### **Measure 6: Review the Regulation respecting identification stickers for parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons**

This measure will improve access to parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons, facilitating autonomous access to public services and places at no risk to health or safety.

In addition to updating the conditions, which have not been reviewed since 1998, it will introduce terms of use that allow the spaces to be used by motorcycles.

**Indicator:** Regulation adopted

**Target:** New regulation adopted by 2019

## SUMMARY TABLE

Paratransit Intervention Framework  Issues, Intervention Priorities and Measures	Indicator	Target	Contribution to aspects of the Sustainable Mobility Policy					
			SMP aspect 1	SMP aspect 2	SMP aspect 3	SMP aspect 4	SMP aspect 5	Winning conditions
<b>ISSUE 1: Improvement of aid programs for transportation of handicapped persons</b>								
<b>Intervention Priority 1.1: Improve the funding related to aid programs for transportation of handicapped persons</b>								
Measure 1: Increase government financial support for paratransit (MTMDET)	Programs improved	Programs improved in 2018	X					
<b>Intervention Priority 1.2: Optimize aid programs for transportation of handicapped persons</b>								
Measure 2: Review the conditions of paratransit programs (MTMDET, OPHQ)	Report submitted	Evaluation report submitted in 2019	X					
<b>ISSUE 2: A service offer that meets the needs of handicapped persons</b>								
<b>Intervention Priority 2.1: Improve the municipal paratransit service offer</b>								
Measure 3: Provide additional financial assistance for trips outside the territory (MTMDET)	Increase in the number of trips outside the territory in comparison to the previous year	Increase in the number of trips outside the territory in 2023 in comparison to 2017	X					
Measure 4: Review the Politique d'admissibilité au transport adapté (MTMDET, OPHQ)	Policy published	Publication of the new eligibility policy in 2020	X					
<b>Intervention Priority 2.2: Improve the mobility framework for handicapped persons</b>								
Measure 5: Evaluate the opportunity to review the legal framework in order to improve the service offer (MTMDET, OPHQ)	Recommendations formulated	Government decision on recommendations by 2020	X					
Measure 6: Review the Regulation respecting identification stickers for parking spaces reserved for handicapped persons (MTMDET, OPHQ)	Regulation adopted	New regulation adopted by 2019	X					