

What we Heard Report 2025 Public Engagement - Accessibility Policy

ADVISE

barrierfreeyeg@edmonton.ca
edmonton.ca/accessibilitypolicy

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Project Overview..... | 3 |
| Executive Summary..... | 3 |
| Public Engagement..... | 4 |
| How We Engaged (ADVISE)..... | 4 |
| Who Was Engaged..... | 5 |
| What We Asked..... | 6 |
| What We Heard..... | 7 |
| Policy Updates..... | 7 |
| Updated Policy Statement..... | 7 |
| Updated Guiding Principles..... | 8 |
| Accessibility Actions..... | 10 |
| City Programs..... | 10 |
| Infrastructure..... | 11 |
| Streets and Sidewalks..... | 12 |
| Dedicated Accessible Transit Service or DATS..... | 13 |
| Public Transit..... | 14 |
| Transit Signage and Announcements..... | 15 |
| Communication and Engagement..... | 16 |
| Workplace Accessibility..... | 17 |
| Awareness and Training..... | 18 |
| General Feedback on Proposed Actions..... | 19 |
| What Happens Next..... | 20 |
| Appendix..... | 21 |
| Policy Updates..... | 21 |
| Accessibility Actions..... | 22 |
| Demographics..... | 30 |

Project Overview

The [Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy](#) is the City of Edmonton's commitment to ensure equitable opportunities for people with disabilities to access, participate and contribute in their city. The City is updating the Policy to align with current best practices and continue to effectively address the needs of Edmontonians with disabilities.

Corporate accessibility plans support the Policy through tangible actions. The City has developed new actions based on [feedback from the previous engagement](#). The actions will make up the next 2025-2029 Corporate Accessibility Plan and are intended to reduce barriers and improve accessibility to City programs, services, practices and spaces.

Executive Summary

By honouring the principle "Nothing About Us Without Us", the Corporate Accessibility Plan will take into account the insights, wisdom and lived experiences of people with disabilities to achieve our goal of a more accessible city. We asked participants for their thoughts on draft accessibility actions intended to reduce barriers in the city. This public engagement report contains feedback received from the community, including people with disabilities and their caregivers, as well as Edmontonians as a whole.

Feedback on the Accessibility Policy update and proposed actions was generally positive, with most respondents agreeing the Policy updates and proposed actions would improve accessibility in Edmonton. Participants raised concerns about implementation, funding, cost impacts and ensuring accountability.

Generally, respondents agreed that the proposed actions would improve accessibility. The highest levels of agreement were for actions related to streets and sidewalks, followed by infrastructure and City programs.

Public Engagement

Public engagement was conducted through two phases to gather feedback on proposed policy updates and draft accessibility actions for the 2025-2029 Corporate Accessibility Plan. In Phase 2, we asked Edmontonians to review the draft accessibility actions.

This 'What We Heard Report' contains findings from the second phase of engagement. We heard from people with disabilities and their caregivers, as well as Edmontonians as a whole. The feedback will be used to finalize the policy updates and accessibility actions.

How We Engaged



For the purpose of this engagement we selected ADVISE which means the public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects, or services.

Engagement opportunity:

- Online survey from March 6 to 16, 2025

The survey opportunity was communicated through:

- Email invitation to community partners and organizations
- Email invitation to 24,000+ Edmonton Insight Community members

- City of Edmonton website (edmonton.ca)
- The City's weekly Public Service Announcement
- Community promotion (e.g., Accessibility Advisory Committee sharing among their networks)

Who Was Engaged

- People with disabilities
- Family members and caregivers of a person with a disability
- The general public
- Organizations that advocate for and/or provide services or programs to people with disabilities
 - Emails with survey invitations were sent to more than 100 organizations, including Voices of Albertans with Disabilities, Excel Society, Skills Society, Inclusion Alberta, CNIB, Spinal Cord Injury Alberta, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council

Participation in Engagement Activities

- **1,441 respondents** to the online survey including Edmonton Insight Community members & members of the general public
 - 1426 respondents completed the survey themselves or on behalf of someone they know with a disability
 - 15 respondents completed the survey as representatives of organizations for people with disabilities
- [See appendix](#) for demographic information of respondents.

What We Asked

Questions addressed:

1. Feedback on the updated policy statement and guiding principles
2. Feedback on accessibility actions
 - i. City programs
 - ii. Infrastructure
 - iii. Streets and sidewalks
 - iv. Dedicated Accessible Transit Service or DATS
 - v. Public transit
 - vi. Transit announcements and signage
 - vii. Communication and Engagement
 - viii. Workplace accessibility
 - ix. Awareness and training

What We Heard

Policy Updates

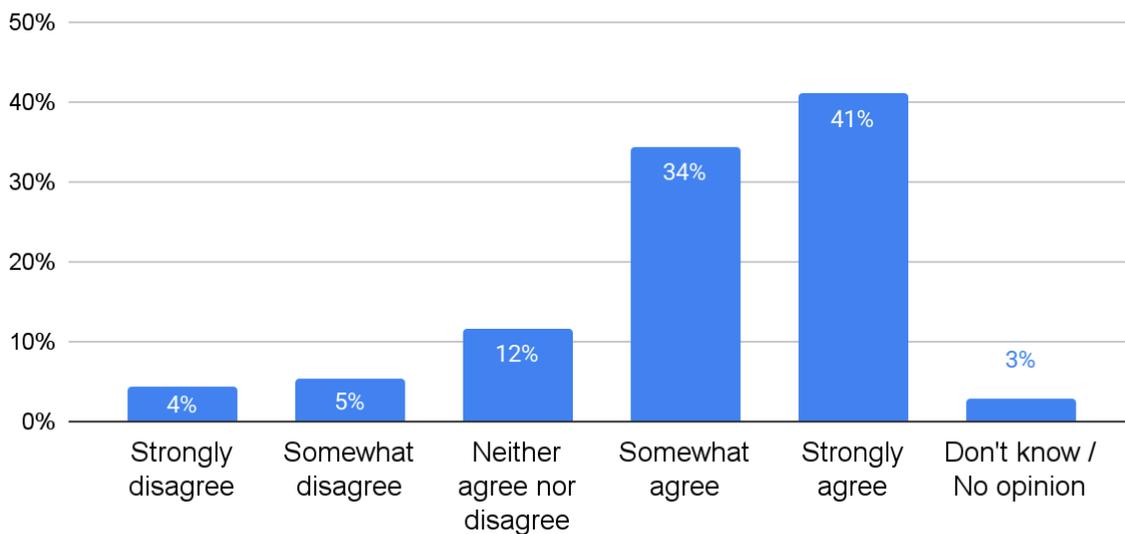
[See appendix](#) for the Policy updates.

Updated Policy Statement

Out of 1,441 respondents, 75 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the updated policy statement clearly outlines the commitments needed to make Edmonton a more accessible city.

The updated policy statement clearly outlines the commitments needed to make Edmonton a more accessible city.

Number of respondents = 1,441

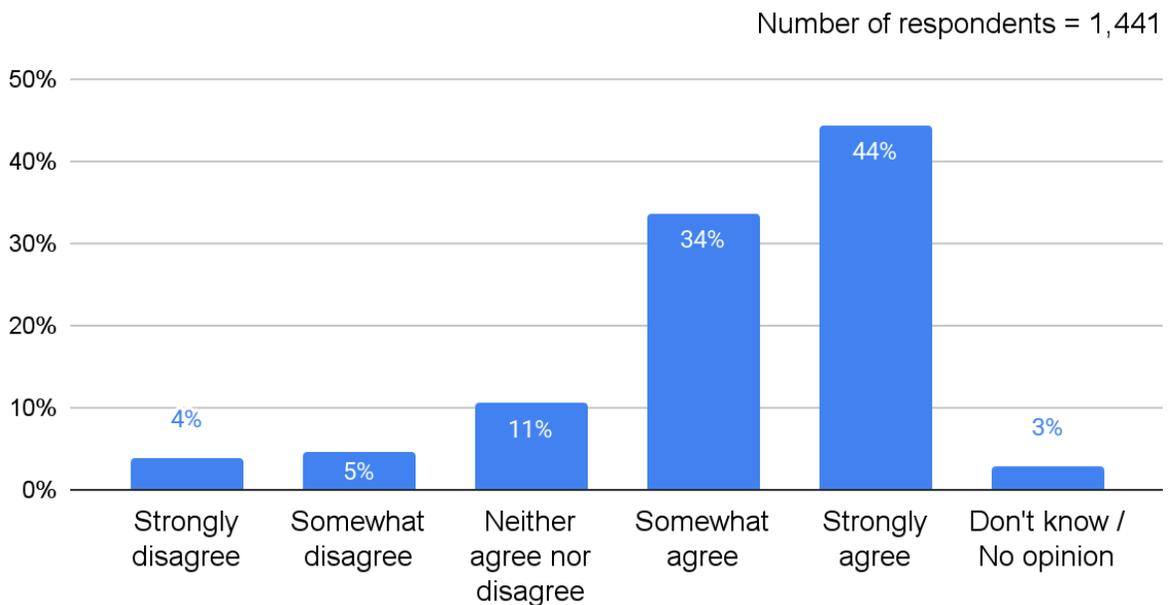


Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 81 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the updated policy statement clearly outlines the commitments needed to make Edmonton a more accessible city.

Updated Guiding Principles

Out of 1,441 respondents, 78 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the updated guiding principles are well-aligned with the City of Edmonton's goal of making Edmonton a more accessible city.

The guiding principles are well-aligned with the City of Edmonton's goal of making Edmonton a more accessible city.



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 83 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the updated policy guiding principles are well-aligned with the City of Edmonton's goal of making Edmonton a more accessible city.

455 respondents commented on the proposed policy updates. While most respondents welcomed the Policy updates, some expressed concerns that funding accessibility initiatives could lead to higher taxes and questioned whether these efforts primarily benefit a smaller segment of the population.

Key themes:

- Effective implementation - ensure the Policy translates into tangible, measurable improvements.

- Accountability - elected officials, staff, contractors and consultants must be aware of and responsible for implementing the Policy.
- Stronger commitment - less aspirational language and stronger commitment language was recommended.
- Measuring success - clear compliance monitoring mechanisms should be established.

*"Very progressive and ambitious, very clear direction that the city is taking." ~
Survey respondent*

Accessibility Actions

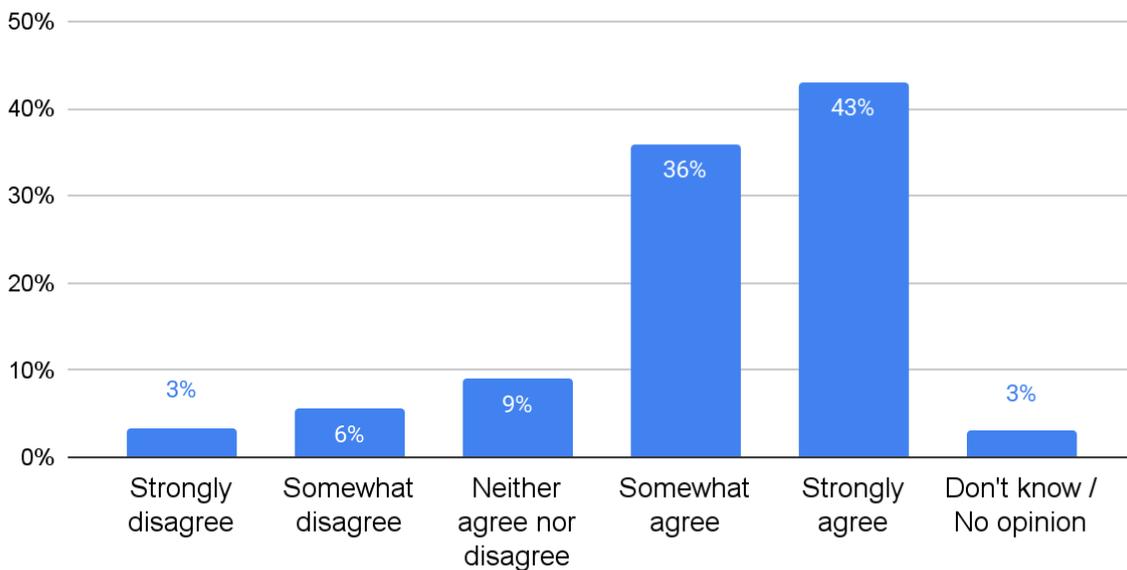
City Programs

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 79 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of City programs.

The actions will improve accessibility of City programs.

Number of respondents = 1,441



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 83 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of City programs.

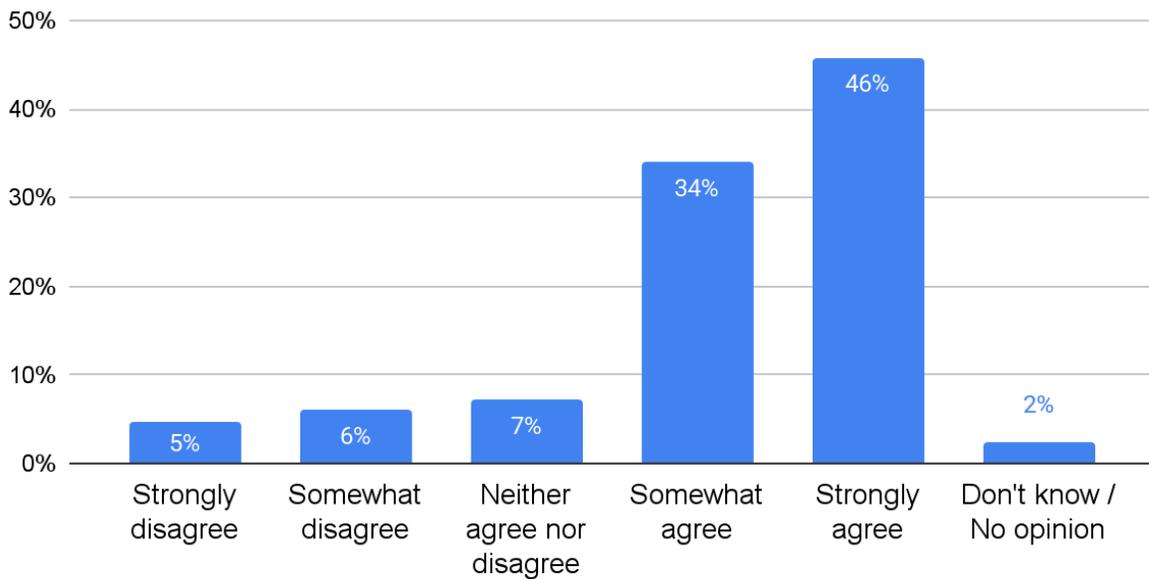
Infrastructure

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 80 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of City infrastructure.

The actions will improve accessibility of City infrastructure.

Number of respondents = 1,441



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 86 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of City infrastructure.

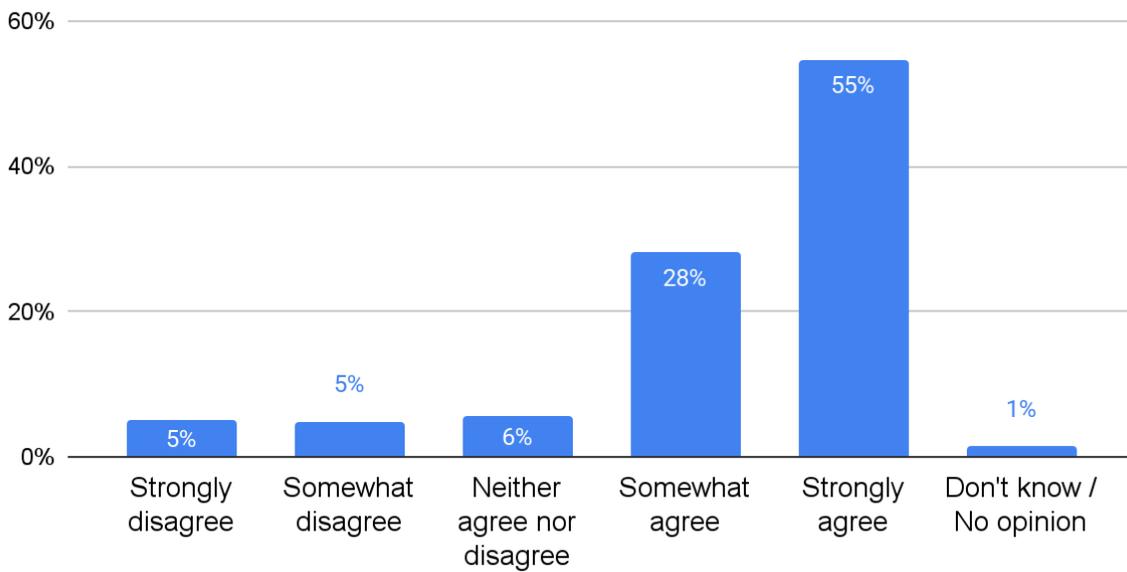
Streets and Sidewalks

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 83 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of streets and sidewalks.

The actions will improve accessibility of streets and sidewalks.

Number of respondents = 1,441



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 87 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of streets and sidewalks.

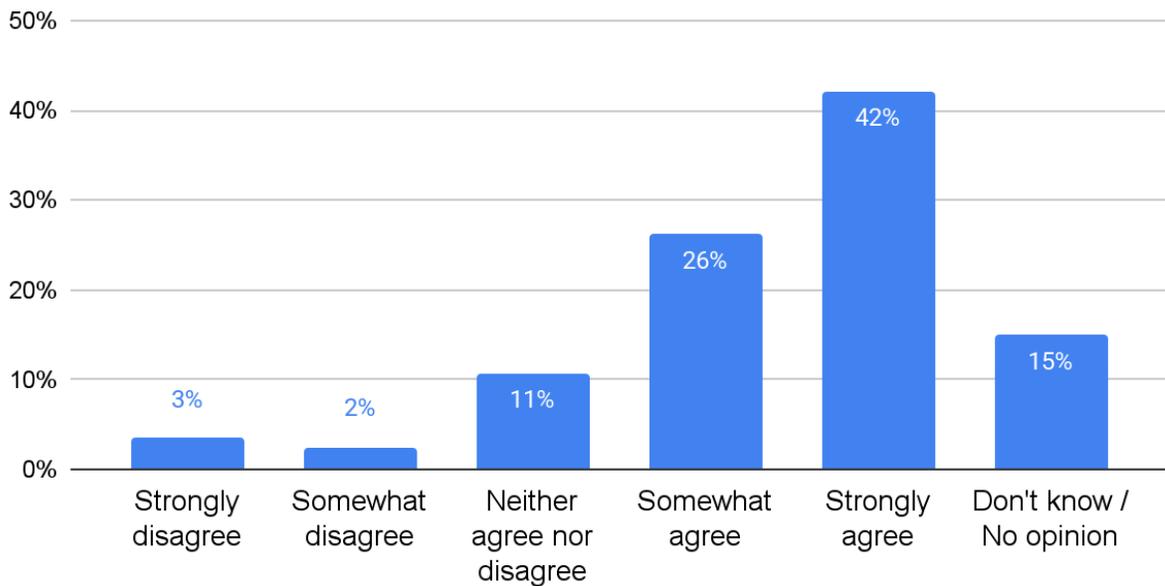
Dedicated Accessible Transit Service or DATS

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 68 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of DATS.

The actions will improve accessibility of DATS.

Number of respondents = 1,441



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 71 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of DATS.

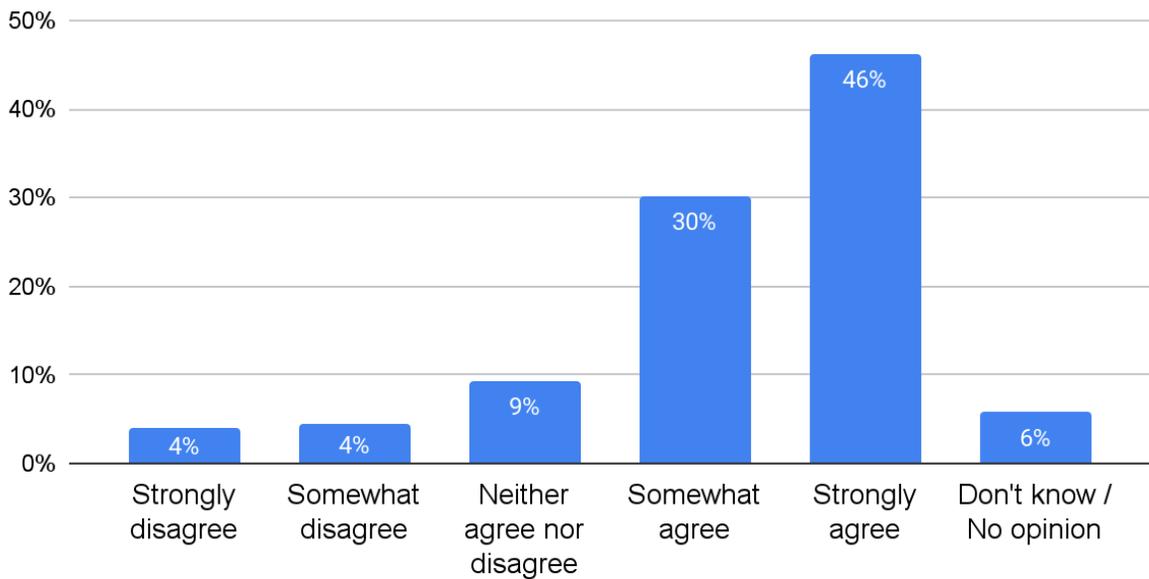
Public Transit

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 76 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of public transit.

The actions will improve accessibility of public transit.

Number of respondents = 1,441



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 81 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of public transit.

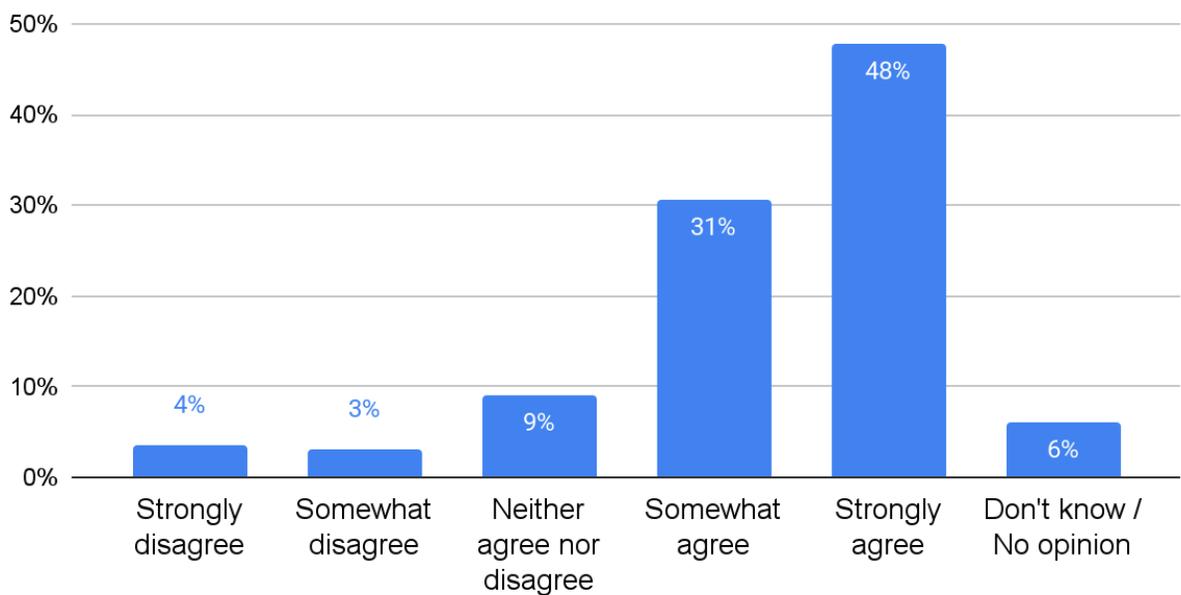
Transit Signage and Announcements

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 79 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of transit signage and announcements.

The actions will improve accessibility of transit signage and announcements.

Number of respondents = 1,441



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 82 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve accessibility of transit signage and announcements.

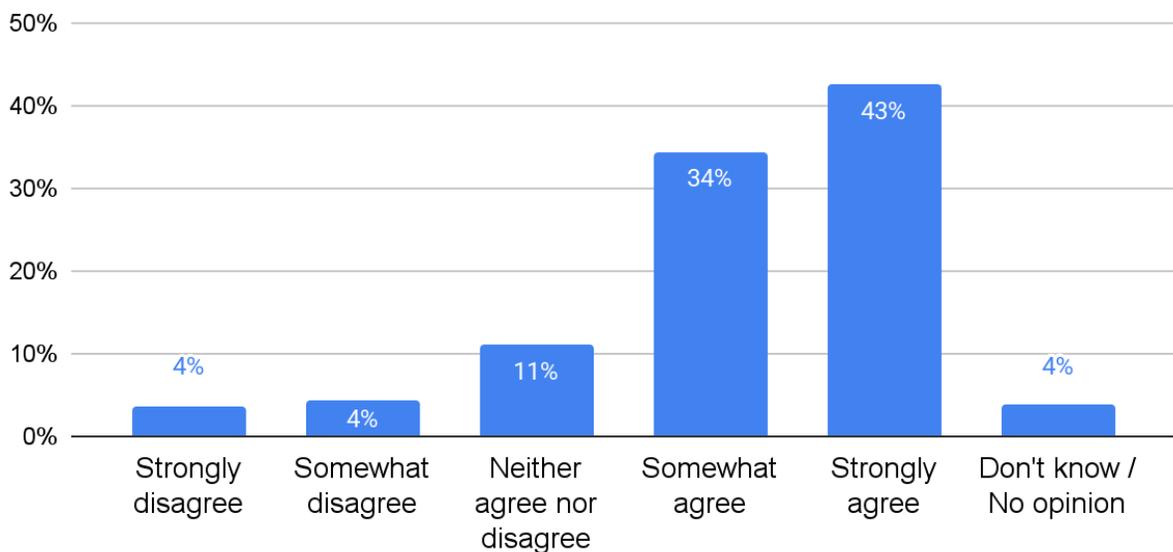
Communication and Engagement

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 77 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will help make City’s engagement activities and communication materials more accessible.

The actions will help make City’s engagement activities and communication materials more accessible.

Number of respondents = 1,441



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 84 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will help make City’s engagement activities and communication materials more accessible.

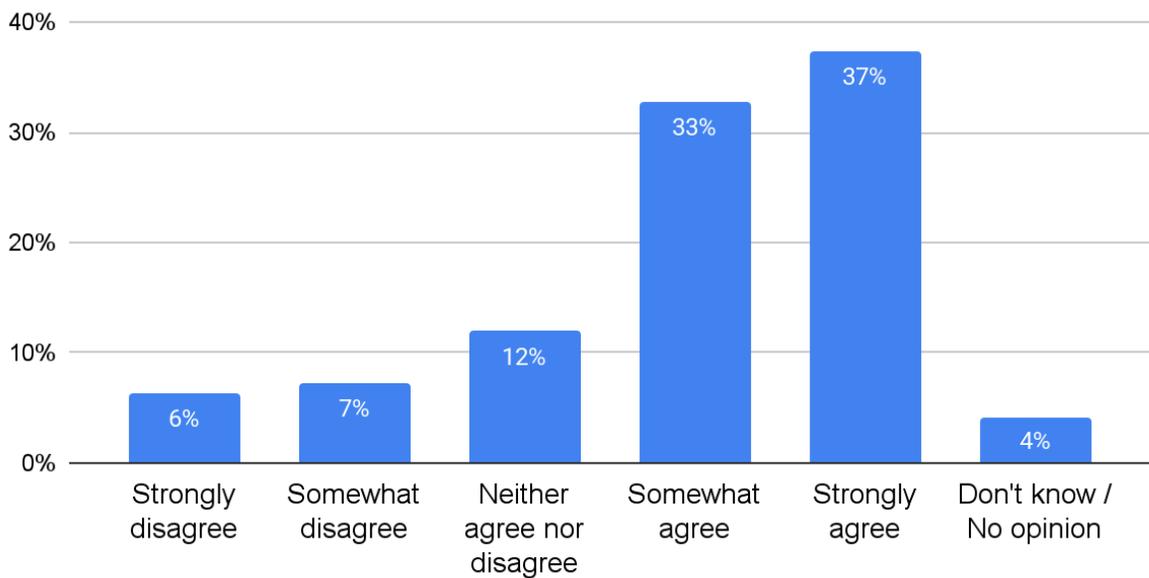
Workplace Accessibility

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 70 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will help make the City a more inclusive workplace.

The actions will help to make the City a more inclusive workplace.

Number of respondents = 1,441



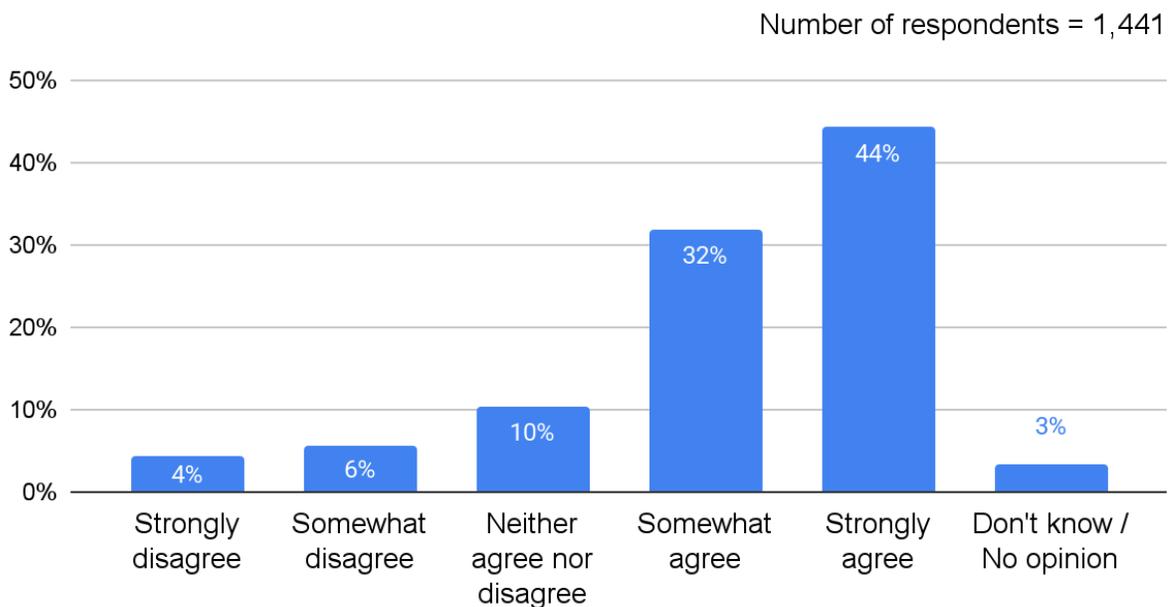
Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 79 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will help make the City a more inclusive workplace.

Awareness and Training

[See appendix](#) for list of actions.

Out of 1,441 respondents, 76 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve understanding of accessibility and enable City staff to better serve Edmontonians with disabilities.

The actions will improve understanding of accessibility and enable City staff to better serve Edmontonians with disabilities.



Among 464 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, 84 per cent agree (strongly agree + somewhat agree) the actions will improve understanding of accessibility and enable City staff to better serve Edmontonians with disabilities.

General Feedback on Proposed Actions

A total of 569 respondents provided comments on the proposed actions. The comments range from appreciation for the City's efforts on accessibility to questioning the need for proactively accommodating people with disabilities. Key themes included:

- Accountability and implementation - The need for accountability and a desire to ensure actions are implemented.
- User feedback - Suggestion to have public feedback mechanisms to identify and prioritize accessibility needs.
- Cost impact - Concerns that the cost of accessibility initiatives could increase taxes.
- Accessibility concerns - Many accessibility issues were raised including transit safety, insufficient accessible parking and inaccessible sidewalks in winter.

"Mostly these are all sensible actions that have the potential to improve accessibility but it is essential there be hard and clear timelines associated with these actions and resources for accountability, monitoring, reporting and evaluation." - Survey respondent

What Happens Next

- Feedback from the public engagement will be used to refine and finalize the updated Policy and the proposed actions for the Corporate Accessibility Plan.
- The updated Policy will go to Council for approval in Q2, 2025.
- Upon the City Manager's approval, the 2025-2029 Corporate Accessibility Plan will be published. Annual progress reports on implementation of the actions will be published on edmonton.ca.

Appendix

This appendix contains the survey questions that respondents were asked to review and provide feedback on.

Policy Updates

Policy statement: The policy statement outlines the commitments.

Respondents provided feedback on the following statement in the updated policy. New additions are highlighted after each sentence.

Edmonton aspires to be an accessible city by:

- **Providing** equitable access and opportunity for people with disabilities to access, participate and contribute to City programs, services, practices and spaces.

[New additions are: “Edmonton aspires to be an accessible city by”, and “providing”]
- **Proactively** identifying, removing and preventing attitudinal, systemic, physical, technology, and communication or **informational** barriers in City programs, services, practices and spaces.

[New additions are: “Proactively” and “informational”]
- **Promoting a workplace culture of inclusion** where qualified applicants and employees with **visible and invisible** disabilities have equitable access to employment opportunities, **career development**, and reasonable accommodation.

[New additions are: “Promoting a workplace culture of inclusion”, “visible and invisible”, and “career development”]
- **Aligning with Canadian accessibility best practices to create awareness** and encourage community groups, businesses,

institutions and organizations to incorporate accessibility and Universal Design in their programs, services, practices and spaces.

[New additions are: “Aligning with Canadian accessibility best practices to create awareness”]

Guiding principles

Respondents provided feedback on the following new guiding principles in the updated Policy.

To support the inclusion of people with disabilities, the City of Edmonton:

- Designs its programs, services, practices and spaces using Universal Design principles with a focus on accessible design.
- Establishes funding in its budgets for accessibility.
- Pursues financial and non-financial partnerships to advance accessibility.
- Aligns the provision of community funding with accessibility considerations.
- Monitors progress on accessibility outcomes.
- Practices continuous improvement in accessibility by seeking feedback from Edmontonians with disabilities and advocacy organizations.

Accessibility Actions

City Programs

Respondents provided feedback on the following actions intended to improve accessibility of City programs.

1. **Visitor amenities:** Identify, test and validate potential opportunities for enhancing accessible amenities in recreation facilities.
2. **Communications:** Increase public and user awareness by improving communication about programs and services.
3. **Partner-delivered programs:** Ensure accessibility is a key consideration in the development and delivery of recreational programs, services, and events offered by external partners.
4. **City recreation programs:** Make it easier to access, engage and participate in City's recreation programs (e.g. by simplifying Leisure Access Program registration)
5. **Training:** Enhance employee skills and knowledge for supporting customers with disabilities by developing training and a communication strategy to raise awareness about accessibility.
6. **Enforcement:** Address accessibility challenges through timely and effective bylaw enforcement (e.g. prioritize accessible parking enforcement).
7. **Funding:** Identify ways to promote accessibility through the City's granting process, and explore funding opportunities for accessibility projects, initiatives and plans.

Infrastructure

Respondents provided feedback on the following actions intended to improve accessibility of City infrastructure.

1. **Standardizing best practices:** Integrate accessibility best practices into current standards and processes used for infrastructure project design and delivery.
2. **Barrier-free access during construction:** Develop requirements on

maintaining barrier-free access around construction sites.

3. **Compliance with standards:** Ensure City infrastructure projects meet accessibility standards by formalizing the accessibility review process.
4. **Accessibility audits:** Audit existing infrastructure, including public streets and sidewalks, for compliance with accessibility standards.
5. **Budget:** Explore funding opportunities to improve accessibility of existing infrastructure owned and operated by the City.
6. **Housing:** Develop an action plan for increasing the supply of accessible affordable housing.
7. **Limited mobility stalls:** Explore adding "limited mobility" parking stalls next to accessible stalls in City-owned public facilities. These stalls would be for parking placard holders, providing closer access to entrances.

Streets and Sidewalks

Respondents provided feedback on the following actions intended to improve accessibility of streets and sidewalks.

1. **Benchmark Program:** To allow for more rest opportunities, add benches to underserved areas and upgrade old benches to current accessibility standards.
2. **Sidewalk maintenance program:** Reduce notification backlog on maintenance of existing sidewalks to ensure it is safe and accessible for pedestrians to use.
3. **Curb Ramp Program:** Add curb ramps at crosswalks to make them accessible for pedestrians.
4. **Pedestrian crossing time:** Review and adjust pedestrian crossing

duration as needed to increase the crossing time for pedestrians.

5. **Active pathways snow removal:** Active pathways snow clearing to meet or exceed Service Level Agreements for priority 1,2 and 3 routes.

Dedicated Accessible Transit Service or DATS

The following actions are intended to improve accessibility of DATS.

1. **DATS scheduling:** Implement a new DATS trip booking and scheduling process that allows users to book trips based on appointment times, enabling them to better plan for time-sensitive appointments.
2. **Integrated dispatch system:** Developing technical integration between dispatch systems of DATS and DATS' taxi providers, allowing for more flexible delivery of service via deployment of taxis in real time. This will help to ensure service standards are met while improving the ability to respond to operational disruptions.
3. **DATS fleet review:** Reviewing DATS fleet for accessibility considerations, client comfort and convenience, and operational considerations to maximize service efficiency and ability to accommodate a variety of mobility aids.

Public Transit

Respondents provided feedback on the following actions intended to improve accessibility of public transit.

1. **Arc card tap exemption program:** Develop and deploy an Arc flash pass for transit users with disabilities who are unable to tap their Arc card.
2. **Transit facilities accessibility audits:** Conduct accessibility audits of transit centres and LRT stations to identify opportunities for accessibility improvements.

3. **Transit fleet review:** Develop a framework to review the accessibility features of new ETS bus purchases to ensure all buses meet accessibility standards.
4. **ETS trip planner updates:** Updating the ETS website and trip planner to be more compatible with screen readers on Android and Apple devices.
5. **Bus directions:** Determine feasibility of providing bus stop directions online to offer riders greater clarity on routes and their direction of travel for each stop, aiding in trip planning and reducing confusion.
6. **Curb visibility:** Brightly paint curbs at transit centers to help riders see where to get on and off buses safely.
7. **Stop buttons:** Review stop request button locations in buses for consistency and to be in line with accessibility best practices.
8. **Train doors:** Remove middle bar on train doors to reduce mobility barriers, as the LRT fleet is replaced.

Transit signage and announcements

Respondents provided feedback on the following actions intended to make public transit announcements and signage more accessible.

1. **Digital transit signage:** Review digital signage in transit stations and vehicles for alignment with accessibility best practices.
2. **Churchill connection signage:** Review signage at Churchill to highlight Valley Line and Capital Line connections to address challenges raised by riders with vision loss and improve wayfinding for all transit riders.
3. **Train announcements:** Review LRT audible announcements for accuracy. Standardize audio and visual announcements on LRT trains

- for consistency and clarity as older units are replaced.
4. **Valley Line signage:** Review feasibility of increasing font size of the Valley Line train banners to improve accessibility for riders with low vision.
 5. **Bus stop announcements:** Review audible bus stop announcements for consistency and clarity.
 6. **Hearing loops:** Explore the feasibility and effectiveness of hearing loop technology to make transit announcements more accessible for riders who are hard of hearing.

Communication and Engagement

Respondents provided feedback on the following actions intended to help make the City's communication and engagement activities more accessible.

1. **Plain language training:** Develop and deliver plain language training to staff.
2. **Annual public engagement:** Conduct annual engagement with the public, people with disabilities, and caregivers to capture barriers and opportunities to make public engagement more accessible.
3. **Engagement accessibility considerations:** Develop and share the online and in-person public engagement accessibility considerations across the corporation to support consistent application of best practices.
4. **Edmonton accessibility map:** Seek opportunities to centralize and share information on the accessibility of City owned and maintained assets, including facilities, parks, playgrounds, and the transportation network (sidewalks, connectivity to bus stops and transit stations).
5. **Public maps accessibility review:** Seek opportunities to add

accessibility reviews to the public map creation process.

6. **Accessible options of tax notices:** Raise public awareness about the availability of accessible formats for assessment and taxation notices.

Workplace accessibility

Respondents provided feedback on the following actions intended to help the City to be a more inclusive workplace.

1. **Review job requirements:** Evaluate current practices and processes around requirements for specific roles, to mitigate employment barriers, especially for those with disabilities.
2. **Workplace resources:** Ensure all staff, including those with visible and invisible disabilities, are aware of resources that support a safe and respectful workplace.
3. **Scent-free workspaces:** Explore the implications of making City of Edmonton administrative spaces scent-free and promote awareness of existing Guidelines to Support Employees with Allergies and Chemical Sensitivities.

Awareness and training

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on the following actions intended to raise awareness on accessibility.

1. **Staff training:** Provide various learning opportunities to staff to raise awareness on barriers to accessibility and how to prevent them in their work.
2. **Consultant training:** Provide consultants working on City's infrastructure projects with training to help them identify and prevent accessibility barriers.
3. **Contractor training:** Deliver online training to construction

- contractors on “Safe and Accessible Worksites” to build an understanding of appropriately accommodating pedestrians on City projects.
4. **Service dog awareness:** Increase awareness among frontline staff on Service Dog legislation and right to access. Add "Service dogs are welcome" stickers to all City of Edmonton facilities (i.e. public and administrative).
 5. **ETS disability awareness training:** Develop a training plan and deliver Disability Awareness Training to staff in Edmonton Transit Service.
 6. **Recognizing accessible facilities:** Explore the feasibility of incorporating an "accessible facility" category into the Prairie Urban Design Awards or reinstating the Mayor's Accessibility Awards.
 7. **ETS Travel training program:** Continue to monitor and adapt the ETS travel training program to support and empower riders of all abilities to travel independently.

Demographics

| Respondents who identify as | n=1,441 |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Persons with disabilities | 32.5% |
| 2SLGBTQIA+ | 7.9% |
| Born outside of Canada | 7.6% |
| Racialized / visible minority | 6.3% |
| Indigenous | 2.7% |
| New to Canada (less than 5 years) | 0.3% |
| Other | 6.9% |
| None of the above | 41.7% |
| Prefer not to answer | 10.0% |

| Type of disability | n=464 |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Mobility (Physical) | 66.4% |
| Pain-related | 31.9% |
| Mental Health related | 25.9% |
| Hearing | 17.7% |
| Seeing (visual) | 11.0% |
| Learning | 10.1% |
| Developmental | 9.7% |
| Other | 11.2% |
| Prefer not to answer | 3.2% |

| Gender | n=1,441 |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Woman | 52.5% |
| Man | 42.9% |
| Non-binary | 2.2% |
| Transgender | 0.9% |
| Two-spirit | 0.3% |
| Another gender not listed above | 0.5% |
| Prefer not to answer | 2.5% |
| No answer | 0.5% |

| Income | n=1,441 |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Under 30,000 | 7.2% |
| 30,000 to 59,999 | 14.1% |
| 60,000 to 99,999 | 21.5% |
| 100,000 to 149,999 | 20.4% |
| 150,000 and over | 19.6% |
| Other | 6.9% |
| Prefer not to answer | 9.8% |
| No answer | 0.5% |

| Residence | n=1,441 |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Lives in Edmonton | 98.6% |
| Do not live in Edmonton | 0.5% |
| Prefer not not answer | 0.3% |
| No answer | 0.6% |

| Age group | n=1,441 |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Under 25 | 0.8% |
| 25-44 | 19.2% |
| 45-64 | 36.9% |
| 65+ | 40.5% |
| Prefer not to answer | 2.2% |
| No answer | 0.5% |