

Section	Accessibility	Current Approval Date
Subject	Service Animal Policy	March 3, 2026

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and requirements relating to customers with a Service Animal travelling on Metrolinx vehicles and while attending Metrolinx properties. It serves to reduce instances that create risks of unclear staff guidance and to provide positive customer experiences.

## POLICY STATEMENT

Metrolinx is committed to providing an accessible and inclusive environment for all customers. Service Animals are welcome on all Metrolinx transportation and properties, in accordance with the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#), the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) (The Code) and the [Blind Person's Rights Act](#).

This policy is publicly available to ensure transparency and consistency in application across GO Transit, UP Express, and other Metrolinx services.

**Note:** This policy is not superseded by any of the requirements in the Metrolinx Pet Policy (Issue Date: October 27, 2022) or Metrolinx by-law No 2. (section 3).

## SCOPE & APPLICATION

This policy applies to all Metrolinx staff and contractors who interact with customers, as well as all customers travelling on Metrolinx services with Service Animals across Metrolinx property.

**Note:** 'Property' refers to any GO Transit or UP Express station, facility or vehicle managed by Metrolinx that a customer may access during their journey.

Metrolinx staff must follow the policy when serving customers who travel with a Service Animal. It applies to both unionized and non-union staff. Metrolinx staff and business units are responsible for meeting Service Animal obligations when providing goods, services, and access to Metrolinx facilities, including GO Transit, UP Express, and all PRESTO devices.

This policy, in accordance with the Code, shall:

- Prohibit the denial of service to a person with a disability because of their Service Animal.
- Take precedence over other rules (e.g., a 'no animals' policy in a private or public building) in cases of conflict.

**Note:** In limited circumstances, accommodation for a Service Animal may not be possible for health and safety reasons (e.g., if the Service Animal cannot be safely managed or contained, see [General Rules for Traveling with a Service Animal](#)).

The policy is publicly available to ensure transparency for all customers. Customers can share feedback relating to their use of Service Animals on Metrolinx systems through the [GO Transit Inquiries and Feedback Process page](#).

## **SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

The following requirements and actions shall occur in accordance with this policy:

### **1. Customer communications re: Service Animals**

- Publication of the customer-facing Metrolinx Service Animal Policy to inform staff and customers of the acceptance of Service Animals onto premises and within vehicles to gain access to Metrolinx services.

### **2. Service Animal Eligibility**

- Station staff (e.g., Station Ambassadors, Duty Managers) shall not unlawfully restrict access to stations and vehicles for customers travelling with Service Animals.
- Customers travelling with Service Animals are permitted on Metrolinx vehicles, property and facilities anywhere that the public is generally permitted, with the exceptions below.
- A customer using a Service Animal is permitted to enter Metrolinx premises and keep their animal with them unless excluded by law from being there, or if accommodating the Service Animal would amount to undue hardship.

### **3. Identification Requirements**

- Customers using a Service Animal are not required to register their need or their animal's function with Metrolinx to use our services.
- Documentation may be requested by Metrolinx staff when it is not obvious that an animal is a Service Animal. The documentation that Metrolinx might request could include (but is not limited to):
  - Registration with a disability service organization
  - Identification card from the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General for people who are blind and use a guide dog.
  - A letter from one of nine health professionals identified in the AODA.

### **4. Staff Training**

- Training will be delivered to staff as required or as a part of the new hire onboarding process.

### **5. Policy Availability**

- This policy is available in French and in English.
- This policy is posted on the Metrolinx Accessibility page and other GO, UP, and PRESTO webpages.

- Updates may be made to the policy from time to time and will be posted on the above websites.

A plain language summary along with a FAQ document will be made available for ease of understanding.

**Note:** The policy is available in alternate formats or with communication supports by contacting [accessibility@metrolinx.com](mailto:accessibility@metrolinx.com) or through the [Contact Centre](#).

## GENERAL RULES FOR SERVICE ANIMALS

The following general rules apply to all customers travelling with Service Animals on Metrolinx services:

### 1. Control and Behaviour

- a. Service Animals must always remain under the control of their handler (e.g., by leash, harness, or other means).
- b. Service Animals must behave appropriately and not disrupt operations or other passengers.

### 2. Placement on Vehicles

- a. Service Animals should remain on the floor, in the customer's arms or lap, and not occupy seats.
- b. Customers should ensure their Service Animal does not block aisles, doors, or emergency exits.
- c. The upper level may pose risks for animals, including navigating stairs, space limitations, and delayed evacuation in the event of emergency. For the safety of all passengers and animals, it is strongly encouraged that animals remain on the lower level whenever possible.

### 3. Identification

- a. While not required, customers are encouraged to have their Service Animals wear visible identifiers (e.g., vest or harness) for easy recognition.
- b. Documentation may be requested when it is not obvious that the animal is a Service Animal (see [Identification Requirements](#)).

### 4. Health and Safety

- a. Service Animals must be clean, well-behaved, and not pose a health or safety risk to others.
- b. In cases where a Service Animal exhibits aggressive or unsafe behaviour, staff may take reasonable action, including asking the customer to disembark for the safety of all passengers. Customers may continue their journey if they get the animal under control.

## 5. Allergies and Phobias

- a. In the instance that customers have conflicting needs, for instance, due to allergies or fear of animals, staff will make reasonable efforts to accommodate all parties while meeting legislative requirements for the customer with a disability to travel with their Service Animal.

## 6. Complaints and Escalations

- a. Customers may report concerns or incidents involving Service Animals through Metrolinx's established complaint channels.
- b. The AODA sets standards to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. However, it is not designed to address complaints if a customer feels they have been discriminated against because they have a disability. Customers who feel they have been personally discriminated against based on a disability that would like to take action can contact the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

## 7. Animal Safety

Service Animals are generally permitted on all Metrolinx services and properties. However, in rare circumstances, **Metrolinx may restrict access** if:

- a. The animal **poses a safety or health risk** to customers, staff, or other animals, including circumstances where the Service Animal becomes aggressive or purposely injures another customer. In such a case, staff will work with the customer to identify an alternative arrangement to maintain accessibility wherever possible.

**Note:** Metrolinx may not be able to accommodate Service Animals that are not domesticated or that might present a potential danger to staff or customers (e.g., exotic or wild animals). If permitted, this kind of Service Animal must be harnessed or contained (e.g., a portable carrier) and access to the animal may be limited while on Metrolinx services and/or property. Prior clearance with Metrolinx regarding attending Metrolinx services with a Service Animal of this nature is highly encouraged.

8. Staff must promptly notify the Network Operations Control (NOC) when encountering situations where:
  - The Service Animal poses a safety concern
  - Staff or customers have an allergy, fear, or phobia that creates conflict

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All Metrolinx staff are required to adhere to the AODA and the Human Rights Code requirements regarding Service Animals.

Responsibilities based on role include:

### Vice-President Customer Experience within CTO

- Approval of the policy and its structures.

### Directors, Managers and Supervisors

- Taking responsibility for ensuring the policy is followed as required.

### Staff

- Adhering to the policy and training regarding Service Animals.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All staff who encounter an incident involving a customer with a Service Animal are required to report it to the NOC, which will document the details and notify the relevant authorities.

## ESCALATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS

While Metrolinx adhere to AODA requirements and ensures compliance with the Code, this does not supersede standards of behaviour that are essential for both customer safety and for ensuring the safe operation of a vehicle. If the presence of a Service Animal affects the safety of staff, customers, or the operation of the vehicle, the customer and their Service Animal may be required to vacate Metrolinx services and property.

The Metrolinx Pet Policy applies to animals that are **not classified as Service Animals**.

Service Animals are permitted at all times and are **not subject to the restrictions outlined in the Pet Policy**. These restrictions (e.g., time-of-day limits, carrier requirements, and location guidelines) apply only to pets.

Staff must not apply Pet Policy rules to customers travelling with Service Animals.

Customers travelling with pets must follow the requirements outlined in the Metrolinx Pet Policy.

## REFERENCES

- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)
- [The Blind Persons Act](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- Pet Policy (Bus Operations Information Bulletin 22-251)

## DEFINITIONS

- **AODA** – The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, which lists requirements for businesses to lawfully accommodate persons with disabilities.
- **Disruptive Behaviour (Service Animal)** – Disruptive behaviour refers to any actions by a Service Animal that interfere with the safe operation of Metrolinx vehicles, the comfort of other customers, or the ability of staff to provide services. Examples of disruptive behaviour may include, but are not limited to:
  - Excessive barking, whining, or vocalization
  - Jumping on or nudging other passengers
  - Blocking aisles, doors, or emergency exits
  - Aggressive actions such as growling, lunging, or biting
  - Refusal to remain under the handler’s control (e.g., not responding to leash or harness)
  - Behaviour that poses a health, safety, or hygiene risk to customers, staff, or other animals
- **OHRC** – The Ontario Human Rights Code **prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on a protected ground in a protected social area.**
- **Service animals** are animals, often but not exclusively dogs, that are trained or utilized to help people with disabilities. Service Animals perform many tasks, including but not limited to:
  - Guiding a blind or person with vision loss around obstacles
  - Alerting a person with diabetes about low blood sugar levels
  - Protecting a person with epilepsy during seizures
  - Calming a person with autism in an environment with sensory stimulation
  - Retrieving out-of-reach objects for a person with a disability
  - Alerting a handler who is deaf or hard of hearing about sounds.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) does not prescribe which functions, such as the above, that a service animal might provide.