



Comox Valley Airport Commission

Accessibility Plan & Feedback Process

2024-2027

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General

Introduction

The Comox Valley Airport is dedicated to providing a world class facility that promotes a welcoming and inclusive culture, and our “Accessibility Plan” is a fundamental element of this commitment. The airport received Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification in 2020 and continues to look for ways to make the airport more accessible. The Accessibility Plan is a requirement through the Accessible Canada Act. It includes specifics on removing barriers to accessibility, as well as preventing new barriers from emerging. It also contains milestones to help guide implementation of the plan. A detailed feedback process is clearly identified as a means of capturing a broad spectrum of airport users.

The Comox Valley Airport recognizes that direct input from persons with disabilities is essential to making this plan effective and we have established the Airport Accessibility Consultation Committee to review the plan and will continue to assist with ongoing comprehensive consultation at regular intervals.

This Accessibility Plan and additional information about the Comox Valley Airport accessibility services, and contact links for feedback, are available online at:

www.comoxairport.com/accessibility

Alternative Format

The plan can be made available in alternative formats upon request. Guidelines stipulate that the Comox Valley Airport must:

- a. provide print, large print, and electronic formats of their plan within 15 days of a request; and
- b. provide braille or audio versions of their plan within 45 days of a request.

Feedback Process

The public is invited to provide feedback about how the Comox Valley Airport is implementing this Accessibility Plan, our feedback process, or any barriers discovered at the airport. Please contact us in by using the address, phone number, or email identified below. All feedback will be acknowledged promptly in the same manner which it was received. Feedback can be made anonymously.

Mailing Address:

Comox Valley Airport Commission
118-1250 Knight Road
Comox, BC, V9M 4H2

Phone: 250-890-0829

Email: accessibility@comoxairport.com

The Comox Valley Airport Operations Manager coordinates the plan and manages the feedback.

Principles of Accessibility

The Comox Valley Airport believes in, and is committed to, upholding the following principles of accessibility:

1. All persons must be treated with dignity, regardless of their disabilities;
2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able to have and wish to have regardless of their disabilities;
3. All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society regardless of their disabilities;
4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities;
5. Laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments, and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons;
6. Persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services and structures; and
7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Accessibility Certification

Rick Hansen Accessibility Certification

The airport was certified by the Rick Hansen Foundation 2020.

The airport was well supported by the Rick Hansen Foundation and plans to commence re-certification in 2025.



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Focus Areas of Accessibility

Staffing

The Comox Valley Airport Commission is committed to following an objective, fair, timely, competitive, and accessible process at all stages of the employment cycle. The airport culture is strongly focussed on inclusion and every staff member is trained in the importance of accessibility, how to support people with disabilities, and to look for methods to enhance accessibility.

Hiring

Job opportunities are posted on our website, advertised in local newspapers and included on social media platforms. We will now actively share our employment opportunities with organizations that support persons with disabilities.

- Interview process – The location for the interview must be accessible and video conferencing should be utilized when the airport location is deemed a barrier.

Training

- Initial Training - All staff receive instruction on accessibility during their initial training and this occurs within three months of being hired by the Comox Valley Airport Commission. Currently, the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) training modules incorporate a major component of that education. This information is available online at <https://otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/training-transportation-service-providers-how-assist-persons-disabilities>
- Refresher Training - All Comox Valley Airport Commission employees receive refresher training annually during a scheduled staff training meeting. The CTA modules are supplemented by hands on wheelchair training. All changes in policies and procedures are included in the refresher training.

Records

The training is logged into the airport staff training records and tracked through this program to ensure that all staff members are proficient in their accessibility procedures. The records are held on file for as long as the individual is employed at the airport.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

The aim of the Information and Communication Technologies section of the airport accessibility plan is to ensure the airport information is communicated via various methods so that it works for everyone.

- Visual paging – A system has been developed for the airlines which utilizes the flight information display system to display standard airline messages that are being broadcast using public address system. These messages are shown in a rolling banner format across the bottom of the screen, thereby enhancing the comprehension of information for persons who are hard of hearing.
- Pre-recorded messages – The airport is in the process of adding a system to play pre-recorded messages (in both official languages) which will standardize the message format, slow the speed of the announcement, and result in better comprehension of all information delivered using the public address system.
- Hearing loop – The airport installed a hearing loop in the hold room to assist passengers who use a hearing aid. It amplifies sound and removes background noise thereby making communication clearer.
- YQQ Website – By searching “accessibility” on our website www.comoxairport.com passengers can learn about the accessible programs and services offered at the airport.
- Social media – The airport utilizes Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X as means of enhancing support to travellers through a broad network of connectiveness.

Communication (other than ICT)

Communication is vital to travellers using the Comox Airport and we employ a variety of tools to deliver messages to passengers and employees in a manner that works most effectively for each individual. The local community encompasses people who are sometimes challenged by advancing technology and therefore rely on simple, non-electronic communication. We also face an increasingly diverse society and often encounter language barriers. The Sunflower Lanyard program (highlighted below) allows the airport to discreetly communicate a hidden disability using a clear, simple, and effective method.

- Signage – The airport signage utilizes universal symbols for way-finding, creating an intuitive environment by reducing confusion and enhancing the navigational accessibility of the terminal.
- Language List – The airport maintains a list of all staff possessing a useful level of a second language, including sign language.
- Sunflower Lanyard Program – The Comox Valley Airport is a participant in the globally recognized Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program to support passengers with hidden (invisible) disabilities. The Sunflower logo aims to assist those travelling with invisible disabilities who may need a little extra patience, care, and assistance, or simply a little more time during their travel experience. A Sunflower Lanyard can be obtained in advance of travel by contacting the airport administration via telephone (250-890-0829) or by email at info@comoxairport.com

Procurement of Goods and Services

The Comox Valley Airport endeavors to purchase all goods in an ethical, inclusive, and accessible manner. The facility depends on the procurement of supplies to maintain the most basic functions (maintenance, cleaning, food, etc.) for passengers and employees. Obtaining cost-effective items is fundamental to the process but must be balanced with the other requirements of our accessible and inclusive culture.

The airport will ensure vendors are accountable to similar standards of accessibility. This will be balanced with assisting them when needed, such as support when receiving goods (i.e., convenient accessible parking, and assistance with moving products when they arrive).

Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

The Comox Valley Airport is committed to ensuring that all programs and services we provide are implemented in a manner that includes everyone and respects the dignity of persons with disabilities. The Airport Accessibility Committee will review our present and future programs to ensure they effectively meet the aim of inclusion.

- Volunteer Ambassador Program - designed to provide assistance to all our guests including persons with disabilities. It also includes the opportunity for all people to work as airport volunteers. Awareness training is provided annually.
- Curbside assistance - For those requiring assistance with baggage or mobility aids from the curbside zone to the check-in counter, an airport (CVAC) staff member is trained and available to help. Contact any member of the CVAC staff on site or call 250-218-3583 and a staff member will be promptly dispatched to assist.
- Support on departure -At check-in, an air carrier representative can provide wheelchair service, and/or an escort through security to the departure gate and onto the aircraft. Advance notice to the air carrier when making the flight reservations is helpful. Electric cart service is not available.
- Support on arrival - Please communicate with your air carrier if assistance is required with deplaning. Your air carrier will also provide assistance to reach the baggage carousel to collect your checked bag/s. If the air carrier representative is unable to assist to curbside, please ask them to contact a CVAC representative for assistance, or call 250-218-3583 and a staff member will be promptly dispatched to assist.
- Escort Passes – Passengers who require assistance can have a support person (family member or friend) escort them through pre-board screening to the boarding lounge. The airline will provide the pass at check-in, provided the escort has valid photo identification. The escort will be subject to the same security screening requirements as the traveller.

Transportation

A vital component of your journey through the Comox Valley Airport includes your transportation to and from our facility. We strive to ensure a variety of options are available and that your choices are accessible for both passengers and employees. Parking, drop-off, and loading also play an important role in the transportation element of making the airport accessible.

Parking lot

- Passengers - There are six accessible parking stalls in the parking lot directly across from the terminal building. These stalls are close to the parking kiosks which are accessible with letdowns in front of each machine.

- Staff - The airport also accommodates employees with disabilities by providing parking options that are close to the terminal.

Accessible Loading Zones

- A dedicated passenger drop-off/loading zone is located in the curb lane at the front of the terminal.

Rental Cars

- All providers of rental car services at Comox Valley Airport are obligated to provide vehicles that are equipped with hand control systems. Please confirm availability of a specialized vehicle prior to arrival in order to allow sufficient time to correctly position the requested automobile.

Ground Transportation

- Transportation to and from the terminal for persons with disabilities is available. Options include vehicles equipped to carry non-folding or non-collapsible mobility aids. Contact information for ground transportation is available at: www.comoxairport.com/ground-transportation or ask a CVAC staff member or one of our volunteer ambassadors to enquire on your behalf.

Bus Service

- Comox Valley Airport is served by BC Transit buses that are equipped with ramps that lower to curb height for access. Each bus can safely accommodate up to two wheelchairs.

Built Environment

The small size of our airport combined with its open architecture creates a pleasing space that is simple to navigate and while offering the conveniences of a much larger facility. We strive to maintain these fundamentals in our Built Environment, allowing all people to move easily through the terminal spaces. To do this effectively, we must identify and remove current barriers to access. Airports are always in a state of change, so any modifications to the facility undergo a thorough assessment to safeguard against new barriers to access. We recognize that close collaboration with our stakeholders and our Accessibility Consultation Committee is essential to balancing the need for access with operational requirements. Consultation with the Accessibility Committee will be considered whenever changes to the airport are being planned.

Present Barriers to the Built Environment

All barriers will be removed as soon as possible depending on the nature and cost of the modifications required. If a barrier is deemed too complex, it will be incorporated into future development and mitigation strategies will be developed to take care of the immediate concerns.

Future Development

All plans for major airport development will be reviewed by experts (Airport Accessibility Committee, Rick Hansen Foundation, etc.) through the lens of accessibility. These professionals will analyze each project during the design phase to look for means of removing current barriers (that have been designated as too difficult) as well as preventing new barriers from being created as a result of further work being done.

Current Support for Accessibility in the Terminal

- Access to all public areas, including gift shop and the cafe
- Wheelchair accessible washrooms
- Automatically controlled doors
- Flat plate baggage carousel for easy luggage pick-up
- Accessible water fountains
- Relief Areas for Service Animals
 - There are designated animal relief areas on the lawns adjacent to both sides of the terminal. Waste bags and a receptacle are located on the curb, adjacent to the lawn.
 - Post Security, there is a designated animal relief area airside. Please contact a CVAC representative for assistance or call 250-218-3583 and a staff member will provide an escort and mobility assistance to access this site. There is no access to this area without an authorized (airside) escort.

Provisions of CTA Accessibility-Related Regulations

The Comox Valley Airport is considered a terminal operator forming part of the federal transportation network as a transportation service provider (TSP) under the Canada Transportation Act (CTA). This Accessibility Plan has been developed in accordance with the applicable regulations, principles and provisions of the accessibility-related legislation listed below. The means in which YQQ meets these requirements is identified throughout this document. (Easy links to the legislation can be used on the airport website www.comoxairport.com under “Accessibility”).

- CTA - Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations Part 1 Plans; <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2019-244/page-1.html#h-1175933> ; and

- CTA - Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations Part 4 Divisions 1 and 2. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2019-244/page-1.html#h-1175944> .

Consultation

In May 2024 the airport established an Airport Accessibility Consultation Committee (AACC). The group is comprised of persons with disabilities from the Comox Valley region as well as two members of the airport management team. The group met (in person) at the airport to develop and review the Accessibility Plan.

Development of the Plan

The committee was provided a draft copy of the plan and provided a tour of the airport terminal. The following questions and responses were fundamental in finalizing our document, our feedback process, and creating a way ahead for the airport consultation committee.

Questions/Responses

1. Do you support the establishment of an Airport Accessibility Consultation Committee? The response was unanimously in favour.
2. Will you be willing to participate in the committee. All attendees agreed to this commitment.
3. Were any short comings identified during the facility tour? No barriers were identified.
4. Do you feel the plan and feedback process adequately meets the aim of the Canadian Transportation Agency of creating a process that leads to improvements in accessibility at the Comox Valley Airport. Again, the response was unanimously in favour.

During the initial consultation they also worked to establish their roles on the committee and determine future requirements. The committee will be engaged to identify and assist in removing barriers to accessibility. They will look at present challenges, customer feedback and future plans. The airport will work closely with the team to bring about positive change to our facility in mitigating present barriers to access and preventing new ones from being created. Ideally, the committee will be made up of individuals who can provide a wide range of insight into the challenges of accessibility.

The aim of this committee is to offer timely support to the airport management team and provide accessibility expertise through lived experience. The work of this committee will enhance our current review process by examining our practices outside of the five-year recertification assessment provided by the Rick Hansen Foundation.

The AACC will assist in outreach and ensure its sustainability with a plan to broaden participation by others with lived experience.

The AACC will meet twice a year (in person or virtually) unless more frequent consultation is needed.

Planning Framework

Plan Review Cycle

The Airport Accessibility Committee will meet twice a year to review the seven Focus Areas of Accessibility described above and make recommendations for improvement and/or propose methods to mitigate barriers.

The Accessibility Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Comox Valley Airport Operations Manager after completing the consultations with the Airport Accessibility Committee. The review will include ensuring compliance with all elements of the Accessible Canada Act (ACA).

The Comox Valley Airport Accessibility Plan will be updated in 2027.

Progress Reports

A progress report will be published annually on the Comox Valley Airport website to highlight any changes to the current barriers and provide updates on remaining barriers.

Retaining Documents

A copy of the Comox Valley Airport Accessibility Plan will be retained for seven years after it has been published. It will be published on the airport website for its effective period.

Feedback received concerning accessibility issues must also be retained for a period of seven years.

Minutes will be published on the airport website for all meetings with the Airport Accessibility Committee.

Actions:

Short term

1. Establish an effective Airport Accessibility Consultation Committee;
2. Review the airport Human Resources manual to identify any barriers to accessibility;
3. Conduct an accessibility audit; and
4. Plan for the next Rick Hansen Foundation re-certification (fall 2025).

Long term

5. Have airport Masterplan reviewed by Airport Accessibility Consultation Committee; and
6. Review the deficiencies in the last Rick Hansen certification and develop a plan to rectify these barriers.

Resources:

Government of Canada, Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations Module 1:

Accessibility Plan, December 2021