

# **WestJet Accessibility Plan Progress Report**

**June 1, 2024**

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## **About WestJet**

WestJet is Canada's second largest airline as measured by seat capacity, providing scheduled service to over 120 destinations in North America, Central America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia.

WestJet operates across two different airline carrier brands: (i) WestJet, a mainline carrier providing travel to domestic, U.S. transborder, and international destinations; and (ii) WestJet Encore, a regional carrier launched in 2013. In this progress report, WestJet and WestJet Encore are collectively referred to as "WestJet".

WestJet is a 'large air carrier' as such term is defined in the Accessible Transportation of Persons with Disabilities Regulations, SOR/2019-244 (ATPDR).

Please also note that on May 1, 2023, WestJet completed the acquisition of Sunwing Vacations Inc., Sunwing Airlines Inc., and Vacation Express USA Corp. At the date of writing, Sunwing Airlines Inc., has a separate air operator certificate and is therefore not captured in this progress report.

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## **General**

WestJet is pleased to provide this first annual progress report on the first anniversary of its inaugural [Accessibility Plan](#), which was published on June 1, 2023.

Over the preceding year WestJet has taken several significant measures to maintain and enhance accessibility. Furthermore, additional actions are at various stages of planning and execution as WestJet invests in continuous improvement to further remove barriers to air travel in years ahead.

A key action taken by WestJet in the past year has been the appointment of a senior leader to oversee accessibility improvement initiatives. This individual is charged with leading and ensuring continuous advancement of WestJet's accessibility plan.

Accordingly, as part of this progress report, WestJet is updating its designated point of contact for receiving feedback on accessibility, its accessibility plan, and its progress reports. We welcome any accessibility-related feedback to be directed to WestJet's Director of Regulatory Affairs & Accessibility via any of the contact methods outlined below.

WestJet provides a number of avenues for those wishing to provide feedback regarding accessibility. These avenues may also be used for those wishing to request an alternative format version of WestJet's accessibility plan, accessibility progress report, or the description of the feedback process.

## **Feedback**

WestJet welcomes all comments and feedback concerning accessibility, including in respect of any challenges or barriers encountered throughout the guest travel journey. The feedback will help WestJet identify, prioritize, and address accessibility opportunities and improve accessibility through removal of barriers to travel.

Comments and feedback may be provided, including anonymously, via any of the available methods:

Feedback Method	WestJet Contact Details
Email	Accessibility@westjet.com
Post Mail	WestJet Accessibility Plan Feedback Attention: Director of Regulatory Affairs & Accessibility 22 Aerial Place N.E. Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 3J1
Phone	Toll-free: 1-833-380-3263 Local: 1-403-444-2268
Teletype / TTY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dial 711</li> <li>2. After the operator gives the prompt, type in 1-888-937-8538 and then type GA.</li> <li>3. The operator will dial the number for you and inform you as soon as someone answers the call.</li> <li>4. You can then proceed to use TTY to communicate with the operator, who will act as translator with WestJet.</li> </ol>
Online form	<a href="https://www.westjet.com/en-ca/special-needs/accessibility-form">https://www.westjet.com/en-ca/special-needs/accessibility-form</a>

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## **Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

### **Digital & Mobile**

WestJet continues to ensure that its websites meet or exceed the required Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) conformance. WestJet currently audits its websites to the WCAG 2.1 level, and will be further increasing internal audits to the WCAG 2.2 level during 2024.

Further, these WCAG concepts are also incorporated into the design of WestJet's mobile apps where possible to achieve comparable levels of accessibility.

WestJet is committed to ensuring compliance and improving the accessibility experience across its digital products. During the preceding year WestJet's digital teams have undertaken several key activities to uphold or improve the accessibility of its websites, including:

- Established an internal Digital Accessibility Center of Excellence, acting as a centralized resource for its digital teams to access tools and training resources related to accessibility standards and design. This group of experts now serves as its primary platform for promoting accessibility throughout its extended digital teams.
- Partnered with external subject matter expert UsableNet to complete content accessibility audits for the following digital products: WestJet.com, Digital Check-In (DCI), Responsive Booking Flow (RBF), Manage Trips (MT), and Mobile Apps (iOS).
- Developed and published an accessibility feedback form on WestJet.com.
- Introduced enhanced accessibility information to its online reservation booking flow to ensure that guests with disabilities have access to information about the accessibility services available and how to access them.

### **Teletypewriter (TTY)**

WestJet has consistently provided TTY services to support accessibility. During the preceding year WestJet has completed a significant upgrade to its TTY services by transitioning from in-house TTY software to a new and standardized TTY service. This new service is broadly available through major telecommunication service providers by dialing 711, and specific instructions for using this service with WestJet are available on [WestJet's website](#).

Adopting this new service is both a more standardized solution, which guests may already be familiar with, and is also significantly more scalable than the prior in-house solution to better ensure availability of TTY services when guests need them.

## Communication, Other Than ICT

### Inflight Entertainment and Connectivity

WestJet provides a variety of inflight entertainment and connectivity (IFEC) options across its fleet types:

Fleet Type	IFEC via Seatback Screen	IFEC via Guest Device (Phone, Tablet, Laptop)
Boeing 787 Dreamliner	✓	✓
Boeing 737		✓

Accessibility is an important part of WestJet’s IFEC offering, especially in respect of providing accessible content for guests with vision and hearing-related disabilities via enhanced audio description and closed captioning capabilities, respectively.

With respect to IFEC accessible via seatback screens, WestJet is currently completing the evaluation of an updated IFEC offering and enhancement of accessibility features is an important consideration. Future offerings could expand beyond the current capabilities and may bring forward further enhancements such as support for screen readers, touch gestures, screen magnification, high contrast text, color inversion, color correction, and font size adjustment. WestJet plans to complete this evaluation in 2024, and will provide further updates in future accessibility progress reports.

With respect to IFEC accessible via guests’ personal device, that content is accessed via the WestJet Connect app (iOS & Android) or via WestJetconnect.com (PC). During the past year WestJet has completed an accessibility audit of these systems. Based on the audit findings its teams redesigned elements to adopt new accessibility best practices as part of continuous improvements efforts for that system.

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## **Procurement of Goods, Services, and Facilities**

As detailed throughout this progress report, WestJet has invested in a number of accessibility improvements over the past year and will continue to invest in the future. Many of these important improvements have involved the procurement of goods, services, and/or facilities.

As noted, there has been a wide range of accessibility related investments, including but not limited to:

- Ongoing acquisition of new aircraft with important accessibility considerations;
- A number of expert consultative and auditing services, such as for its digital products;
- Supplies and services for built environment improvements in a number of its facilities;
- Software development to enable new flight crew alerting procedures for wheelchair handling;
- Design, procurement, and delivery of 150,000 new checked mobility device tracking tags as a first run, including their distribution to all airports throughout the WestJet network; and
- New services procured, such as an entirely new TTY solution.

Each of these examples, as well as the others noted throughout this progress report, represents an important investment in WestJet's work to maintain and enhance accessibility.

## **Design and Delivery of Programs and Services**

### **Wheelchairs & Mobility Aids**

A wheelchair or similar mobility aid is essential to guests who rely on them. Further, requests related to the use of a wheelchair or mobility aid represent nearly 90% of all accessibility support services requested by guests. Given this combination of both high importance and frequency, WestJet has focused during the past year on opportunities to improve the wheelchair-related services it offers. We are pleased to have designed and delivered the following three substantive improvements for guests in this area.

#### **1. Wheelchair Size & Weight, and Handling Protocol**

WestJet is committed to removing barriers to travel for persons with disabilities. We recognize the importance of continuously evaluating our capabilities to identify new opportunities to enable travel, as well as clearly communicating our capabilities to guests and the travelling public.

WestJet has conducted a comprehensive review of its aircraft fleet and associated equipment, such as baggage lifts, to maximize acceptance of wheelchairs and mobility devices, while at all times ensuring a dependable and uncompromisingly safe operation.

Through this detailed review WestJet has revalidated the maximum size and weight for mobility aids for each of its fleet types. These updates have increased the size and/or weight of mobility devices WestJet is able to handle for certain fleet types, meaning that more mobility aids will now be accepted for travel based on these updates. This information has been updated on [WestJet's website](#) and in related internal procedures to achieve consistent practices across the airline for guests. This ensures guests have easy access to the most updated and accurate information regarding WestJet's ability to accept their mobility device for travel.

As a further part of this review, WestJet has also adopted the standard industry practice that powered mobility devices will be handled only in a fully upright position. Adoption of this standard practice will help safe-guard these sophisticated and sensitive mobility devices while they are in WestJet's care.

#### **2. Confirmed Loading of Checked Mobility Devices**

Guests who check a wheelchair or mobility device for carriage as cargo depend on WestJet to deliver these aids at the destination in order to maintain their mobility. WestJet has implemented new tools, systems, and procedures for the handling of checked mobility aids to help ensure this expectation is met.



Under this new approach, an updated tagging procedure has been developed for checked mobility devices and is accompanied by associated electronic alerts for WestJet’s flight crews. This tagging and alerting system will help ensure that mobility aids are loaded for travel on the aircraft of the guest.

Further, this new protocol includes a positive confirmation of device loading for the owner once the mobility device has been loaded into the aircraft’s cargo hold. Mobility aid users can now fly with more peace of mind when a cabin crew member delivers them a physical tag from their own mobility device as tangible evidence it has been placed in the baggage hold of their flight and is flying with them.

In future iterations WestJet will consider also adding this confirmation to its mobile app, but receiving a physical tag from their own mobility aid will remain important in helping guests feel assured that their mobility device is aboard and will arrive with them at their destination.

### **3. New Special Service Request (SSR) Codes for Mobility Aids**

WestJet recognizes the vast array of wheelchair types that guests rely on, ranging from manual devices to highly sophisticated powered chairs. Gathering more information about these devices sets both guests and our team up for success on the day of travel.

To that end, WestJet has launched three new device-specific SSR codes and will be actively gathering this device-related information from guests:

New SSR Code	Indicated Wheelchair Information
WCMP	Manual non-powered wheelchair transported in the hold.
WCBD	Wheelchair containing a non-spillable, nickel-metal hydride or dry battery transported in the aircraft hold.  Requires preparation and may require battery removal prior to departure and reinstallation upon arrival.
WCBW	Wheelchair containing a wet cell battery transported in the aircraft hold.  Requires preparation, battery removal prior to departure, storage in a battery box during flight, and reinstallation upon arrival.

These new SSR codes are currently available via WestJet's call center, travel agents, and airport staff. In the future WestJet will also enable these SSR codes in select self-serve channels, such as WestJet.com.

Additionally, a further new SSR code "WCLB", indicating a wheelchair containing a lithium-ion battery transported in the aircraft hold, is under development and will be launched in the future.

These new SSR codes provide our team with more information and preparation capabilities for the handling of mobility aids. Additionally, the increased information gathering will lead to more detailed discussions with guests, helping them to better understand what to expect and how to prepare their specific mobility device for travel, especially in respect of battery handling for powered mobility aids.

As we continue to take further steps, advancements will be reported in future accessibility plan progress reports.

### **Medical Desk Enhancements**

Guests can contact WestJet for onboard medical accommodations through our Medical Desk, which oversees WestJet's programs designed to address onboard accessibility for all guests traveling with medical conditions and ensuring their health, safety, and comfort.

For further details about our programs, please visit: [Travelling with Health Concerns](#)

During the preceding year our Medical Desk has implemented an enhanced program to assist guests and their physicians in understanding the effects of air travel on their medical conditions by sharing internationally recognized medical guidance on air travel.

This guidance, combined with our onboard medical accommodation program, promotes accessible travel, and prioritizes the health and safety of guests and inflight cabin crew. This program aims to reduce barriers throughout the entire travel journey by enabling both guests and their physicians to make informed travel decisions based on the latest aeromedical guidance.

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## **Employment**

WestJet is dedicated to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), including reducing barriers to employment for persons with disabilities where feasible. To achieve this, WestJet has appointed a senior leader as of May 1, 2024, with a specific mandate to advance DEI initiatives.

Primary responsibilities of this role will be to ensure a continued commitment to providing modified work and reasonable accommodations for all employees when required. On this topic in particular, WestJet has recently deployed a new Human Rights Training Course to help explain our responsibilities and obligations as it relates to workplace accommodations. This course supports our leaders' understating of WestJet's duty to accommodate employees requiring an accommodation. WestJet leaders play a key role in ensuring we meet these obligations, and this training ultimately benefits employees who need such support.

Concurrently, over the past year WestJet has streamlined processes for employees requiring a permanent accommodation, including documented clear and repeatable processes for such cases. A cross functional team comprising members from Employee Health, Talent Acquisition, Legal and People Relations has been formed for this purpose. The team aims to drive alignment and consistency, ultimately placing employees in suitable destination roles. As a next step in this initiative, we will introduce a dashboard for Human Resources Business Partners to use alongside leaders to track success of workplace accommodations and further highlight opportunities for improvement. Advancements will be reported in future progress reports.

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## **Transportation**

The majority of WestJet's activities are related to transportation, and WestJet has invested in numerous accessibility improvements over the past year, and will continue to invest in the future, as detailed in this progress report.

The airlines of the WestJet Group are large air carriers, as such is defined in the ATPDR, and accordingly comply with all applicable requirements of large air carriers under the Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations (ATPDR).

During the year prior to this progress report, WestJet has completed a front-to-back review and reset of its tariffs. As part of that effort WestJet has significantly strengthened, clarified, and simplified its tariff language in respect of these important applicable regulatory requirements concerning accessibility. These significantly improved and clarified tariffs will make it easier for the travelling public to understand WestJet's practices in respect of accessibility. These updated tariffs have been submitted to the required regulatory bodies. WestJet expects that these revised tariffs will achieve the required regulatory approvals and be published as WestJet's official tariffs prior to the next accessibility plan progress report, and WestJet will accordingly report its progress.

## **Built Environment**

### **Aircraft Fleet**

WestJet is growing and has a large narrow-body order book. As WestJet continues to maintain, retrofit, order, and receive aircraft, it ensures that accessibility-related features remain a priority.

Feature	All Fleet Types	Select Fleet Types
Onboard Wheelchair	✓	
Seatbelt Extenders	✓	
Moveable Armrests	✓	
Lavatory Assist Handles	✓	
Largest Available Cargo Door	✓	
Braille &/or Raised Character Row Markers		✓
Accessible IFEC		✓
Accessible Lavatory		✓

WestJet's fleet team is currently engaged in several cabin redesign and retrofit programs and as a benefit of those programs they expect to expand the accessibility features of the fleet. Advancements will be reported in future progress reports.

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### **WestJet Facilities**

During the past year WestJet has made distinct investments at several of its airport bases and at its corporate campus to improve the accessibility of physical spaces for guests and employees.

- Through feedback, its team identified an opportunity to increase the accessibility of its Calgary Elevation Lounge. Consequently, its team installed new door operators on six doors within the lounge, including two washrooms and two washroom cubicles, to make the facility more accessible.
- Its Vancouver airport employee office has been enhanced to better accommodate wheelchair users by installing accessible office doors and repositioning office equipment. These changes included the instillation of barrier free devices which better enable access by WestJet employees to the work environment.
- At its Toronto airport employee office, several doors were identified as barriers to employee accessibility. As a result, seven door operators were installed during the past year at that location to remove a barrier to accessibility and employment.
- As part of a renovation of its Inflight Training Centre, accessibility was increased through installation of several new automatic doors, improving accessibility for staff.
- A similar renovation is planned for its crew room at the Winnipeg airport in 2024. Two door operators will be upgraded to ensure that staff can move comfortably and safely.

WestJet has implemented these improvements at numerous airport bases during the past year, and will continue to do so in the future, as opportunities are identified to further improve facilities and establish a barrier-free work environment for team members and guests.

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## **Provisions of CTA Accessibility-Related Regulations**

WestJet is a large air carrier as defined in the ATPDR. WestJet will continue to operate in compliance with those sections applicable to aircraft and air carriers under Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the ATPDR.

As part of this compliance, WestJet also complies with the applicable requirements of the Accessible Transportation Planning and Reporting Regulations (ATPRR). This progress report meets the requirements of the ATPRR and related guidance documents on progress reports published by the Canadian Transportation Agency. WestJet's progress with respect to implementing and advancing its accessibility plan is reflected in the various sections of this progress report.

For more information regarding this regulation, the ATPDR may be accessed [here](#) and the ATPRR may be accessed [here](#).

## Feedback Information

As part of publishing its first Accessibility Plan in June 2023, WestJet also established a feedback mechanism dedicated to accessibility. Details are provided in the General section above, as well as in WestJet's Accessibility Plan.

As of the writing of this progress report, WestJet has received 56 individual pieces of feedback via this new mechanism. Each item received was carefully evaluated, categorized, and handled as follows:

Feedback Category	Count of Feedback Items Received
Request accessibility plan in alternate format	27
Accessibility related, Directed to subject matter expert for handling & resolution	10
Not accessibility related, Directed to subject matter expert for handling & resolution	19



## **Consultations**

WestJet's progress in removing barriers to accessibility remains rooted in the consultations conducted in 2023. These consultations involved the Open Doors Organization, along with disability advocacy groups that included those with hidden, physical, visual, and hearing disabilities. Concurrently, WestJet engaged staff who had self-identified as living with a disability to share their workplace accessibility experiences to help identify accessibility barriers encountered in their hiring process, onboarding/orientation experience, and regular workday. This feedback contributed significantly to the items which have subsequently been prioritized, and on which we are now reporting progress.

Additionally, over the past year WestJet has conducted in-depth interviews and/or investigations with numerous guests who personally experienced challenges regarding the accessibility services and support they received while travelling. These case studies have provided valuable insight into opportunities to remove barriers to accessibility, helped corroborate the ongoing validity of earlier consultations, and confirmed that WestJet is focused on delivering meaningful improvements in high-impact areas for persons with disabilities.

A further key enabler of WestJet's progress in the prior year has been the formation of an internal accessibility taskforce. This is a group of subject matter experts from across a wide range of WestJet's roles and functions. This group has been assembled to leverage their extensive knowledge to guide design and implementation of accessibility solutions, and effectively act as a group of expert internal consultants responsible for reviewing policies and processes through an accessibility lens. Our goal is to continually strive for an inclusive and barrier free environment for both employees and guests. The efforts of this group have been pivotal in achieving WestJet's progress to date and will continue to be invaluable in the future.

Externally, WestJet is an active participant in several industry working groups focused on accessibility. This includes the forum organized by the National Airlines Council of Canada (NACC) as well as the Accessibility Advisory Committee organized by the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA). In addition to consultation and best practice sharing among airlines, these forums are actively attended by subject matter experts from the accessibility community and their feedback is a further important element of WestJet's consultation strategy.

Prior to its next Accessibility Plan Progress Report in 2025, WestJet will fully revisit its external and internal consultation strategy. WestJet envisions establishing one or more advisory boards with relevant experts in a variety of areas of accessibility. These groups will help guide WestJet's forward-looking strategy and priorities for investments to further remove barriers to travel and employment.