



Air North, Yukon's Airline

Accessibility Plan

Progress Report, 1 June 2024

Contents

3	General
4	Focus Area: Employment Targets
5	Focus Area: Built Environment
6	Focus Area: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
8	Focus Area: Communications, other than ICT
9	Focus Area: Design and delivery of programs and services
12	Focus Area: Procurement of goods, services, and facilities
14	Focus Area: Transportation
15	Feedback

■ Focus area timeframes

- **Short term** One year
- **Medium term** One to two years
- **Long term** Three or more years

General

■ Introduction

Air North, Yukon's Airline holds true that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. As part of that, we take our commitment seriously to improve the accessibility of our services, operations, policies, and communications to make life better for our customers and employees.

This is the first annual snapshot that offers an update to our Accessibility Plan, originally published on 1 June, 2023. Here you will find details on all the items we originally identified or were raised in our customer survey, as well as where we have made progress, have yet to begin, or where we need to do more research or planning before we can start.

During the past year, we had hoped to engage our customers with a second survey to measure if there has been any improvement and to determine if any new areas of interest would be identified. We fell short of this goal due to staff availability. Nevertheless, we are listening.

Our reservations and customer service teams, as well as our accessibility team, have noted any comments or feedback that have come in by phone, social media or email, and we have asked our passenger service agents and flight attendants to notify us if they observe anything that we can work to resolve.

To ensure our progress is meaningful, we are working with advocates, local leaders, and stakeholders whenever possible. If you are one of these, or a customer with accessibility needs who has experience with areas where Air North could improve, please let us know. You will find our accessibility team's contact information in the Feedback section at the end of this document.

Focus Area: Employment Targets

Include information about accessible employment options in Air North job postings and advertisements.

Status: Completed, June 2023

Timeframe: Not applicable

All job advertisements include a section on accessible employment.

Collaborate with advocacy and support organizations to provide support to job-seekers with disabilities to match job opportunities with prospective employees.

Status: Underway

Timeframe: Short term

An initial meeting was held in 2023, and one of the organizations has asked for a follow-up meeting. The intent is to re-establish a mutually beneficial relationship that had been in place prior to the pandemic.

Consult with an employment specialist to find ways Air North can improve its hiring practices for individuals with disabilities.

Status: Not started

Timeframe: Medium term

Focus Area: Built Environment

■ Provide barrier-free access for employees, visitors and customers to facilities.

Status: **Not started**

Timeframe: **Long term**

We plan to conduct a full review of the facilities we own and operate to evaluate where they presently meet accessibility requirements and where they fall short. For those that require improvement, we will then begin a process of evaluating what changes may be necessary and are feasible.

For facilities where Air North operates but does not own, such as airports, we will work with our partners and relevant agencies to evaluate where changes may be necessary. Many partner organizations already conduct such audits, and in these cases Air North will review their audits and request improvements or make recommendations where applicable.

■ Lease additional accessible check-in counters for ease of passenger access.

Status: **Underway**

Timeframe: **Medium term**

During our 2023 survey, we heard from passengers that a priority check-in line with accessible height counters would be extremely beneficial. Air North is in talks with the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport to provide such counter space, as well as a priority line that individuals with accessibility concerns would be invited to use. We are also evaluating the possibilities in the other airports out of which we operate.

Focus Area: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

■ Ensure our websites meet WCAG 2.0 accessibility standards.

Status: **In progress**

Timeframe: **Medium term**

We have completed a baseline audit of our websites (flyairnorth.com and airnorth.vacations) to determine where they meet or require revisions to meet WCAG 2.0 accessibility standards. Issues have been identified, and where it is technically and financially feasible to make revisions in the short term, these will be completed. In some cases, primarily with flyairnorth.com, some issues will be held until the website is redeveloped with meeting current accessibility standards as one of its key requirements.

■ Allow passengers to self-identify through flyairnorth.com if they have a disability, and to identify what assistance they may require.

Status: **Underway**

Timeframe: **Medium term**

As of this update, flyairnorth.com does not include any features that would permit a customer to identify themselves as having a disability at the time of booking or once a booking has been made. Currently, passengers who require assistance due to a disability must contact our reservations team by phone to make any arrangements they require.

A technical evaluation is underway to determine what additions must be made to our system to permit a passenger to self-identify during the time of booking, or once a booking has been made.

Redevelop the accessibility section of flyairnorth.com to improve the clarity and presentation of information.

Status: **Underway**

Timeframe: **Medium term**

The accessibility section of flyairnorth.com contains a significant amount of information which makes it challenging for website visitors to view and find the information they need. We intend to reorganize and sub-divide the content so that individual topics are more easily discovered and the information clearer. Some of this is expected to be completed within the 2024 calendar year, while a more detailed reassessment of this page and its content will occur in a future redevelopment of the website.

Allow passengers to change travel dates to an existing booking via flyairnorth.com.

Status: **Not yet started**

Timeframe: **Medium term**

At present, it is not possible to modify an existing reservation via our website beyond cancelling the booking. With the need sometimes arising for a customer to make changes to an existing booking outside of call centre hours, especially for those who are booking medical travel where appointments or other arrangements can change suddenly with little notice, it would be beneficial for customers to be able to modify their reservations online. This requires modifying our reservations system and our IT team is investigating to determine what changes will be required and the associated timeframe.

Focus Area: Communications, other than ICT

■ Call centre hours of operation.

Status: Underway

Timeframe: Long term

An area of feedback received was that the call centre's hours of operation could sometimes pose an issue, especially in the case of those needing to make changes to medical travel outside of their hours of operation. We are always evaluating based on call volumes and staffing availability to determine where hours can be adjusted. This area of feedback also informs the "Allow passengers to change travel dates to an existing booking via flyairnorth.com" item under the Information and Communication Technologies focus area.

■ Review customer feedback to discover additional areas of concern.

Status: Underway

Timeframe: Long term

As a matter of standard practice, we now ask all of our teams that interact with customers before, during and after each flight to advise the accessibility coordinator of any feedback, experiences they observe, or areas of improvement they note that we can add to this process or take action to resolve.

Focus Area: Design and delivery of programs and services

■ Take steps to make it easier for passengers requiring extra assistance to connect to other flights.

Status: **In progress**

Timeframe: **Medium term**

Passengers with disabilities who require assistance are seated first. Upon arrival, they are typically asked by the crew to remain in their seats until the rest of the passengers have disembarked. This way, the aisle is clear and the crew can most easily assist them. For those who need to reach a connecting flight, especially if there has been a delay, this wait could put a flight connection at risk. If notified in advance about the connection, our teams do assist customers where possible to reach their next flight. We are committed to examine opportunities to improve this process.

■ On-board assistance for those with allergies.

Status: **Completed, January 2023**

Timeframe: **Not applicable**

Our flight crews are trained to make an announcement to all passengers in the event that they are made aware that a passenger has a severe nut allergy. For passengers with a severe allergy to dogs or cats, our crews will move such passengers elsewhere on the aircraft should they be seated next to, or near to, an animal in the cabin to which they are allergic.

Training and support for staff to better assist customers with cognitive or intellectual disabilities.

Status: **Completed, March 2024**

Timeframe: **Not applicable**

Earlier this year we completed the development of a training program to better prepare our team to assist customers with cognitive or intellectual disabilities. This training has been reviewed and audited by the Canadian Transportation Agency and is part of our employee onboarding process for flight attendants and passenger services agents.

Conduct an accessibility tour to familiarize customers with disabilities with the travel experience, from check-in to boarding and disembarking.

Status: **Underway**

Timeframe: **Long term**

Based in part on a model shown to be effective by others in the industry, Air North plans to collaborate with Autism Yukon and the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport (and its associated partners and stakeholders) to host their first guided accessibility tour. Primarily targeting young passengers with disabilities, but open to those of all ages, the tour will take passengers step-by-step through the complete air travel process from checking in to clearing security, boarding and the on-board experience, and then disembarking from the aircraft. The goal is to help prepare these passengers for future travel, while also giving Air North passenger services agents and flight attendants an opportunity to gain more experience and better assist with such travellers.

Improve access and customer experience for passengers while boarding, disembarking, and on-board Air North aircraft.

Status: **Underway**

Timeframe: **Long term**

We are planning to purchase two wheelchair movers. These devices connect to a passenger's wheelchair and allow a passenger services agent to move it without having to do so manually, which makes the process much easier and safer both for the passenger and for our staff, in particular during times where there is a steep ramp. One mover will be located in Whitehorse, and the other in Vancouver. For our other bases, we are looking into what is possible either in association with the airport's operators or where there are contractor services that can assist.

As of summer 2024, Air North is introducing two Boeing 737-800 aircraft to its fleet, known as "Next Generation". These aircraft feature three wheelchair accessible lavatories on each aircraft, as well as armrests on all aisle seats (apart from row one) that can be raised by the crew for passenger access.

Focus Area: Procurement of goods, services, and facilities

Meet with advocacy and specialized organizations to examine opportunities to create policies, programs, practices and services designed to identify, remove and prevent barriers in Air North's procurement of goods, services and facilities.

Status: Not yet begun

Timeframe: Medium term

Review our Request for Proposal (RFP) process to include specific accessibility-related criteria, where applicable.

Status: Not yet begun

Timeframe: Long term

To date, much of Air North's purchasing of goods, services or facilities has not involved a standardized RFP process or format. The first step is to evaluate where such a format would be beneficial, and then to ensure that accessibility criteria is included whenever necessary. For purchasing completed without an RFP process, we intend to take steps to ensure that accessibility concerns are considered proactively.

Acquisition of aircraft and fleet planning.

Status: Underway

Timeframe: Long term

Air North's current fleet consists primarily of Boeing 737 aircraft known as "Classics" (Boeing 737-400 and 737-500 jets) and ATR 42 turboprops. In the case of the "Classics", these aircraft were built during a time where accessibility issues were not a priority for manufacturers. As such, these aircraft feature lavatories that are not wheelchair accessible and few rows feature seats with aisle armrests that can be raised to allow easier access for passengers with limited mobility. The ATR 42 turboprops, due to their smaller size, also do not have wheelchair-accessible washrooms.

As part of Air North's fleet planning, accessibility on-board future aircraft will be a primary concern. See "Improve access and customer experience for passengers while boarding, disembarking, and on-board Air North aircraft" under the "Design and delivery of programs and services" focus area for information about the two Boeing 737-800 "Next Generation" aircraft added to our fleet in summer 2024 and the enhancements that they offer.

Focus Area: Transportation

Ensure the availability of information about services available for those with disabilities, such as porter services, in the airports served by Air North.

Status: **In progress**

Timeframe: **Short term**

We are in the process of updating our website to include links to detailed information published by the airports Air North operates out of, where available, so that passengers have access to this information via our website. Where the airports do not publish this information, or for airports where no such services are available, we will ensure this is noted.

Feedback

This process is important to us, as is hearing from you if you have any comments, experiences, or thoughts that you wish to share that will help us as we work to improve our services and supports for customers and employees with disabilities.

■ How to get in touch

- **By email** at accessibility@flyairnorth.com
- **By phone** at 1.800.661.0407 extension 1 (toll-free) or (867) 668.2228 extension 1 to speak to our reservations or customer service teams
- **By mail**
Accessibility Team, Attention: Chief Operating Officer
Air North, Yukon's Airline
150 Condor Road
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 0M7

If you get in touch via email or mail, or if you leave a message by phone, we will use the same communication format to acknowledge your message.

You are welcome to provide your feedback, comments or experience anonymously if you wish. If that is the case, please do not provide your name or any other identifying information. If you are contacting us by mail, do not include a return mailing address on the envelope.

■ Applicability of federal regulations

As a small carrier transporting less than a million passengers a year, Air North, Yukon's Airline does not fall under the requirements of the Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations (ATPDR). However, we must comply with the **Air Transportation Regulations, Part VII** and the **Personnel Training for the Assistance of Persons with Disabilities** Regulations.