



## Annual Report 2025

2025 was another busy and successful year for Access Oceanside Association. We were pleased to welcome new members, increasing representation across Oceanside, as we continued our work on *Removing Barriers for people with Disabilities*.

Here are the projects we worked on in 2025.

**Commercial Accessibility:** Our major focus of 2025 was surveying and improving the accessibility of commercial establishments in Oceanside. This is important for both residents, businesses, and the many visitors we welcome through the year. With support from the [Parksville Downtown Business Association](#), the project started with the Parksville Downtown area focusing on accessible parking, entry doors, aisle widths inside stores and the accessibility of washrooms and change rooms.

As we saw with the Parksville Beach Accessibility Project, the easier access is, the more people will take advantage of it. For businesses, accessibility means more customers. To date we have surveyed 159 businesses in Parksville. The initiative will gradually roll out to the rest of Parksville, Qualicum Beach and Oceanside.

Our surveys are recorded on the "[AccessNow](#)" app, which is a Canadian company that provides accessibility information worldwide based on user reviews. "AccessNow" has a goal to build a movement that celebrates access by connecting people to inclusive, welcoming places for all. The searchable map functionality of AccessNow makes it easy to identify accessible service providers in our region.

When the rollout of their AI Accessibility Assistant resulted in inaccurate information, we worked closely with them over several months to ensure that the issue was resolved. Special thanks to Ralph and Maggie Tietjen who spearheaded this initiative and were key in solving the AI issue.

**Website:** We now have a refreshed, updated website at [www.accessoceanside.com](http://www.accessoceanside.com). This update enables people with disabilities to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the website. The website provides information on the Association and our projects. It has a wealth of information on resources including local support services, businesses, emergency preparedness, travel and transportation, and accessible parks and trails. Special thanks to our web designer Stephanie Clark who was invaluable in this important project.

**Communication:** We developed a Facebook page in February. With regular updates and information on accessibility, it is proving to be a great medium for reaching the community.

**Bus stops:** We reviewed bus stops in the City of Parksville for the safety of riders who use mobility devices when boarding buses, identifying six that need improvement. That information was sent in a letter to Mayor and Council with the hope that improvements to these stops will be included in the City's 2026 budget.

**Parksville Transportation Plan:** We were asked for our input and actively participated in the consultation process, providing feedback on our priorities of the listed projects. The City of Parksville thanked us for our participation and valuable input to the Master Transportation Plan process.

**Beach accessibility:** Working with PKQB Tourism, we explored finding a home for the second beach wheelchair at QB or Rath Trevor, unfortunately without success. We will continue to look at options for the chair in 2026. We encouraged the City of Parksville to post “Share the Walkway” signs and work on boardwalk improvements. We are pleased that signs have been posted and the work on boardwalk improvements continues.

**Hotel Surveys:** The accommodation survey was updated in 2025 and is posted on our website.

**Evacuation Route Planning Workshop for Emergency Preparedness:** Two of our members attended this session and provided their input with a focus on how it would work best for disabled residents of Qualicum Beach, Parksville and the RDN.

**Ongoing:** Through the year, AOA provided letters of support for worthy projects and grants, provided accessibility assessments when requested, and participated in Oceanside events. These events included QB Family Day, the Craig Street Market and the Parksville Canada Day Parade. We have members who sit on both the Parksville and QB Accessibility Advisory Committees.

## **Next Steps**

We will continue our accessibility surveys, broadening to include QB businesses. We will continue to work with the Downtown Parksville Association, the Chamber of Commerce and Oceanside business owners and their landlords to make improvements to improve their accessibility. These improvements can be very small and inexpensive.

Come join us, we'd love to welcome new members.

We are proud of our accomplishments in 2025. Many thanks to our members, liaisons and partners !

Kathy Coburn, Chair