



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Memorandum

Subject: **INFORMATION**: Clarification of FHWA's
Oversight Role in Accessibility

Date: September 12, 2006

From: J. Richard Capka
Administrator

Reply to
Attn. of: HCR-1
HIF-1

To: Associate Administrators
Chief Counsel
Chief Financial Officer
Directors of Field Services
Resource Center Director and Operations Manager
Division Administrators
Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announces consolidating guidance to clarify and address ongoing issues concerning FHWA's oversight of States' and localities' compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504).

Based on the work of an ADA and Section 504 working group, the Associate Administrators for Civil Rights and Infrastructure present the attached clarification Memo to FHWA offices to explain how the FHWA is to oversee States' and localities' efforts to meet ADA and Section 504 obligations. In detailed Questions and Answers, FHWA provides further details on FHWA oversight and the actions required by the States and localities to meet ADA and Section 504 requirements. The Memo and the Questions and Answers will be posted on the Civil Rights Web site. Both of these documents clarify existing FHWA policies on issues including FHWA ADA and Section 504 oversight responsibilities, and appropriate actions by States and localities to meet the requirements of ADA and Section 504.

Through the actions detailed above, the FHWA continues to work with States and localities to ensure that persons with disabilities may access the public right of way without discrimination.

Attachment





U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Memorandum

Subject: **ACTION:** Clarification of FHWA's Oversight Role in
Accessibility

Date: September 12, 2006

From: Frederick D. Isler *Frederick D. Isler*
Associate Administrator for Civil Rights

Refer to: HCR-1
HIF-1

King W. Gee *King W. Gee*
Associate Administrator for Infrastructure

To: Associate Administrators
Chief Counsel
Chief Financial Officer
Directors of Field Services
Resource Center Director and Operations Manager
Division Administrators
Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recognizes the need for the transportation system to be accessible to all users. The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify FHWA's role and responsibility to oversee compliance on pedestrian access required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504). Since 1978, FHWA has promoted accessible transportation systems through technical assistance and guidance on ADA and Section 504. In addition, accessibility improvements are eligible for Federal-aid funding.

The FHWA is responsible for implementation of pedestrian access requirements from the ADA and Section 504. This is accomplished through stewardship and oversight over all Federal, State, and local governmental agencies ("public agencies") that build and maintain highways and roadways, whether or not they use Federal funds on a particular project.

Policy

In February 2000, the FHWA issued a policy providing technical guidance to integrate facilities for pedestrians, including persons with disabilities, into the transportation infrastructure. The guidance can be found at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/design.htm#d4.

The ADA and Section 504 do not require public agencies to provide pedestrian facilities.



However, where pedestrian facilities exist they must be accessible. Furthermore, when public agencies construct improvements providing access for pedestrians, the completed project also must meet accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities to the maximum extent feasible.

Planning

Title 23 requires that long-range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs, in both statewide and metropolitan planning processes, provide for the development and integrated management and operation of accessible transportation systems and facilities.

Additionally, State DOTs and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) must certify (at least biennially for State DOTs and annually for MPOs) that the transportation planning process is being carried out or conducted in accordance with all FHWA, Federal Transit Administration and other applicable Federal statutory and regulatory requirements [see 23 CFR 450.220 and 23 CFR 450.334, respectively]. Further, 23 CFR 450.316(b)(3) requires the metropolitan planning process to identify actions necessary to comply with the ADA and Section 504.

Transition Plans

The ADA and Section 504 require State and local governments with 50 or more employees to perform a self-evaluation of their current services, policies, and practices that do not or may not meet ADA requirements. The public agency must develop a Transition Plan addressing these deficiencies. This plan assesses the needs of persons with disabilities, and then schedules the required pedestrian accessibility upgrades. The Transition Plan is to be updated periodically, with its needs reflected in the processes utilized by State DOTs, MPOs, and transit agencies to develop the Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs and metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs.

Projects

Public agencies should work to meet accessibility requirements throughout the project delivery process. Issues surrounding pedestrian accessibility should be addressed at the earliest stage possible to reduce or prevent conflicts with other right-of-way, planning, environmental, and design considerations. This could include the acquisition of right-of-way and use of special plan details for specific locations to remove barriers. Projects requiring pedestrian accessibility include projects for new construction and projects altering existing street and highway facilities.

New Construction

All projects for new construction that provide pedestrian facilities must incorporate accessible pedestrian features to the extent technically feasible, without regard to cost. The development process should ensure accessibility requirements are incorporated in the project.

Alterations

Alterations shall incorporate accessibility improvements to existing pedestrian facilities to the extent that those improvements are in the scope of the project and are technically feasible,

without regard to cost. Projects altering the usability of the roadway must incorporate accessible pedestrian improvements at the same time as the alterations to the roadway occur. See Kinney v. Yerusalim, 9 F.3d 1067 (3d Cir. 1993), cert. denied, 511 U.S.C. 1033 (1994). Alterations are

changes to a facility in the public right-of-way that affect or could affect access, circulation, or use by persons with disabilities.

The FHWA has determined that alterations are projects that could affect the structure, grade, function, and use of the roadway. Alteration projects include reconstruction, major rehabilitation, structural resurfacing, widening, signal installation, pedestrian signal installation, and projects of similar scale and effect.

Maintenance

Maintenance activities are not considered alterations. Therefore, maintenance projects do not require simultaneous improvements to pedestrian accessibility under the ADA and Section 504. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the courts consider maintenance activities to include filling potholes. The FHWA has determined that maintenance activities include actions that are intended to preserve the system, retard future deterioration, and maintain the functional condition of the roadway without increasing the structural capacity. Maintenance activities include, but are not limited to, thin surface overlays (nonstructural), joint repair, pavement patching (filling potholes), shoulder repair, signing, striping, minor signal upgrades, and repairs to drainage systems.

As part of maintenance operations, public agencies' standards and practices must ensure that the day-to-day operations keep the path of travel open and usable for persons with disabilities, throughout the year. This includes snow and debris removal, maintenance of pedestrian traffic in work zones, and correction of other disruptions. Identified accessibility needs should be noted and incorporated into the transition plan.

Accessibility Design Criteria for Sidewalks, Street Crossings, and Trails

Sidewalks and Street Crossings

Where sidewalks are provided, public agencies shall provide pedestrian access features such as continuous, unobstructed sidewalks, and curb cuts with detectable warnings at highway and street crossings. 28 CFR 35.151(c), referencing 28 CFR Part 36, App. A, ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). The FHWA encourages the use of ADAAG standards. If pedestrian signals are provided, they must have a reasonable and consistent plan to be accessible to persons with visual disabilities.

Sidewalks and street crossings generally should use the guidelines the Access Board is proposing for public rights-of-way. The FHWA distributed an information memorandum on November 20, 2001, stating that *Designing Sidewalks and Trails, Part II, Best Practices Design Guide* can be used to design and construct accessible pedestrian facilities. This report provides information on how to implement the requirements of Title II of the ADA. *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access* is the most comprehensive report available for designing sidewalks and street crossings and contains compatible information on providing accessibility with information

published by the Access Board in the ADAAG. This report can be found at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/sidewalk2.

When the Access Board completes guidelines for public rights-of-way and they are adopted by the United States Department of Transportation and DOJ as standards under the ADA and Section 504, they will supersede the currently used standards and criteria.

When Federal-aid highway program funds are used for parking facilities, or buildings such as transit facilities, rest areas, information centers, transportation museums, historic preservation projects, or other projects where pedestrians are expected, the project must meet the current applicable accessibility standards, whether or not the project is within the public right-of-way. The ADAAG includes special provisions for building alterations and for historic preservation projects.

Shared Use Paths and Trails

The design standards for shared use paths and trails are specific to the function of the path or trail:

- Shared use paths and pedestrian trails that function as sidewalks shall meet the same requirements as sidewalks. Where shared use paths and pedestrian trails cross highways or streets, the crossing also shall meet the same requirements as street crossings, including the provision of detectable warnings.
- Shared use paths and pedestrian trails that function as trails should meet the accessibility guidelines proposed in the Access Board's *Regulatory Negotiation Committee on Accessibility for Outdoor Developed Areas Final Report* found at www.access-board.gov/outdoor/outdoor-rec-rpt.htm. This report also has guidelines for Outdoor Recreation Access Routes (routes connecting accessible elements within a picnic area, camping area, or a designated trailhead).
- Recreational trails primarily designed and constructed for use by equestrians, mountain bicyclists, snowmobile users, or off-highway vehicle users, are exempt from accessibility requirements even though they have occasional pedestrian use.

Most trailside and trailhead structural facilities (parking areas, restrooms) must meet the ADAAG standards.

Technical Feasibility and Cost

When constructing a new transportation facility or altering an existing transportation facility, a public agency should consider what is included within the scope of the project. For elements that are within the scope of the project, the ADAAG provides that "Any features of a...facility that are being altered and can be made accessible shall be made accessible [i.e., made to conform with ADAAG] within the scope of the alteration." ADAAG 4.1.6(j). The only exception to this rule is where conformity with ADAAG is "technically infeasible," meaning that "existing structural conditions would require removing or altering a load-bearing member which is an

essential part of the structural frame [e.g., in the case of a highway project, a bridge support]; or because other existing physical or site constraints prohibit modification or addition of elements, spaces, or features which are in full and strict compliance with the minimum requirements for new construction and which are necessary to provide accessibility.” ADAAG 4.1.6(j).

Where making an alteration that meets accessibility requirements is technically infeasible, the public agency must ensure that the alteration provides accessibility to the “maximum extent feasible.” If a public agency believes that full ADAAG compliance is technically infeasible, the public agency should document that the proposed solution to the problem meets the “maximum extent feasible” test. With respect to any element of an alteration that is within the scope of the project and is not technically infeasible, DOJ guidance provides that under ADAAG standards “cost is not a factor.” DOJ Technical Assistance Manual for Title II of the ADA, II-6.3100(4). Consequently, if the accessibility improvement is technically feasible, the public agency must bear the cost of fully meeting ADAAG standards.

However, cost may be a factor in determining whether to undertake a stand-alone accessibility improvement identified in a Transition Plan. For example, if an existing highway, not scheduled for an alteration, is listed in the public agency’s Transition Plan as needing curb cuts, the public agency may consider costs that are “unduly burdensome.” The test for being unduly burdensome is the proportion of the cost for accessibility improvements compared to the agency’s overall budget, not simply the project cost.

If the project alters any aspect of the pedestrian route, it must be replaced with accessible facilities. Additional work outside of the scope and limits of the project altering a facility is at the discretion of the agency. However, any features not conforming to ADA requirements outside the project scope should be added to the Transition Plan.

FHWA Responsibilities

The FHWA is responsible for ensuring public agencies meet the requirements of the ADA and Section 504 for pedestrian access for persons with disabilities. Under DOJ regulations, FHWA divisions must work with their State DOTs, MPOs, and local public agencies to ensure ADA and Section 504 requirements are incorporated in all program activities for all projects within the public right-of-way regardless of funding source. Program activities include project planning, design, construction, and maintenance. Furthermore, FHWA is responsible for ensuring accessibility requirements for projects that are not within public right-of-way, but use funding through FHWA. This includes parking areas, information centers, buildings, shared use paths, and trails. Divisions have a legal responsibility to work with State agencies or other recipients to ensure ADA and Section 504 requirements are incorporated into all projects using funding through FHWA.

For all projects that use Federal funds as part of the financing arrangements, the division offices need to periodically:

- Review those projects, where they have oversight responsibilities, for accommodation of pedestrians. The divisions shall not approve Federal funding for projects that do not adequately provide pedestrian access for persons with disabilities where the project scope and limits include pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way.

- Review the Stewardship Agreement to ensure pedestrian accessibility requirements are included, as appropriate.
- Review the State DOT, MPO, and/or local jurisdiction processes, procedures, guidelines, and/or policies that address ADA in transportation planning and programming processes and how accessibility commitments are addressed in transportation investment decisions.
- Assist transportation agencies in updating their Transition Plans. The United States Department of Transportation Section 504 regulation requires FHWA to monitor the compliance of the self-evaluation and Transition Plan of Federal-aid recipients (49 CFR 27.11). The ADA deadline for completing the accessibility improvements within the Transition Plan was in 1995. For those State and local governments that have not performed the self-evaluation and prepared a plan, it is critical that they complete the process.
- Encourage and facilitate training for FHWA personnel on accessible pedestrian features.
- Ensure pedestrian accessibility compliance through periodic program reviews of recipients' highway planning, design, and construction activities.
- In addition, the Federal Lands Highway Divisions should ensure that each direct Federal construction project fulfills both policy guidance on pedestrian access and meets the minimum ADA and Section 504 accessibility requirements.

For all highway, street and trail facilities, regardless of whether Federal funds are involved, the division offices need to:

- Perform onsite review of complaints about accessibility and report the findings of the review to HCR-1.
- Make presentations and offer training on pedestrian accessibility at meetings, conferences, etc.
- In contacts with State and local officials, encourage them to develop procedures for incorporating pedestrian accessibility into their projects.

Additional Information and Resources

A Web site with questions and answers concerning recurring issues, training opportunities, and background legal information on FHWA's responsibilities under the ADA and Section 504 is located at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/index.htm>. This memorandum has been reviewed and approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation General Counsel as consistent with applicable disability law.

Questions concerning these obligations may be directed to:

- For Accessibility Policy: Kirsten Poston, Office of Civil Rights
- For Design Standards: William A. Prosser, Office of Program Administration
- For Trails: Christopher Douwes, Office of Natural and Human Environment
- For Construction and Maintenance: Christopher Newman, Office of Asset Management
- For Legal: Lisa MacPhee, Office of the Chief Counsel

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT ADA/SECTION 504

These questions and answers are presented to help FHWA and its State and local transportation department partners better understand roles and responsibilities to provide accessible transportation facilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504). These questions and answers are derived from extensive experience and input from the FHWA Offices of Civil Rights, Infrastructure, Chief Counsel, and Planning, Environment, and Realty. Like all guidance material, these questions and answers are not, in themselves, legally binding and do not constitute regulations. These Q&As explain the FHWA's position on the implementation of the ADA and Section 504. These questions and answers have been reviewed and approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation General Counsel as consistent with applicable disability law.

The FHWA Offices of Civil Rights, Infrastructure, Chief Counsel, and Planning, Environment, and Realty developed these questions and answers and approved them as consistent with the language and intent of the ADA and Section 504. The questions and answers outlined in this document are to be applied to Federal, State, and local governmental agencies; hereafter called "public agencies" or "agencies."

Public Agencies covered by ADA and Section 504

1. What authority requires public agencies to make public right-of-way accessible for all pedestrians with disabilities?

Public rights-of-way and facilities are required to be accessible to persons with disabilities through the following statutes: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) (29 U.S.C. §794) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (42 U.S.C. §§ 12131-12164). The laws work together to achieve this goal. (posted date)

2. What do these statutes require public agencies to do?

These statutes prohibit public agencies from discriminating against persons with disabilities by excluding them from services, programs, or activities. These statutes mean that the agency must provide pedestrian access for persons with disabilities to the agency's streets and sidewalks, whenever a pedestrian facility exists. Regulations implement this requirement by imposing standards for accessible features such as curb cuts, ramps, continuous sidewalks, and detectable warnings. (posted date)

3. Does the ADA require public agencies to provide pedestrian facilities?

No. However, when a public agency provides a pedestrian facility, it must be accessible to persons with disabilities to the extent technically feasible.

4. What is FHWA's responsibility for assuring access for persons with disabilities?

FHWA is responsible for ensuring access for persons with disabilities in four areas:

(1) For surface transportation projects under direct FHWA control (e.g., Federal Lands projects): FHWA is responsible for ensuring that project planning, design, construction, and operations adequately address pedestrian access for people who have disabilities.

(2) For Federally funded surface transportation projects that provide pedestrian facilities within the public right-of-way: FHWA is responsible for ensuring that the public agencies' project planning, design, and construction programs provide pedestrian access for persons with disabilities. FHWA-funded projects outside of the public right-of-way, such as Transportation Enhancement projects, must also adhere to these requirements.

(3) For pedestrian facilities within the public right-of-way, or any other FHWA enhancement project, regardless of funding source: FHWA is responsible for investigating complaints. 28 CFR §§ 35.170 – 35.190.

(4) FHWA should provide or encourage accessibility training for Federal, State, and local agencies and their contractors.

FHWA does not have ADA oversight responsibilities for projects outside of the public right-of-way that do not use Federal surface transportation program funds. (posted date)

5. What public agencies must provide accessible pedestrian walkways for persons with disabilities?

All State and local governmental agencies must provide pedestrian access for persons with disabilities in compliance with ADA Title II. 42 U.S.C. §12131(1). Federal, State, and local governments must provide pedestrian access for persons with disabilities in compliance with Section 504 standards. 29 U.S.C. §794(a). (posted date)

6. Can a public agency make private individuals or businesses responsible for ADA and Section 504 mandated pedestrian access?

No. The public agency is responsible for providing access for persons with disabilities. Private entities with joint responsibility for a public right-of-way, such as a private tenant on public property, are responsible for accessibility for persons with disabilities on the public right-of-way under Title II of ADA. The lease or other document creating this legal relationship should commit the private party to ensuring accessibility. In addition, public/private partnership relationships for the public right-of-way retain accessibility obligations to persons with disabilities under Title II. If the private entity eventually takes over the right-of-way in its entirety, then the private entity becomes responsible for accessibility for persons

with disabilities under the private entity's obligations under Title III of the ADA. (posted date)

7. What United States Department of Justice (DOJ) and United States Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations govern accessibility requirements?

The DOJ ADA regulation is 28 CFR Part 35. The DOT Section 504 regulation at 49 CFR Part 27 governs public agencies, with the ADA incorporated at 49 CFR §27.19. Additional regulations drafted specifically for recipients of the Federal Transit Administration are at 49 CFR Part 37. (posted date)

8. What is FHWA's authority to implement ADA and Section 504 requirements?

The DOJ regulations designate the DOT as the agency responsible for overseeing public agencies' compliance with the ADA. 28 CFR §35.190(b)(8). The DOT has delegated to the FHWA the responsibility to ensure ADA compliance in the public right-of-way and on projects using surface transportation funds. (posted date)

9. What is the public right-of-way?

The public right-of-way consists of everything between right-of-way limits, including travel lanes, medians, planting strips, sidewalks, and other facilities. (posted date)

Transition plans

10. What authority requires public agencies to make transition plans?

The ADA requires public agencies with more than 50 employees to make a transition plan. 28 CFR §35.150(d). (posted date)

11. What should a transition plan include?

The transition plan must include a schedule for providing access features, including curb ramps for walkways. 28 CFR §35.150(d)(2). The schedule should first provide for pedestrian access upgrades to State and local government offices and facilities, transportation, places of public accommodation, and employers, followed by walkways serving other areas. 28 CFR §35.150(d)(2). The transition plan should accomplish the following four tasks:

- (1) identify physical obstacles in the public agency's facilities that limit the accessibility of its programs or activities to individuals with disabilities;

- (2) describe in detail the methods that will be used to make the facilities accessible;
- (3) specify the schedule for taking the steps necessary to upgrade pedestrian access to meet ADA and Section 504 requirements in each year following the transition plan; and
- (4) indicate the official responsible for implementation of the plan. 28 CFR §35.150(d)(3). (posted date)

12. *How does the transition plan relate to a public agency's transportation planning process?*

The ADA transition plan is intended to identify system needs and integrate them with the State's planning process. The transition plan and its identified needs should be fully integrated into the public agency's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Agencies should incorporate accessibility improvements into the transportation program on an ongoing basis in a variety of ways:

- (1) Any construction project that is programmed must meet accessibility requirements when built.
- (2) Accessibility improvements identified in the transition plan that are not within the scope of an alteration project should be incorporated into the overall transportation planning process. This can be accomplished through the development of stand-alone accessibility projects.
- (3) As a means to identify ADA compliance needs, during scheduling maintenance activities, the agencies should identify ADA accessibility needs and incorporate them into the overall transportation planning process. (posted date)

13. *What public agencies must make a transition plan?*

The ADA requires any public agency with more than 50 employees to make a transition plan setting forth the steps necessary to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. 28 CFR §35.150(d). (posted date)

14. *When should the FHWA review an agency's transition plan?*

DOT Section 504 regulation requires FHWA to monitor the compliance of the self-evaluation and transition plans of Federal-aid recipients (49 CFR §27.11). The FHWA Division offices should review pedestrian access compliance with the ADA and Section 504 as part of its routine oversight activities as defined in their stewardship plan. (posted date)

15. *When and how should a transition plan be updated?*

An agency's transition plan should have been completed by January 26, 1992, and should be based on updates of the self-evaluation conducted to comply with the requirements of Section 504. 28 CFR §35.105. The plan should be updated periodically to ensure the ongoing needs of the community continue to be met. The transition plan should be coordinated appropriately with the STIP and the TIP. Changes to the plan shall be made available to the public for comment. The public agency should specifically target any local community groups representing persons with disabilities for comment, to ensure that the agency is meeting the local priorities of the persons with disabilities in that community. If a public agency has never completed a transition plan, the Division should inform the public agency to complete a transition plan now and review that public agency's completed transition plan.

The ADA deadline for completing the improvements listed in the transition plans was January 26, 1995. For those State and localities that have not completed their self-evaluation and transition plans, it is critical that they complete this process. (posted date)

Projects Covered by the ADA and Section 504

16. *What projects must provide pedestrian access for persons with disabilities?*

Any project for construction or alteration of a facility that provides access to pedestrians must be made accessible to persons with disabilities. 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131 - 12134; 28 CFR §§ 35.150, 35.151; Kinney v. Yerusalim, 9 F.3d 1067 (3d Cir. 1993), cert. denied, 511 U.S. 1033 (1994). (posted date)

17. *What projects constitute an alteration to the public right-of-way?*

An alteration is a change to a facility in the public right-of-way that affects or could affect access, circulation, or use. Projects altering the use of the public right-of-way must incorporate pedestrian access improvements within the scope of the project to meet the requirements of the ADA and Section 504. These projects have the potential to affect the structure, grade, or use of the roadway. Alterations include items such as reconstruction, major rehabilitation, widening, resurfacing (e.g. structural overlays and mill and fill), signal installation and upgrades, and projects of similar scale and effect. (posted date)

18. *What activities are not considered to be alterations?*

The DOJ does not consider maintenance activities, such as filling potholes, to be alterations. The DOJ does consider resurfacing beyond normal maintenance to be an alteration. DOJ's ADA Title II Technical Assistance Manual, § II-6.6000, 1993.

The FHWA has determined that maintenance activities include actions that are intended to preserve the system, retard future deterioration, and maintain the functional condition of the roadway without increasing the structural capacity. These activities include, but are not limited to, thin surface treatments (nonstructural), joint repair, pavement patching (filling potholes), shoulder repair, signing, striping, minor signal upgrades, and repairs to drainage systems. (posted date)

Timing of Accessibility Improvements

19. Does a project altering a public right-of-way require simultaneous accessibility improvements?

Yes. An alteration project must be planned, designed, and constructed so that the accessibility improvements within the scope of the project occur at the same time as the alteration. 29 CFR § 35.151; Kinney v. Yerusalim, 9 F.3d 1067 (3d Cir. 1993), cert. denied, 511 U.S. 1033 (1994).

The ADA does not stipulate how to perform simultaneous accessibility improvements. For example, a public agency may select specialty contractors to perform different specialized tasks prior to completion of the alteration project or concurrently with an ongoing project. (posted date)

20. When does the scope of an alteration project trigger accessibility improvements for people with disabilities?

The scope of an alteration project is determined by the extent the alteration project directly changes or affects the public right-of-way within the project limits. The public agency must improve the accessibility of only that portion of the public right-of-way changed or affected by the alteration. If a project resurfaces the street, for accessibility purposes the curbs and pavement at the pedestrian crosswalk are in the scope of the project, but the sidewalks are not. Any of the features disturbed by the construction must be replaced so that they are accessible. All remaining access improvements within the public right-of-way shall occur within the schedule provided in the public agency's planning process. (posted date)

21. Do maintenance activities require simultaneous improvements of the facility to meet ADA standards?

No. Maintenance activities do not require simultaneous improvements to pedestrian accessibility under the ADA and Section 504. However, in the development of the maintenance scope of work identified accessibility needs should be incorporated into the transition process. (posted date)

22. *When should accessible design elements be incorporated into projects in the public right-of-way?*

FHWA encourages the consideration of pedestrian needs in all construction, reconstruction, and rehabilitation projects. If a public agency provides pedestrian facilities, those facilities must be accessible to persons with disabilities. A public agency is not relieved of its obligation to make its pedestrian facilities accessible if no individual with a disability is known to live in a particular area. This is true regardless of its funding source. DOJ's ADA Title II Technical Assistance Manual, § II-5.1000, 1993. (posted date)

Cost

23. *How does cost factor into a public agency's decision in its transition plan concerning which existing facilities must comply with ADA and Section 504 pedestrian access requirements?*

For existing facilities requiring accessibility improvements as scheduled in the transition plans, the public agency must provide accessibility improvements unless the cost of the upgrades is unduly burdensome. The test for being unduly burdensome is the proportion of the cost for accessibility improvements compared to the agency's overall budget, not simply the project cost. 28 CFR Part 35, App. A, discussion at §35.150, ¶¶ 4 – 7.

The decision that pedestrian access would be unduly burdensome must be made by the head of a public agency or that official's designee, accompanied by a written statement of the reasons for the decision. 28 CFR §35.150(a)(3). (posted date)

24. *For a new project planned outside of the transition plan, with ADA accessibility improvements required to make the facility readily accessible and useable by individuals with disabilities, can cost be a reason not to complete an ADA-required accessibility improvement?*

No. Cost may not be a reason to fail to construct or delay constructing a new facility so that the facility is readily accessible to and useable by persons with disabilities under the ADAAG standards. 28 CFR §35.151(a); see DOJ Technical Assistance Manual for Title II of the ADA, II-6.3100(3). (posted date)

25. *For an alteration project planned outside of the transition plan, with ADA accessibility improvements required within the scope of the project, can cost be a reason to decide what ADA-required improvements will be completed?*

No. Cost may not be a reason for a public entity to fail to complete an ADA-required improvement within the scope of an alteration project under the ADAAG standards. A public agency must complete any ADA-required accessibility improvements within the scope of an alteration project to the maximum extent feasible. 28 CFR §35.151(b); DOJ Technical Assistance Manual for Title II of the ADA, II-6.3100(4). (posted date)

26. *What role does the “maximum extent feasible” standard play for ADA accessibility requirements in altered projects?*

In an alteration project, the public agency must incorporate the ADA accessibility standards to the maximum extent feasible. 28 CFR §35.151(b). The feasibility meant by this standard is physical possibility only. A public agency is exempt from meeting the ADA standards in the rare instance where physical terrain or site conditions restrict constructing or altering the facility to the standard. ADA Accessibility Guidelines 4.1.6(1)(j).

Cost is not a factor in determining whether meeting standards has been completed to the maximum extent feasible. DOJ’s ADA Title II Technical Assistance Manual, § II-6.3200(3)-(4), 1993. No particular decisionmaking process is required to determine that an accessibility improvement is not technically feasible, but the best practice is to document the decision to enable the public agency to explain the decision in any later compliance review. (posted date)

27. *What should a public agency do when it does not control all of the public right-of-way required to provide access for persons with disabilities?*

The public agency should work jointly with all others with interests in the highway, street, or walkway to ensure that pedestrian access improvements occur at the same time as any alteration or new project. The ADA encourages this cooperation by making each of the public agencies involved subject to complaints or lawsuits for failure to meet the ADA and Section 504 requirements. 28 CFR §§ 35.170 – 35.178. (posted date)

28. *Can a public agency delay compliance with the ADA and Section 504 on alteration projects through a systematic approach to schedule projects?*

No. All pedestrian access upgrades within the scope of the project must occur at the same time as the alteration. Kinney v. Yerusalim, 9 F.3d 1067 (3d Cir. 1993), cert. denied, 511 U.S. 1033 (1994). (posted date)

Elements of Accessible Design

29. *What are the elements of an accessible design?*

Public agencies have the choice of whether to follow the standards in the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) or the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). 28 CFR §35.151(c); (appendix A to 28 CFR Part 36). FHWA encourages public agencies to use ADAAG. Under the ADAAG standards, an accessible design to a highway, street, or walkway includes accessible sidewalks and curb ramps with detectable warnings. 28 CFR §35.151(c) and (e) (curb ramps), ADAAG 4.3-4.5 (accessible routes), 4.7 (curb ramps with

detectable warnings), 4.29 (detectable warnings). Continuously maintained sidewalks are required by the case of Barden v. City of Sacramento, 292 F.3d 1073 (9th Cir. 2002), cert. denied, 123 S.Ct. 2639 (2003).

Accessible pedestrian signals and signs must be considered, with a reasonable and consistent plan to facilitate safe street crossings. 28 CFR §35.151(c); 23 U.S.C. §217(g)(2). (posted date)

Funding

30. What sources of funding may be used to comply with ADA and Section 504 requirements?

Federal Funding Opportunities for Pedestrian Projects and Programs																	
ACTIVITY	NHS	STP	HSIP	RHC	TE	CMAQ	RTP	FTA	TrE	BRI	402	PLA	TCSP	FLH	BYW	SRTS	
Pedestrian plan		*	*			*						*	*				
Paved shoulders	*	*	*	*	*	*				*			*	*	*		
Shared-use path/trail	*	*	*		*	*	*			*			*	*	*	*	
Recreational trail							*							*			
Spot improvement program		*	*		*	*							*			*	
Maps		*			*	*					*		*			*	
Trail/highway intersection	*	*	*		*	*	*						*	*	*	*	
Sidewalks, new or retrofit	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*			*	*	*	*	
Crosswalks, new or retrofit	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*				*	*	*	*	
Signal improvements	*	*	*	*	*	*							*			*	
Curb cuts and ramps	*	*	*	*	*	*							*			*	
Traffic calming		*	*	*									*			*	
Safety brochure/book		*			*	*					*		*			*	
Training	*	*	*		*	*	*				*		*			*	

NHS National Highway System

STP Surface Transportation Program

HSIP Highway Safety Improvement Program

RHC Railway-Highway Crossing Program

TE Transportation Enhancement Activities

CMAQ Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program

RTP Recreational Trails Program

FTA Federal Transit Capital, Urban & Rural Funds

TrE Transit Enhancements

BRI Bridge (HBRRP)

402 State and Community Traffic Safety Program

PLA State/Metropolitan Planning Funds

TCSP Transportation and Community and System Preservation Program

FLH Federal Lands Highways Program

BYW Scenic Byways

SRTS Safe Routes to School

Each program has its own specific requirements and provisions. Further details on these sources of funding may be found in the following memo: *Flexible Funding for Highways and Transit and Funding for Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs*, February 6, 2006, at www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/flexfund.htm. (posted date)

Maintenance

31. *What obligation does a public agency have regarding snow removal in its walkways?*

A public agency must maintain its walkways in an accessible condition, with only isolated or temporary interruptions in accessibility. 28 CFR §35.133. Part of this maintenance obligation includes reasonable snow removal efforts. (posted date)

32. *What day-to-day maintenance is a public agency responsible for under the ADA?*

As part of maintenance operations, public agencies' standards and practices must ensure that the day-to-day operations keep the path of travel on pedestrian facilities open and usable for persons with disabilities, throughout the year. This includes snow removal, as noted above, as well as debris removal, maintenance of accessible pedestrian walkways in work zones, and correction of other disruptions. ADAAG 4.1.1(4). Identified accessibility needs should be noted and incorporated into the transition plan. (posted date)

Criteria

33. *What accessibility training is available?*

FHWA has the following training courses available:

- (1) National Highway Institute: Pedestrian Facility Design, Course Number 142045. See www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/training/brows_catalog.aspx, and search for Course 142045.
- (2) Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals/FHWA: Designing Pedestrian Facilities for Accessibility. See www.apbp.org or contact: Judy Paul at 609-249-0020.
- (3) Resource Center Civil Rights Team: Designing Pedestrian Facilities for Accessibility. Contact: Deborah Johnson at 410-962-0089.

34. *Where is information on the criteria to be used in developing accessible facilities?*

The following list of documents contains resources from several agencies and organizations

US Access Board: The Access Board is the Federal agency responsible for developing ADA design standards. The following publications on accessible pedestrian design are available on the Board's Web site at www.access-board.gov:

- Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)
- Notice of Availability of Draft Public Rights-of-Way Guidelines
- Accessibility Guidelines Accessible Public Rights-of-Way Design Guide

- Pedestrian Access to Roundabouts
- Detectable Warnings: Synthesis of US and International Practice
- Accessible Pedestrian Signals
- Advisory Committee Report: *Building a True Community*
- Accessible Public Rights-of-Way
- Interfacing Accessible Pedestrian Signals and Traffic Signal
- Controllers

Call 1-800-872-2253, 1-800-993-2822 (TDD) to order the US Access Board Video, *Accessible Sidewalks: Design Issues for Pedestrians with Disabilities*

- Program 1: Pedestrians who use wheelchairs
- Program 2: Pedestrians who have ambulatory impairments
- Program 3: Pedestrians who have low vision
- Program 4: Pedestrians who are blind

The Federal Highway Administration: Pedestrian documents and reports are available at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/publications.htm. A bicycle and pedestrian publications order form is at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/order.htm.

Research and best practices design publications on pedestrian accessibility:

- *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access, Part I, A Review of Existing Guidelines*, www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/sidewalk (electronic formats only: hard copies out of print).
- *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access, Part II, Best Practices Guide*, www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/sidewalk2 (electronic formats only: hard copies out of print, HTML version incorporates all the changes listed in the errata sheet: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/errata.htm).
- Design Guidance Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel:
- A Recommended Approach, A DOT Policy Statement on Integrating Bicycling and Walking into Transportation Infrastructure.
- *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)* provides the standards for traffic control devices and includes guidance on Accessible Pedestrian Signals, Chapter 4E. and Temporary Traffic Control Elements, Chapter 6D. The MUTCD is available at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov>.
- Detectable Warnings Memorandum (July 30, 2004).
- Detectable Warnings Memorandum (May 6, 2002): FHWA and the US Access Board encourage the use of the latest recommended design for truncated domes.

Accessible Pedestrian Signals

- Synthesis and Guide to Best Practices Web site - this Web site provides overall information on installation criteria and design considerations.
- Synthesis and Guide to Best Practices Article - this article provides the latest recommended technical specifications for installing accessible pedestrian signals.

- FHWA Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety - includes pedestrian and bicycle safety resources. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/ped_bike.htm.
- FHWA Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Research - provides information on issues and research related to improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety. www.tfhrc.gov/safety/pedbike/pedbike.htm.

Other DOT Web sites

- U.S. Department of Transportation Accessibility Web site - The Department is committed to building a transportation system that provides access for all Americans. See www.dot.gov/citizen_services/disability/disability.html.
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), Freedom to Travel, (www.bts.gov/publications/freedom_to_travel/), a report on the travel issues for people who have disabilities.

Institute of Transportation Engineers

- Alternative Treatments for At-Grade Pedestrian Crossings (an informational report which documents studies on crosswalks and warrants used by various entities).
- ITE's Web site, www.ite.org/accessible/, has information on accessible intersection design, *Electronic Toolbox for Making Intersections More Accessible for Pedestrians Who are Blind or Visually Impaired*

Informational Web sites

- Accessible Design for the Blind: information and research on making travel safer and accessible for pedestrians with disabilities, www.accessforblind.org.
- The Pedestrian/Bicycle Information Center (sponsored by FHWA):
 - www.walkinginfo.org
 - www.bicyclinginfo.org

Definitions

Accessible.

Describes a site, building, facility, or portion thereof that complies with the ADA Accessibility Guidelines. (ADAAG 3.5)

Accessible Route.

A continuous unobstructed path connecting all accessible elements and spaces of a building or facility. Interior accessible routes may include corridors, floors, ramps, elevators, lifts, and clear floor space at fixtures. Exterior accessible routes may include parking access aisles, curb ramps, crosswalks at vehicular ways, walks, ramps, and lifts. (ADAAG 3.5)

Accessible Space.

Space that complies with the ADAAG. (ADAAG 3.5)

Alteration.

An alteration is a change to a building or facility that affects or could affect the usability of the building or facility or part thereof. Alterations include, but are not limited to, remodeling, renovation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, historic restoration, resurfacing of circulation paths or vehicular ways, changes or rearrangement of the structural parts or elements, and changes or rearrangement in the plan configuration of walls and full-height partitions. (ADAAG 3.5)

Further, each facility or part of a facility altered by, on behalf of, or for the use of, a public entity in a manner that affects or could affect the usability of the facility or part of the facility shall, to the maximum extent feasible, be altered in such manner that the altered portion of the facility is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, if the alteration was commenced after January 26, 1992. (28 CFR §35.151(b))

Circulation Path.

An exterior or interior way of passage from one place to another for pedestrians, including, but not limited to, walks, hallways, courtyards, stairways, and stair landings. (ADAAG 3.5)

Designated agency.

The Federal agency designated to oversee compliance activities for particular components of State and local governments. (28 CFR §35.104)

Detectable Warning.

A standardized surface feature built in or applied to walking surfaces or other elements to warn visually impaired people of hazards on a circulation path. (ADAAG 3.5)

Discrimination.

Denying handicapped persons the opportunity to participate in or benefit from any program or activity. (28 CFR §35.149)

Facility.

All or any portion of buildings, structures, site improvements, complexes, equipment, roads, walks, passageways, parking lots, or other real or personal property located on a site. (28 CFR §35.104; ADAAG 3.5)

Maximum Extent Feasible.

In alteration projects, an ADA-required accessibility improvement must be installed to the maximum extent feasible; that is, to the maximum extent technically, or physically, feasible. (ADAAG 4.1.6(1)(j))

Public Entity.

- (1) Any State or local government;
- (2) Any department, agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a State or States or local government. (42 U.S.C. §12131)

Public Facility.

A facility or portion of a facility constructed by, on behalf of, or for the use of a public entity subject to title II of the ADA and 28 CFR Part 35 or 49 CFR §§ 37.41, 37.43. (28 CFR §35.104)

Public Use.

Describes interior or exterior rooms or spaces that are made available to the general public. Public use may be provided at a building or facility that is privately or publicly owned. (ADAAG 3.5)

Undue Burden.

In determining whether financial and administrative burdens are undue in making decisions program-wide in the transition plan, a public agency must consider all of that public agency's resources available for use in the funding and operation of the service, program, or activity. (29 CFR Part 35, App. A, discussion of §35.150, ¶ 6)