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Technical Brief

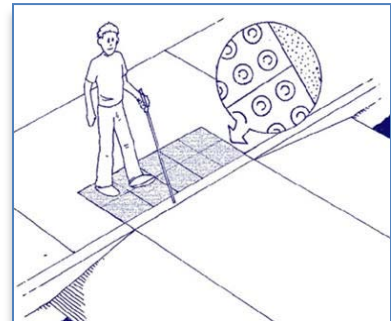


Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Program Review, Training, and Support Services

This report provided guidance to NJDOT's Division of Civil Rights in establishing the basic program framework and undertaking required action steps to improve accessibility of agency programs, activities, and public facilities by persons with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The project includes a review of best practices and self-assessment toolkits for achieving greater accessibility, a long-term blueprint (i.e., "Transition Plan") for making NJDOT's new and altered facilities accessible, development of internal training materials, and review of select NJDOT documents to ensure integration of Title II ADA requirements.

Background

As part of its 2008 program oversight activities, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) directed NJDOT's Division of Civil Rights to amplify its focus and to accelerate program efforts on accessibility related to public facilities and services by persons with disabilities. NJDOT must meet the basic administrative requirements of Section 504/Title II through various program elements, including: designation of a formal staff coordinator responsible for cross-departmental Title II efforts, provision of public notice regarding ADA requirements, adoption and publishing of grievance procedures, performance of a self-assessment of existing physical barriers, and creation of a Transition Plan for removing identified barriers. The most substantive and far-reaching requirement is the development of a phased schedule for providing curb ramps along pedestrian crossings where NJDOT has identified and inventoried physical barriers.



Research Objectives and Approach

The overriding objective of the research activity was to collect cross-cutting data and information relevant to Section 504/Title II compliance throughout NJDOT – and through external resources – to enable the drafting of required elements of the Transition Plan. A related objective was to identify and document data and program gaps in relation to the Transition Plan document, while recommending incremental goals for compliance that could be achieved over a short-, medium-, and long-term timeframe. A third, more broad objective of the effort was to increase cross-functional knowledge and awareness of ADA and Section 504/Title II compliance across NJDOT and its various divisions.

Findings

The key research findings from this research effort are as follows:

- As a substantive element under Title II and its required accessibility implementation plan document (otherwise known as a “Transition Plan”), the development of a facility prioritization and curb ramp installation schedule at NJDOT faces challenges in terms of funding, staff resources, and the nature of existing Departmental datasets. Specifically, many of these databases comprise of standalone tools for each respective division’s functional duties and are difficult to leverage for compliance tracking and monitoring across a project’s entire lifecycle. Moreover, they currently are not set up for inclusion of accessibility-specific information, or they lack common attributes (such as geography) in order to be successfully merged.
- The addition of ADA-specific data elements to a set of promising datasets, such as the facility-specific LBAM system, could set the foundation for creating a more comprehensive inventory that could be monitored and updated, while providing needed input into future Transition Plan updates.
- In spite of existing data gaps, NJDOT has developed a program framework for Section 504/Title II that includes meeting the administrative duties of the program, involving internal stakeholders, performing a self-assessment of its gaps, developing a comprehensive training program on ADA issues, and creating a roadmap for future activities. It is anticipated that a full-fledged ADA program will take several years to fully develop. The research approach emphasizes incremental and steady progress over time, based on available staff and budgetary resources.
- Opportunities for internal collaboration on ADA matters include the ADA Work Group who can share and disseminate information between the member divisions, as well as external stakeholders, including MPOs and members of disability and advocacy groups outside the Department.

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A final report is available on-line at: <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/refdata/research/>.
If you would like a copy of the full report, send an e-mail to: Research.Bureau@dot.state.nj.us.

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