

ADA Transition Plan Update, January 2012

Introduction

July 2010, the Council issued a Proclamation of Recommitment to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which prohibits:

- Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs, activities and services
- ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan, created 1992 and implemented 1995
- Enforced by the Department of Justice/private lawsuits

In 2008,

- ADA Transition Plan was adopted by City Council in June
- \$3 million was allocated for ADA upgrades
- Public Works issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an ADA facility upgrade design team, December 2008
- Summary Of Required Facility Upgrades: 74 - City facilities evaluated by Endelman and Associates, February 2007
 - ✓ 29 - Facilities removed from list
 - ✓ 12 - Fire Stations will implement Policies and Procedures only
 - ✓ 33 - Facilities require upgrades to meet current ADA standards

The following is an update on the current status of the plan items and issues identified by the Commission on Disabilities. The areas addressed are:

- Building Retrofits
- City parks and Open Spaces
- Employment, Contracting, Licensing
- ADA Parking Committee
- Effective Communication Committee
- Public Rights-of-Way
- Emergency Management and Public Safety

Building Retrofits

In February 2011, the Human Rights and Human Services Department (HRHS) sponsored Accessible Building Code training. Over 120 people from across Washington State attended the training. The presenter is nationally known and is one of the Code authors.

On May 24, 2011, the Public Works Department and the Human Rights and Human Services Department jointly presented a status report on the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) facility upgrades at the Tacoma City Council Study Session. This report provided project history, the contracting status of the interior and exterior work, a budget summary, schedule, and before-and-after photos of constructed improvements.

Internal Retrofits

In 2011, internal retrofits were completed at the Tacoma Municipal Building and the Tacoma Municipal Building North, Fern Hill Library, Beacon Senior Center, Les Davis Restrooms and Snack Bar, TV Tacoma, Tagro, Swasey Library, and South Tacoma Library. We started work at the Rialto Theater and Mottet Library. As of January 2012, work will continue at the Rialto Theater, Mottet Library, and the Fire Training Center.

Design work is in progress for the remaining facilities: Pantages Theater, Fire Prevention, and the Tacoma Dome. We are also assisting Tacoma Public Utilities with their design work. A recap of remaining internal work to be finished in order to accomplish full accessibility of facilities includes: Rialto Theater, Mottet Library, Fire Training, Fire Prevention, Pantages Theatre, and the Tacoma Dome.

External Retrofits

Design work is in progress for the remaining external retrofits needed to accomplish full accessibility: Tacoma Dome, Museum of Glass Parking Facility, Park Plaza North Garage, Carlton Parking Garage, People's Community Center, Fire Prevention Center, Mottet Library, Swasey Library, Fern Hill Library, South Tacoma Library, Lighthouse Senior Center, A Street Parking Garage, Fire Prevention Center, and TV Tacoma.

City Parks and Open Spaces

Between 2008 and 2011, City of Tacoma (COT) and the Metropolitan Park District (MPD) staff worked collaboratively to complete ADA assessments of all MPD and MPD/COT parks and facilities. In 2008, staff created an evaluation tool and began assessment of over 85 parks and associated structures. In addition, staff worked collaboratively to write an ADA Transition Plan for MPD.

There are currently approximately 75 City-owned urban parks and open spaces that need to be assessed for ADA compliance, and then prioritized and scheduled for retrofit.

Employment, Contracting, and Licensing

In 2009, an Employment Survey was conducted with 25 staff representing various departments throughout the City. The goal was for each representative to go over the questions in team meetings with the intent to raise awareness through discussions of the questions. Based on the responses, this did not seem to happen. In addition, some of the questions were considered vague or ambiguous. In 2011, the Employment, Contracting and Licensing Team revamped the survey and conducted a City-wide survey for all employees. Over 600 surveys were completed.

In 2012, based on the results of the survey, The ECL Teams has identified the following areas of improvement (named individuals are team members):

- Encourage visitors to request assistance as needed and teach staff how to help.
Action: Gail (Gail Himes, the ADA Coordinator) will provide signage to each of the main service counters and train staff. (Signage states, "Welcome. Assistance is Available Upon Request.")
- Offer all documents and other information in alternative formats. In 2010, Graphic Services was charged with making sure all publications had the tagline to request alternative formats. In addition, articles were included in Take 5 and Newslines to educate staff.
Action: Gail will include more articles in internal newsletters, and review various documents and contact departments as needed. Sandy (Davis, Senior Human Resources Analyst-FMLA) will include alternative format information in ADA trainings with staff.
- Train staff on using a TTY machine. Articles have been included in Take 5 and Newslines.
Action: Sandy will include in her ADA trainings.
- Know who to contact for disability discrimination.
Action: Sandy will include in trainings provided by her and Jerry Lee.
- Place Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) notices pertaining to reasonable accommodations and non-discrimination in all areas.
Action: The team plans to offer articles weekly/monthly for internal news sources. Also, add to ADA training provided by Human Resources.
- Plan for disability accommodation issues in advance of an emergency. Information will go out annually to all staff letting them know who to contact should they need assistance in the event of an emergency.
Action: the Team will continue to educate personnel in staff trainings and internal news sources. Also, Human Resources will emphasize advance planning in new staff orientation.
- Ensure interview locations for job interviews are accessible. The ADA retrofits of all City-owned facilities should be completed by 2014. Human Resource Analysts have been educated on accessible locations.
- Teach appropriate interview questions and etiquette regarding people with disabilities. Several documents regarding hiring are now available on the Human Resources website. HR analysts have also been informed.

Additional ECL Team action on the above noted areas for improvement include a presentation to the Senior Management Team, writing a monthly column in Take 5 and Newslines (include a contest with prizes as a way to incentivize learning), requesting directors and managers to have staff attend trainings, and including related goals in Employee Development and Performance Reviews.

Note: The Commission on Disabilities is forming a sub-committee to ensure the City is open to hiring people with disabilities, and offering adequate supports.

ADA Parking Committee

In late 2010, City of Tacoma staff partnered with the Northwest ADA Center to create a video showing businesses the importance of ADA parking and how to bring their parking into compliance. The video is included in a packet of information Parking Enforcement staff give to business owners and managers. In addition, the City gives ADA parking signage to businesses willing to upgrade their ADA parking.

ADA Parking Committee work during 2011-2012 includes:

- A project started in 2009, to develop a permit process for striping parking lots. A letter has been drafted for striping companies as well as a list of companies doing business in the City. This will ensure a greater number of ADA parking stalls in private lots throughout the City. This project has been delayed in Building and Land Use Services of the Community and Economic Development Department.
- In 2011, Commissioner Gerrit Nyland evaluated Parking Enforcement data and generated a comprehensive report showing the number of staff dedicated to ADA parking enforcement and citation numbers.
- ADA Coordinator Gail Himes partnered with NW ADA Center to provide two half-day trainings on ADA parking. All Parking Enforcement staff attended.
- Commissioner Nyland recently produced a comprehensive parking citation dispositions and payments report.
- The Commission on Disabilities' Parking Committee is organizing an end of year event to bring awareness to use of ADA parking (similar to DUI patrols). This may become a regional event.
- The Parking Committee is also working with state and county officials to form a committee to review and grant funding for parking education. The money would be coming from an increase in the ADA parking citation fee.
- The Parking Committee is also exploring bringing ADA accessible taxis to Tacoma.

Effective Communication Committee

Since 2008, The Effective Communication Committee (ECC) has urged the City to make all their websites accessible. Web testing was performed on the main City website and results were shared with staff, noting several deficiencies. A meeting between the Deputy City Manager, Information Technology Director, HRHS Director, and ADA Coordinator was held to highlight this issue, especially the lack of accessibility to the NeoGov, the site used for potential City employment. In addition, the Commission on Disabilities sent a letter to the City Council and the City Manager expressing concerns about this issue. Since that time, minimum web compliance standards have been created for the City of Tacoma and added to contracts for vendors creating City websites. A vendor has been hired to redesign the main City website and ensure accessibility.

Other Committee work includes organization of the 2010 "20-Year Anniversary of the ADA" celebration which included an exhibit of ADA history, a video showing President Bush signing the ADA into law, a gathering of the Commission on Disabilities and Tacoma City Council, and the acceptance of a proclamation at the City Council meeting. Celebrations continue each year in July. Also, October is celebrated as National Disabilities Awareness Month.

The Effective Communication Committee helped organize the Independent Lens Film Festival, “For Once in My Life,” which showed at the Washington State History Museum. The Committee organized a panel of experts to speak on disabilities as well as artists who showed off their work.

And the Committee created an annual Disability Advocate of the Year Award for volunteers, professionals, and businesses.

Current ECC work includes:

- Creating a mission statement with goals and objectives for the Commission on Disabilities
- Revising the Commission webpage
- Assisting with the redesign of the main City website.

Other work that the Effective Communication Committee will address includes:

- An ADA Transition Plan needed for all of the City sponsored websites (reported to be over 100)
- Policies and procedures needed for all website and webpage administrators to ensure all future work is ADA compliant, and a plan to make existing content accessible.
- A Team is needed that will act as a gatekeeper for all new websites and any new information posted to the web.

Public Rights-of-Way

Since Public Rights of Way is a large area, five (5) sub-committees have been created to work on specific issues.

1. **Curb Ramp Matrix-** this matrix was created to instruct staff and outside vendors what actions trigger curb ramp construction. The matrix has been adopted as ‘Best practice.’ Matrix trainings have been offered to staff across all City departments. In addition, curb ramp design guidelines were created as well as all new standard plans for curb ramps. Guidance was also instituted to assist staff in assessing receiving ramps. All Public Rights-of-Way Guidelines (PROWAG) for curb ramps were illustrated on curb ramp drawings and placed on City’s govME web page for designers.
2. **Accessibility during Construction-** verbiage regarding creating and maintaining accessible pedestrian routes was created and added to the Traffic Control Handbook. Every construction project is to include a pedestrian plan. Evaluations of past and current projects indicate more work is needed in this area.
 - Team members have reconvened to create a more robust set of guidelines and drawings. Audible devices that give verbal instructions to pedestrians encountering large construction projects are being tested. New guidelines with drawings are being drafted.
 - Tree grates in sidewalks is another issue. City Code conflicts have emerged because on sidewalks which are less than 9 ft in width, pedestrians must walk over grates. The Committee is working on standard plans for tree grates and will need to work with Building and Land Use Services and the Urban Forester on tree requirements.
3. **Bus Stops-** some of the bus stops in Tacoma are not accessible to people with disabilities. Lack of curb ramps, signage that is too high, and lack of pads for wheelchair lift deployment are just some of the barriers. The City has been working for over 3 years to get a new contract with Pierce Transit and is currently in contract negotiations with Pierce Transit.

4. **Curb Ramp Design-** this team is working on a consistent method of displaying curb ramps and sidewalk elevations on plan sets.
5. **Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS)** - Federal law requires new construction and alteration projects to install accessible pedestrian signals. These devices offer information in visual and audible formats. The team has developed draft APS policy and is now waiting for Public Rights-of-Way Guidelines (PROWAG) to be adopted into law before finalizing. In addition, the PROWAG were under Proposed Rule Making in 2011. The City submitted comments and held meetings with the US ACCESS Board that drafts PROWAG, thus the City of Tacoma is participating on a federal level to affect change regarding accessibility.

Emergency Management and Public Safety

The Emergency Management and Public Safety Committee (EMPS) completed review of the City of Tacoma's Emergency Management Plan. Several pages of this document were edited, to include consideration of people with disabilities who have access and functional needs. During this process, it became apparent that many policies, procedures, and memorandums of understanding need to be developed by each City department in order to carry out their essential functions during an emergency. This comprehensive plan also needs to be linked closely with Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) since staff not only need to assist the community in a disaster but will need to continue with daily business operations.

Current work for this Committee includes advocating for a revised Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) to be presented and adopted by City Council before the mandatory date in 2014 and asking Emergency Management staff to assist with coordinating department work.

Work has also occurred with the Police Department to ensure that staff has been trained to work with people who have various disabilities.