

2017

Section IV

ADA Transition Plan

City Facilities, Parks & R-O-W

City of Helena



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Helena, MT 59623
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City Owned Facilities, Parks and Public Rights-of-Way

The City of Helena owns and either operates or leases a number of municipal and utility buildings, public streets, historic properties, parking lots, community centers, parks, trails, sports fields and lease properties. Some of these properties are not open for public use or do not house public services or programs, but many do.

The City has conducted a variety of site visits, surveys and inventories of its facilities, curb ramps and parks after the ADA became law in 1992. Today, the City continues to make progress to meet ADA compliance for its facilities, parks and curb cuts along its roadways. The following is a summary of the currently identified accessibility improvement priorities and needs.

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITY

- **Public Works:** The Public Works Director or their designee is the City of Helena official responsible for the implementation of any required physical alterations to existing roads, curbs and sidewalks under the city's jurisdiction.
- **Community Facilities:** The Community Facilities Director or their designee is the City of Helena official responsible for the implementation of any required physical alterations to new and existing city facilities.
- **Parks and Recreation:** The Parks and Recreation Director or their designee is the City of Helena official responsible for the implementation of any required physical alterations to new and existing Park facilities.
- **City Programs, Services and Activities:** The Director of each City Department or their designee is the City of Helena Official responsible for implementing required policy or program modifications and equivalent facilitation for all programs and services offered by the city, and/or their designee.

PUBLIC FACILITIES:

"Public Facility" is defined here as any building or other facility owned by the City that is open to the public or houses City departments or private businesses that meet with or conduct business with the public from that location. This does not include parks, trails and sports fields.

The City's Community Facilities Department is responsible for maintaining all City owned buildings and structures. In addition, the department must assure that all buildings are accessible to the public.

The City of Helena initially surveyed its public facilities after the ADA went into effect in 1992. Since the first ADA facility survey was conducted, the City has made improvements to several of its buildings built before 1992 based on the recommendations of the 1993 Transition Plan. In addition some City services and programs were moved to more accessible locations.

The City of Helena utilizes the International Building Code, first adopted in 2004 as its building code. All new city owned buildings or renovations to existing city owned buildings are subject to the provisions of the building code to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. The City also uses the 2010 ADA

Standards for Accessible Design in the design and construction of its facility improvements and construction projects.

As part of the requirement to maintain and provide accessibility to City owned facilities staff is committed to bringing all existing facilities into or as close as feasibly possible to compliance with the ADA, based on available funding and other resources.

During the spring of 2015 City staff were paired with staff from Recreation Accessibility Consultants (RAC) to learn how to conduct Self Evaluation facility audits that helps identify what types of access barriers exist for individuals with disabilities in existing City owned facilities. These audits were then used to develop a new Transition Plan for City owned facilities. The ADA improvement project list for City-facilities is included in this plan **(See Appendix F)**.

PARKS & RECREATION:

City of Helena Parks and Recreation is responsible for:

- Acquiring, planning, designing and building new parks, trails and sports fields.
- Operating and making major improvements to existing parks, trails and sports fields.
- Providing a variety of recreation classes, camps, programs and activities at local parks and sports fields.
- Maintenance of all City parks, trails and sports fields.

The Parks and Recreation Department requires all new park construction projects and park improvement projects be designed in accordance with the International Building Code, 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, and the Access Board's draft Outdoor Developed Areas Guidelines.

In 2015 the Parks and Recreation Department surveyed all of the City parks, trails and sports fields. Currently the Parks and Recreation Department is reviewing all of its programs, services and activities as part of this transition plan.

During the summer of 2015 City Parks and Recreation staff was paired with staff from Recreation Accessibility Consultants (RAC) to learn how to conduct Self Evaluation facility audits that helps identify what types of access barriers exist for individuals with disabilities in existing City owned Parks. These audits were then used to develop a new Transition Plan for City owned parks. The ADA improvement project list for City-owned parks, trails and sports fields are included in this plan **(See Appendix F)**.

TRANSIT STOPS – CAPITAL TRANSIT:

Prior to November 1979 the Helena Area Transit Service (H.A.T.S.) was privately owned and operated. While operated as a private business there were only 2 buses and neither were ADA Accessible (no wheelchair lifts). In November of 1979 the Helena City Commission acquired ownership of H.A.T.S in order to continue providing buses as a public transportation option for area residents. As a publicly operated transportation service the buses were upgraded to include the needed accessible features to accommodate persons with disabilities.

In July 2016 H.A.T.S. was rebranded and is now known as Capital Transit (CT). Currently Capital Transit provides a Checkpoint Fixed Route bus, an East Valley Deviated Fixed/ADA Complementary Origin to Destination Paratransit Service, and a city wide ADA Complementary Origin to Destination Paratransit Service bus.

During the fall of 2015 staff from Recreation Accessibility Consultants (RAC) conducted Self Evaluation facility audits for existing and proposed transit stops in order to identify what types of access barriers exist for individuals with disabilities. These audits were then used to develop a Transition Plan for the existing transit stops and guidance for establishing new stops and retrofitting the existing locations. This Transition Plan document is included in **Appendix G**.

PUBLIC RIGHTS-of-WAY:

The city of Helena has over 210 miles of paved streets and 11 miles of unpaved streets to maintain and upgrade. It has been a priority for the city to improve accessibility for all pedestrians by requiring the installation of sidewalks with new construction and major subdivisions and when needed, ordering the repair of existing sidewalks. The city has implemented several programs and policies and developed funding mechanisms to address the tremendous system needs including:

- Ensuring all new transportation capital projects include pedestrian access and meet the current ADA design standards and guidelines.
- Updated the Snow Removal Ordinance.
- Completing updates of the Street Design Standards to address changes and clarifications on ADA design from the Federal Access Board to better incorporate pedestrian facilities.
- Providing funding in all pavement management overlay projects for building missing or repairing existing ADA sidewalk ramps.
- Requiring that all new developments and site expansions or improvements include ADA facilities.
- Continue to seek alternate funding options to complete the projects identified in the Capital Improvements Plan.

SIDEWALKS

The Greater Helena Area Long Range Transportation Plan - 2014 Update (LRTP) Page 34 states the following: *There are currently nearly 228 miles of street frontage sidewalk gaps out of the 468 miles of potential sidewalk mileage within the City limits. About 49 percent of the potential total mileage for sidewalks (assuming they would be installed on both sides of every non-Interstate system street within the City limits) is absent. It should be noted, however, that not all of the remaining potential sidewalk mileage would need sidewalks.*

Existing Transportation conditions are discussed in Chapter 3 of the LRTP. Information specific to sidewalks and walking are found on Pages 33 through 39. Chapter 8 of the LRTP contains recommendations for transportation facilities, pages 126 through 133 of the LRTP discuss pedestrian improvements and recommendations for the City of Helena sidewalk system.

The Greater Helena Area Long Range Transportation Plan - 2014 Update can be found on the City website at:

[http://www.helenamt.gov/fileadmin/user_upload/City_Public_Works/engineering/Budgeted_Capital Projects/Helena-LRTP-Final.pdf](http://www.helenamt.gov/fileadmin/user_upload/City_Public_Works/engineering/Budgeted_Capital_Projects/Helena-LRTP-Final.pdf)

CURB RAMP INVENTORY & PRIORITY ROUTES

In 2011, the city of Helena completed a street intersection curb ramp inventory for all streets in the city. The curb ramp inventory indicates there are over 4,015 potential curb ramp locations within the city limits. Data for the Curb Ramp Inventory was collected at each intersection to indicate whether or not there were any existing curb ramps, and whether or not existing curb ramps met the ADA design standards including slope, lip, ramp width, and landing area. This data allowed the city to create a list of missing curb ramps and a list identifying what elements of existing curb ramps were out of compliance. The 2011 Street Intersection Curb Ramp Inventory indicated the following eight (8) curb ramp classifications:

1. Red (Map Key Color): No ADA ramp, has sidewalks: **769 Curb Ramps**
2. Yellow: No ADA ramp, no sidewalks: **1,150 Curb Ramps**
3. Black: Has ADA ramp, slope and/or landing that are not at current standard, has trip hazard or deteriorating condition: **591 Curb Ramps**
4. Pink: Has ADA ramp, slope and/or landing that are not at current standard, but are in good condition: **959 Curb Ramps**
5. Green: At current standard, but no truncated dome installed: **146 Curb Ramps**
6. Orange: At current standard, has no immediately connecting sidewalk: **6 Curb Ramps**
7. White: Undeveloped (No curb or other issues): **289 Curb Ramps**
8. Blue: Constructed to ADA standard: **105 Curb Ramps**

Total curb ramps in inventory: 4,015

The ADA Committee used the curb ramp inventory information and following criteria to identify the five (5) priority routes and develop a Funding Priority Map.

The criteria used by the ADA Committee to determine the 5 priority routes were:

- Proximity to government facilities
- Streets with higher traffic volumes
- Streets located along emergency snow routes
- Streets with public transit service
- Streets with pedestrian attractors like schools, parks, and shopping

Based upon the Curb Ramp Inventory and criteria, the ADA Committee identified the following five (5) priority routes:

1. Broadway Street, between North Park Avenue and North Montana Avenue.
2. Helena Avenue, between Neill Avenue (Mini-Malfunction Junction) and Railroad Avenue.
3. Downtown Area, east-west generally between North Park and Benton Avenues and Cruse Avenue and north-south between Neill Avenue to the intersection of South Park and Cruse Avenues. A leg section extends northward from Neill Avenue to Lyndale Avenue along North Last Chance Gulch.
4. 11th Avenue, between Cruse Avenue and North Montana Avenue.
5. North Roberts, between 8th Avenue and Billings Avenue.

The Curb Ramp Inventory and Priority Funding Map have proved to be valuable tools for curb ramp installation and repair projects. Projects completed or in process since the development of the curb ramp inventory and priority map include the following:

- Priority route #1 (Broadway Street, between North Park Avenue and North Montana Avenue) was part of a Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) project that focused on repairing sidewalks and ADA ramps along this corridor.
- Priority route #5 (North Roberts, between 8th Avenue and Billings Avenue): A Safe Routes to Schools Grant was used to make curb ramp and sidewalk improvements along this corridor.
- In 2013, the city secured a \$600,000 grant from MDOT to repair or replace 48 curb ramps in portions of the downtown area. Construction on these ramps was initiated by MDOT on the Downtown Curb Ramp Project in the fall of 2015.
- Since 2011, the city has repaired, replaced, or installed approximately **475 ADA curb ramps** through various means such as street improvement or maintenance projects and the Volunteer Sidewalk Replacement Program.
- In 2011, the city completed the installation of accessibility improvements to the Last Chance Gulch crossing (Walking Mall) at Broadway.

CURB RAMP FUNDING

The total estimated cost to make all the curb ramp improvements in the city is approximately \$9.5 million. This figure does not include other related upgrades, such as sidewalk repair, driveway replacement, installation of audible crossing signals, annual inflation, or price changes for materials and labor.

With the exception of possible grant funding opportunities the City dedicates \$50,000 each budget year specifically for curb ramp improvements and sets aside another \$25,000 for curb ramp improvements with other street improvement projects; and completes as many projects as possible with limited funding.

In addition to the limited budget, the City continually looks for additional funding opportunities and has periodically obtained funding for these projects from other sources, including grants from local, state, and federal programs.

STREET MAINTENANCE - VS - ALTERATIONS

The United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) and the Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a joint technical assistance memo on July 08, 2013 which provides a single Federal policy that identifies specific asphalt and concrete pavement repair treatments that are considered to be alterations – requiring installation of curb ramps within the scope of the project – and those that are considered to be maintenance, which do not require curb ramps at the time of the improvement.

This memo clearly identifies the types of structural treatments that both DOJ and FHWA agree require curb ramps (when there is a pedestrian walkway with a prepared surface for pedestrian use and a curb, elevation, or other barrier between the street and the walkway) and furthers the goal of the ADA to provide increased accessibility to the public right-of-way for persons with disabilities. This single Federal policy will provide for increased consistency and improved enforcement. A copy of the memo is located in **Appendix C**.

The following illustration provides a summary of the types of projects that fall within maintenance versus alterations.

