

WisDOT 2023 ADA Transition Plan Comments

The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging (Commission) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 2023 ADA Transition Plan and appreciates the continued efforts WisDOT is taking to enhance the accessibility of state-owned infrastructure, making Milwaukee County and greater Wisconsin a safe, livable and enjoyable location for all residents, including those with mobility limitations.

Upon review of the Plan, the Commission congratulates WisDOT on the 85 highway improvement projects in 2022 which installed or updated roughly 1700 curb ramps in the state, but finds the timeline for curb ramp improvement to be grossly prolonged, with its completion anticipated roughly 50 years after the passing of the ADA.

Unfortunately, the 2023 ADA Transition Plan document itself presents accessibility challenges for people with visual impairments, with images and attachments within the documents that do not include descriptive text for those using screen readers. Likewise, the tables included within appendices would be hard to follow using these devices. The Commission urges WisDOT to make this Plan, and all other plans and policy documents accessible for those using screen readers.

The Commission is glad to hear that WisDOT has developed, or is developing, guidance for the implementation of pedestrian islands, road diets, and curb extensions. The Commission would love to see additional guidance on other protective measures such as routine installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals, which improve street crossing safety for residents with visual impairments.

Within the WisDOT Highway Curb Ramps and Sidewalk ADA Inventory Database, there are many curb ramp locations without Detectable Warning Field's that do not have a 'program year' attributed to them (along Highway 145 in Milwaukee County, for example). In the case that these locations are outside the available 6-year timelines, WisDOT may consider adding a note in their attribute table reporting so, to clarify that improvements to this highway are not yet planned for.

The Commission remains steadfast in the desire for greater investment in improvements that increase accessibility for older adults and people with disabilities, including investment in sidewalk infrastructure, transit and specialized transportation. We urge the State to expedite the timeline of improvement projects to the greatest extent possible, as well as advocate for increases in budget to support their completion. Pedestrian infrastructure and expanded public transit greatly impact the aging and disability populations' abilities to safely and successfully navigate their communities and maintain travel independence throughout their lifespan.