

Florida Department of Transportation

ADA/Accessibility Program

ADA Q&A – Introduction

Florida DOT has received many questions about when and where accessible features are required or recommended to be included during the planning, design, construction and maintenance of roadway projects and facilities.

This document is intended to answer some of these questions.

A little background: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, Public Law 101-336) was enacted in July 1990 and became effective in January 1992. The original **ADA Standards** were published in July 1991. New construction and alterations projects permitted after January 26, 1992 were required to follow the 1991 **ADA Standards**.

Based on updated guidelines issued by the U.S. Access Board, in November 2006 the USDOT issued new standards as the **ADA Standards for Transportation Facilities (ADASTF)**, link below). Transportation projects permitted after November 29, 2006 must follow the **ADASTF**.

ADA Standards for Transportation Facilities

<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/transportation/facilities/ada-standards-for-transportation-facilities>

Similar standards were issued by USDOJ in March 2012 as the 2010 **ADA Standards for Accessible Design (ADASAD)**. At the same time, the State of Florida updated the **Florida Accessibility Code (FAC)** to incorporate the **ADASAD** and issued it in March 2012. All building projects must follow the **FAC** and either **ADASTF** or **ADASAD**.

NOTE: The primary difference between the **ADASTF** and the **ADASAD** are 4 modifications that USDOT included when they published the **ADASTF**. These include:

1. Location of Accessible Routes (206.3)
2. Detectable Warnings on Curb Ramps (406.8)
3. Bus Boarding and Alighting Areas (810.2.2)
4. Rail Station Platforms (810.5.3)

In July 2005, the U.S. Access Board issued guidelines for accessibility within public rights of way, known as proposed “**Public Rights of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)**”. These were revised and reissued as proposed guidelines in July 2011(link below). The **PROWAG** criteria are intended to ‘fill the gap’ where the **ADA Standards** do not cover elements found primarily along roadways.

In January 2006 USDOT issued a memo stating that, while the criteria in **PROWAG** are not enforceable in law, they constitute the ‘state of the practice’ for accessible public rights of way and should be followed where the **ADA Standards** don’t address an issue.

Public Rights of Way Accessibility Guidelines

<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/streets-sidewalks/public-rights-of-way/proposed-rights-of-way-guidelines>

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ADA Q&A – Answers

GENERAL

[Q. When must ADA criteria be considered?](#)

A. Short answer: Wherever there are pedestrian facilities. The basic requirements of the ADA regulations are: Each facility or part of a facility constructed by, on behalf of, or for the use of a public entity shall be designed and constructed so the facility or part of the facility is “readily accessible to and usable by” individuals with disabilities, if the construction was commenced after January 26, 1992.

So, every ‘new construction’ or ‘alteration’ project must include accessible elements and features as needed to ensure they are accessible to and useable by people with disabilities.

[Q. Which Standards and/or Guidelines apply to my project?](#)

A. It depends.

1. Projects involving facilities and sites for which the provision of transportation services is the primary purpose (i.e., train stations, bus stops, etc.) must follow the **ADASTF**.
2. Project involving other, non-transportation-related facilities and sites (i.e., office buildings, rest areas, etc.) must follow the **ADASAD**.
3. Projects involving facilities within public rights of way will primarily use the **PROWAG** and include criteria from **ADASTF**, where appropriate.
4. In addition, any project in Florida that includes ‘building’ facilities must also comply with the **Florida Building Code** and the **Florida Accessibility Code**.

[Q. What is the relationship between ADA requirements and FDOT’s “Practical Design” policy?](#)

A.1. The ADA is a civil rights law and, with very few exceptions, accessibility criteria must be included in all projects that have pedestrian facilities. If a project does not include pedestrian facilities, compliance with the ADA is not required.

A.2. The Practical Design policy is intended to encourage a practical design approach on transportation projects and activities for all modes appropriate to scale, cost, location and schedule. The objective of Practical Design is to maximize improvements to the transportation system by focusing resources on improvements that deliver the highest return on investment. When considering practical design, designers must also consider our responsibilities under the ADA, especially if the work will impact pedestrian facilities.

PLANNING

[Q. When must ADA criteria be considered when planning new transportation projects?](#)

- A. Short answer: Always, if there are pedestrian facilities. There may be rare exceptions for some 'structural impracticability' where unique characteristics of terrain prevent the incorporation of accessibility features. If full compliance is structurally impracticable for persons with certain disabilities, accessibility must be provided for persons with other disabilities where it is not structurally impracticable.

[Q. When must ADA criteria be used for alterations to existing facilities?](#)

- A. Almost always, if there are pedestrian facilities. The altered portions of existing facilities must meet the ADA requirements "to the maximum extent feasible" (more later). In addition, unaltered portions of altered buildings may be required to provide 'path of travel' accessibility to the altered portions.

DESIGN

Sidewalks:

[Q. Are sidewalks required under the ADA?](#)

- A. "Sidewalks", per se, are not required under the ADA. What are required are 'accessible routes' connecting accessible entrances to buildings and facilities. If sidewalks are provided, they must meet the criteria of the ADA Standards. Information for sidewalks may also be found in the FDOT Design Standards Index 310 (link below).

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/DS/17/IDx/00310.pdf>

[Q. When must sidewalks comply with the ADA?](#)

- A. All new sidewalks and reconstructed portions of existing sidewalks must meet the ADA criteria. One consistent requirement is the maximum cross-slope of a sidewalk must be no greater than 2%. To be safe, designers are encouraged to 'design-in' a tolerance (i.e., design for 1.5% cross-slope instead of 2%).

For sidewalks on a site, the maximum running slope is 5%. Any slope greater than 5% is considered a ramp and must include handrails on both sides and level landings every 30" of level change. The maximum slope for a ramp is 8.3%. Again, designing-in a tolerance (say 7.1%) where feasible can provide better likelihood of the finished product being compliant.

For a sidewalk along a roadway, the slope of the sidewalk may follow the profile grade of the roadway. Landings and handrails are not required, but should be considered if the sidewalk is separated from the roadway edge (i.e., close to the right-of-way line and outside the clear zone of the roadway).

[Q. What are the requirements for sidewalks?](#)

- A. See sidewalk details in Standard Index 310 (link below).

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/DS/17/IDx/00310.pdf>

Curb ramps:

[Q. Where are curb ramps required?](#)

- A. Curb ramps are required at all junctions of pedestrian ways and vehicle ways that are separated by a curb. They must be useable by persons using wheeled mobility aids (i.e., wheelchairs or scooters). Place curb ramps at all intersections and turnouts with curbed returns. Include a landing at the top of curb ramps when sidewalks are not present. Curb ramps are not required where the sidewalk and roadway are at the same level (i.e., blended transition).

[Q. What are the requirements for curb ramps?](#)

- A. Curb ramps must be no greater than 8.3% slope and must be at least 4' wide and have a 4' landing at the top. The counterslope at the bottom of a curb ramp at the gutter line must not be greater than 13.3% (i.e., 5.0% roadway cross-slope). If the counterslope is expected to be greater than 11.3% (i.e., 3.0% roadway cross-slope), it is recommend to provide at 24" level 'landing' at the bottom of the curb ramp. See curb ramp details in Standard Index 304 (link below).

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/DS/17/IDx/00304.pdf>

Detectable warnings:

[Q. What is the purpose of detectable warnings?](#)

- A. Detectable warnings are used, in the absence of a curb, to provide an 'edge cue' for people with vision impairments at the junction of a pedestrian way (i.e., sidewalk, etc.) and a vehicular way (i.e., street, roadway, etc.) People who are blind or have low vision use detectable warnings to help identify where the sidewalk meets the roadway edge.

[Q. Where are detectable warnings required?](#)

- A. Detectable warnings are required at the following locations where a pedestrian facility crosses a vehicular way:
- curb ramps and blended transitions at street crossings
 - cut-through pedestrian refuge islands 6' wide or greater
 - pedestrian at-grade railroad crossings
 - edges of rail boarding platforms not protected by screens or guards
 - commercial driveways with a "STOP" sign or traffic signal

[Q. What are the requirements for detectable warnings?](#)

- A. Detectable warnings must include a rectilinear pattern of 'truncated domes'. These constitute a unique configuration of flat-topped domes spaced between 1.6" and 2.4" center-center, are 0.9" in diameter and 0.2" high. There are numerous manufacturers of detectable warnings for new construction and retrofit installations that are listed on the FDOT Approved Products List (APL, link below).

<https://fdotwp1.dot.state.fl.us/ApprovedProductList/ProductTypes/Index/117>

See detectable warning details in Standard Index 304 (link below).

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/DS/17/IDx/00304.pdf>

See: Sheet 6 of 7

For projects on the State Highway System, detectable warnings must also meet the criteria in Standard Specification 527 (link below).

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/programmanagement/Implemented/SpecBooks/July2016/Files/716eBook.pdf>

Scroll down to Section 527 (Pg. 718)

NOTE: It's not necessary for domes to align with a crossing, but it is desirable if they do.

Pedestrian crossings:

Q. What are the ADA requirements for pedestrian crossings?

- A. Care must be given to ensure the running slope of a crossing (i.e., cross-slope of the roadway) does not exceed 5%. This is to ensure the counterslope at the bottom of a curb ramp does not exceed 13.3% (i.e., 8.3% + 5.0% = 13.3%)

The cross-slope of the crossing varies, depending on its location and the type of traffic control serving the roadway crossed. For new construction and major reconstruction of a roadway, the maximum cross-slopes for a crossing are:

1. Crossing of a "STOP" or "YIELD" sign-controlled roadway (i.e., side-street): 2% maximum cross-slope.
2. Crossing of a non-stop-controlled roadway (i.e., roadway with a traffic signal or no control): 5% maximum cross-slope.
3. Mid-block crossing: Match the grade of the roadway.

In all instances, use the minimum slope and cross-slope feasible.

Crossing markings must comply with Standard Index 17346 (link below).

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/DS/17/IDx/17346.pdf>

Roundabouts

Q. What accessible features are required at modern roundabouts?

- A. Depends on the type of roundabout. The primary concern is accommodating pedestrians who are blind or have low-vision and have problems locating the crossing, aligning with the crossing and cannot easily distinguish gaps in traffic due to moving traffic in the rotary roadway.
- For single-lane roundabouts, no special pedestrian treatments are required. Use common pedestrian features: curb ramps, detectable warnings, splitter islands, etc.

- For multi-lane roundabouts, in addition to the ‘standard’ pedestrian features, it is recommended to include pedestrian-activated controls, such as ‘pedestrian hybrid beacons’ (HAWKs) or ‘rectangular rapidly-flashing beacons’ (RRFBs).

Bus Stops

Q. Are bus stops required to be accessible?

A. Depends on the type of stop and the amenities provided at the stop.

A simple bus stop with only a sign on a post needs only to be located on a pedestrian access route (within a public right of way) or accessible route (on a site or facility).

Q. Which bus stops are required to be accessible?

- A. If the stop consists of more than a sign on a post, amenities provided must be accessible to and useable by persons with disabilities. These include:
- Boarding and Alighting area: This is a ‘firm, stable and slip-resistant’ surface (generally concrete or asphalt) that is at least 5’ wide (parallel the roadway) and 8’ long (perpendicular to the roadway). The B&A must connect to a pedestrian access route or accessible route. The B&A should be located at least 5-6” above the adjacent roadway surface.
 - Bench: A bench must be on a pedestrian access route and have a 30” x 48” clear space at one end of the bench. The bench must provide at least 4’ of clear width on the pedestrian access route. A bench must not be placed within the 5’x8’ boarding and alighting area.
 - Shelter: A bus shelter must be on a pedestrian access route, have a 30” x 48” clear space inside the shelter and must connect to the boarding and alighting area by a pedestrian access route. The shelter must provide at least 4’ of clear width on the pedestrian access route – 5’ or more is preferred.
 - Accessibility is also required at other amenities, such as: bike racks, waste receptacles, ticket kiosks/dispensers, etc.

Driveways

Q. What the ADA requirements for sidewalk crossings of driveways?

A. Where sidewalks cross driveways, a portion of the driveway surface or turnout must include a 4’ minimum area with 2% maximum cross-slope connecting the sidewalk on either side of the driveway. See Standard Indices 310 and 515 for details (links below).

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/DS/17/IDx/00310.pdf>

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/DS/17/IDx/00515.pdf>

Accessible pedestrian signals

Q. What are accessible pedestrian signals?

- A. Accessible pedestrian signals (APs) are pedestrian signals with additional non-visual information to provide people with vision impairments with information they need to know when to cross the street. APs include audible and 'vibro-tactile' features to the various phases of the pedestrian signal.

Q. Are accessible pedestrian signals (APs) required?

- A. Not yet. Until adoption of **PROWAG**, APs are installed upon request according to the procedure established in the **Traffic Engineering Manual** (TEM) (link below). When **PROWAG** is adopted as standards, APs will be required for all new pedestrian signal installations and alterations to existing ped signals (i.e., upgrades, replacements, repairs, etc.)

http://www.dot.state.fl.us/trafficoperations/TrafficServices/Studies/TEM/FDOT_Traffic_Engineering_Manual_revised_February2016.pdf (See Chapter 3.7.)

Alternate Pedestrian Access Routes

Q. What are the ADA requirements when a project temporarily closes or blocks an existing sidewalk?

- A. When an existing sidewalk is temporarily closed by construction, alterations, maintenance operations, or other conditions, the Temporary Traffic Control Plan (TTCP) must include an alternate pedestrian access route complying with sections 6D.01, 6D.02, and 6G.05 of the MUTCD. Pedestrian barricades and channelizing devices must comply with sections 6F.63, 6F.68, and 6F.71 of the MUTCD.

NOTE: MUTCD recommends that whenever possible work should be done in a manner that does not create a need to detour pedestrians from existing pedestrian routes. Extra distance and additional pedestrian street crossings add complexity to a trip and increase exposure of risk to crashes. MUTCD also requires alternate pedestrian routes to be accessible and detectable, including warning pedestrians who are blind or have low vision about sidewalk closures.

Maximum Extent Feasible / Existing Physical Constraint

Q. What do we do if site conditions (i.e., profile grades, right-of-way widths, large immovable objects, etc.) do not permit the design or construction of some required accessible features?

- A. The ADA regulations allow for some exceptions to the strict compliance with the 'new construction' criteria when working with existing facilities. For example:
1. Each facility altered in a manner that affects or could affect the usability of the facility must, 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.

2. Where existing physical constraints make it impracticable for altered facilities to fully comply with the requirements, compliance is required to the extent practicable within the scope of the project. Existing physical constraints may include: underlying terrain, right-of-way availability, underground structures, adjacent developed facilities, drainage, or the presence of a notable natural or historic feature.
3. If providing accessibility to individuals with certain disabilities (e.g., those who use wheelchairs) would be structurally impracticable, accessibility must be ensured to persons with other types of disabilities, (e.g., those who use crutches or who have sight, hearing, or mental impairments).

Rehabilitation, Resurfacing & Restoration (RRR) Projects:

Q. Are sidewalks required to be constructed or upgraded to meet ADA standards during a RRR project?

A. It depends:

If sidewalk construction/reconstruction is within the scope of work for a RRR project, any newly constructed or reconstructed sidewalks must meet the ADA criteria.

If sidewalk construction or reconstruction are not included in the scope of work for a RRR project, it would up to the Project Engineers whether to include sidewalk work.

However, if there has been a complaint concerning sidewalks within the project limits, the RRR project must include corrections to the deficient portions of the sidewalk.

See guidance in letter from Chris Richter, Federal Highway Administration, Florida Division (link below).

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/projectmanagementoffice/ADA/RRR-FHWALetter-Richter.pdf>

Q. Are curb ramps required to be constructed or reconstructed to meet ADA Standards during a RRR project?

A. Generally, Yes. Under a new Joint Technical Assistance memo from USDOJ and USDOT, alterations to a roadway must include construction of missing curb ramps and upgrades to substandard curb ramps. The Joint TA describes what operations constitute alterations, which would trigger curb ramp work. Generally, most resurfacing projects would constitute an alteration to the roadway, which require construction of and/or upgrades to curb ramps. See the links below:

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/doj_fhwa_ta.cfm

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/ada_resurfacing_qa.cfm

Q. Are detectable warnings required to be added or upgraded to meet ADA standards during a RRR project?

A. Yes. Under the Joint Technical Assistance (see Curb Ramps, above), curb ramp improvements must include detectable warnings that meet the current criteria.

Q. Are driveway crossings required to be constructed or upgraded to meet ADA standards during a RRR project?

A. It depends:

If driveway construction/reconstruction is within the scope of work for a RRR project, any newly constructed or reconstructed driveway turnouts must meet the ADA criteria.

If driveway construction or reconstruction are not included in the scope of work for a RRR project, it would up to the Project Engineer whether to include driveway work.

However, if there has been a complaint concerning driveways within the project limits, the RRR project must include corrections to the deficient driveways.

CONSTRUCTION

Q. What are the ADA responsibilities of Contractors?

A. Contractors are required to follow the construction documents, which include accessible features intended to comply with the **ADA Standards**, the **FDOT Design Standards** and the **PROWAG**.

Q. What must a Contractor do when a project closes or blocks an existing sidewalk?

A. Follow the Temporary Traffic Control Plan. See Answer for “Alternate Pedestrian Access Routes”, above.

Q. What are the responsibilities of Project Administrators and Inspectors?

A. Project Administrator and Inspectors are responsible ensure contractors follow the construction documents, including criteria for accessible features. There are two Department checklists to assist Inspectors ensure the appropriate accessible features are included: **ADA Critical Requirements** and **ADA Inspection Guidelist** (links below).

Inspection Guidelist – QC Category 20: ADA-Accessibility Issues

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/construction/CONSTADM/Guidelist/InspectGuidelist/FY1516/GL-20.pdf>

Critical Requirements – QC Category 20: ADA-Accessibility Issues

<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/construction/CONSTADM/Guidelist/CriticalReq/FY1516/CR-20.pdf>

MAINTENANCE

Q. What are the ADA responsibilities when maintaining facilities?

- A. Basically, accessible features must be maintained to be accessible over the life of the facility. This applies to surfaces, clear widths, operable elements, etc., which must be “accessible to and useable by” all users, including those with disabilities.

Q. If an accessible feature is determined be damaged or degraded to the point it is no longer accessible to and useable by pedestrians, how soon must corrections or repairs be made?

- A. Generally, as soon as is practicable based on the location, nature and severity of the problem. For highly-used pedestrian facilities in popular and/or urban areas, corrections should be implemented as soon as possible – usually within a few hours or, at most, a few days after an issue has been identified.

For example: Grass growing over a sidewalk could probably be trimmed the next time a mowing crew visits the area. However, a crack in the sidewalk that is greater than ¼” high may also be a safety (trip and fall) issue that needs to be fixed quickly. A damaged guardrail that hangs over a sidewalk or a broken curb ramp needs to be fixed quickly, to avoid blocking the pedestrian path or possibly causing an injury.