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CHANGES COMING TO PEDESTRIAN ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Michigan communities will soon have to adhere to new rules with significant changes for pedestrian intersection crosswalks, including roundabouts, to maintain compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The Pedestrian Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG), published last August, provide a more relevant application of accessibility requirements to street settings than the current ADA guidelines.

PROWAG is a set of technical specifications to help designers create accessible routes along and across public streets. It is aimed at improving accessibility for pedestrians with disabilities and eliminating travel obstacles due to the lack of accessibility on sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian facilities.

“Keeping sidewalks and ADA ramps up to par is important so those with disabilities can fully utilize our community,” says Ron Masticiano, superintendent for the Village of Onsted.

WHAT HAS TRIGGERED ADA CHANGES?

Even though the ADA guidelines were handed out more than 40 years ago, there were no official accessibility standards tailored to items like sidewalks, curb ramps, and pedestrian push buttons.

Last year, the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) issued the final rule for federal, state, and local governments to follow on how to make their pedestrian sidewalks, crosswalks, signals, shared use paths, and on-street parking accessible to people with disabilities.

Michigan communities will be required to follow PROWAG on all pedestrian facilities regardless of funding source. While these guidelines will be enforceable once adopted this year by the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Transportation, there is still no direction on roll out or a grace period for compliance.

WHAT CHANGES WILL BE REQUIRED?

What the changes mean to municipalities are still being sorted out, but the new guidelines, issued under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and

the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA), require:

- Providing sidewalks and other pedestrian paths with a “pedestrian access route,” wide enough and accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Providing a temporary access route when the pedestrian access route is under construction.
- Adding “accessible pedestrian signals” (APS) at all new or improved pedestrian signals at crosswalks, enabling anyone with visual impairments to safely cross the street.
- Installing curb ramps and detectable warning surfaces at crosswalks where a pedestrian path meets a roadway.
- Adding treatments at crosswalks with multilane roundabouts that alert motorists to the presence of pedestrians and slow or stop traffic at those crosswalks.
- Transit stops must be constructed for those with a disability so they can board buses and rail cars.
- On-street, non-residential parking must also have accessible parking spaces large enough for a disabled individual to exit a parked vehicle without entering the path of oncoming vehicles.

It is highly recommended that Michigan communities update street inventories of existing sidewalks, curb ramps, and push buttons to incorporate PROWAG into the assessment.

Fleis & VandenBrink (F&V) recently assisted the Village of Onsted with a sidewalk project and followed the new PROWAG rules. F&V has staff with expertise in the new ADA rules, and we’re ready to offer technical guidance on your future improvements. Call F&V’s Matt Johnson, at 269.532.7396 or email mjohnson@fveng.com. He can help your community be ADA compliant and make your streets and sidewalks accessible and safe to pedestrians.



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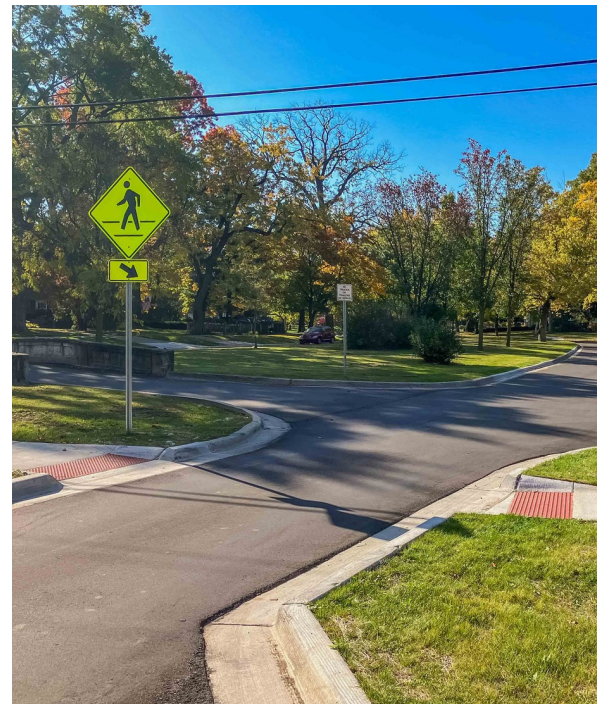
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