



**LOCAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

TO: LTF staff

**FROM: Jon Kaplan, P.E.
Assistant Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator**

DATE: January 21, 2003

SUBJECT: Sidewalk Widths and ADA

Based on a recent discussion about sidewalk widths and Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) requirements, there appears to be the need for some clarification around this topic.

Our current VTrans standard sidewalk width (and one which clearly meets ADAAG) is 5 feet. The VTrans Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Design Manual also supports the minimum sidewalk width of 5 feet. Numerous other design documents, including the draft AASHTO Pedestrian Guide and the ITE publication, Design and Safety of Pedestrian Facilities use 5 feet as a minimum sidewalk dimension. It is sound engineering practice to provide a minimum of a 5 foot wide sidewalk.

A facility can still meet the requirements of ADAAG if there are constraints such as right of way or environmental or cultural resources that limit the ability to provide a 5 foot wide sidewalk. ADAAG and 28 CFR Part 36 provide that "If an accessible route [sidewalk] has less than 60 inches clear width, then passing spaces at least 60 inches by 60 inches **shall be** (emphasis added) located at reasonable intervals not to exceed 200 ft."

3-14 Additionally, "The minimum clear width for single wheelchair passage shall be 32 inches at a point and 36 inches continuously." A "point" location is defined as one having no more than 24 inches in length in the direction of travel. This provision is what allows sidewalks to be narrowed at driveway crossings (36 inch continuous passage) and to bypass obstacles like utility poles or fire hydrants (32 inches at a point).

Please bear in mind that **all of these dimensional requirements are *minimums* for accessibility** and facilities should be constructed to greater than minimum requirements when possible.

The decision to build sidewalks less than 5 feet wide cannot be an arbitrary one. When sidewalks are proposed to be less than 5 feet wide, clear justification should be provided as to why greater width cannot be achieved. This would normally be some kind of constraint such as right of way, cultural resources, natural resources, etc. The VTrans Ped/Bike Design Manual states:

"Adequate documentation for designing to below minimum dimensions shall at least include the following:

1. The impact of meeting the minimum dimension (on cost, constructability, environmental resources, etc.)
2. What mitigating features or circumstances offset the use of less than minimum dimensions?"

Hopefully, the information in this memo provides some clarification on this issue. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Jon Comments