



City of Seattle

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Seattle commits to accessibility

SEATTLE (July 17, 2017) – The City of Seattle has reached a landmark settlement of a class action lawsuit by committing to the installation or remediation of 22,500 accessible curb ramps throughout the city over the next 18 years. The City of Seattle is a national leader in accessibility and today's announcement reaffirms this commitment. Curb ramps provide people with mobility disabilities a safe way to get on and off sidewalks as they travel throughout the city.

Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Seattle has struggled to meet the standards for curb ramp access required by law. Under the leadership of Mayor Murray and City Attorney Pete Holmes, this settlement will put the City of Seattle on a path to meet the accessibility requirements of the ADA for the first time since the law went into effect 25 years ago. The settlement was reached amicably after a lengthy negotiation process in which the City and the plaintiffs committed to engage in mediation rather than to spend resources litigating the issues in court.

“With inclusion as our guiding principle, today, we are making Seattle safer and more accessible for everyone by correcting a problem that has persisted for decades,” said Mayor Ed Murray. “By building thousands of curb ramps we are righting a wrong that prevented people with mobility disabilities from easily moving around the city. It has been a priority of my administration to ensure everyone has dependable, safe access to our entire transportation network. Our commitment to building curb ramps fits with our ambitious Pedestrian Master Plan, Vision Zero, and our transportation levies. Thank you to City Attorney Pete Holmes and his team for making today a reality.”

The settlement calls for the construction of 22,500 new curb ramps over the next 18 years. Under the settlement, 1,250 curb ramps must be constructed annually. All ramps built or repaired within

Seattle will count toward the annual commitment, including ramps constructed by other entities, such as utilities, telecom providers, schools, and private developers.

“The City is committed to making Seattle accessible for all City residents and visitors. We are pleased with this settlement and the historic investment in accessible infrastructure improvements it will bring,” said City Attorney Pete Holmes. “The settlement also eliminates the risk, uncertainty and expense of litigation for both parties.”

“The Seattle Department of Transportation is not only committed to building the curb ramps, but also proud of the fact that this work reinforces the core values that drive the department to build a safer, more vibrant and interconnected city,” said Scott Kubly, Director of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). “From our aggressive Pedestrian Master Plan goals, to our Vision Zero efforts to end traffic fatalities in the City of Seattle, SDOT remains inspired and steadfast in our commitment to improving safety and mobility for all travelers.”

“Federal and state disability access laws were enacted decades ago to provide persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to fully participate in civic life,” said Tim Fox, plaintiffs’ counsel and co-founder of the Civil Rights Education and Enforcement Center. “Today, we stand together with the City of Seattle to fulfill the promise of those laws by ensuring that people with disabilities can travel independently throughout their communities.”

People with disabilities are one of the largest minority groups in the country; census figures estimate that 56.7 million Americans, one in five, has a disability. In Seattle alone, there are approximately 26,000 people with mobility disabilities who use wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, or other mobility devices to get around. Missing, broken, or poorly maintained curb ramps can impede access to City sidewalks, crosswalks and other walkways for people with mobility disabilities.

“As a lawyer with a disability practice in Seattle, I am beyond thrilled with this agreement,” said Conrad Reynoldson, one of the plaintiffs who brought the case. “This means that both my clients and I will have full, equal, and safe access to an inclusive community. It has been hard finishing up law school, setting up my practice, or even getting to court, when I have to figure out a way to get there that doesn’t involve me going blocks out of my way or traveling in the street due to a missing curb ramp.”

“Beyond the thousands of new curb ramps, one of Seattle’s most promising commitments is improving how a citizen can request a new curb ramp or fix a broken curb ramp,” said David Whedbee, another plaintiff. “They no longer have to figure out how to do this on their own. Instead, this agreement makes sure that there is one clear, easy system for installing or fixing curb ramps.”

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