



WHAT'S NEW WITH THE 2023 PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES (PROWAG)?

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Overview

The U.S. Access Board has published updated guidelines under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) that address access to sidewalks and streets, crosswalks, curb ramps, pedestrian signals, on-street parking, and other components of public right-of-way. These guidelines also review shared use paths, which are designed primarily for use by bicyclists and pedestrians for transportation and recreation purposes.

As of August 8, 2023, the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines, (*PROWAG*) was published in the Federal Register, making the guidelines the standard for pedestrian accessibility. TEA continues to observe many instances where pedestrian facilities do not comply with accessibility standards. A pedestrian facility consists of the pedestrian pathway (sidewalk or shared-use trail) and crosswalks that make up the path on which the pedestrian travels.

The PROWAG guidelines contain scoping and technical requirements to ensure that pedestrian facilities located in the public right-of-way are readily accessible to, and usable by, pedestrians with disabilities.

The PROWAG applies to new construction and alterations to existing facilities. Even though existing facilities do not need to be brought to PROWAG compliance, TEA recommends working to bring them to full compliance.

The PROWAG guidelines have been modified since their draft initial release. The version of the guidelines published in the Federal Register has differences from previous versions; therefore, ensure that the most current version is referenced. This bulletin will focus on the new additions and changes in the 2023 version of the PROWAG.

The U.S. Access Board offers technical assistance to assist agencies in complying with PROWAG requirements. They also offer training videos which can be viewed free of charge: [U.S. Access Board Releases Training Videos on Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines \(access-board.gov\)](https://www.access-board.gov/training/).

This bulletin will focus on the recent changes. Note that it is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of PROWAG's scope. For the complete requirements, see the Access Board's PROWAG page: [R3: Technical Requirements \(access-board.gov\)](https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/) and [R4 Supplemental Technical Requirements](https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/).

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Scope and Applicability

All new construction and alterations to existing facilities within the public right of way must be brought to PROWAG standards. PROWAG uses the term “pedestrian access route” to refer to the path that pedestrians travel. It is most comprised of sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps. PROWAG does not require an accessible route to be in place unless pedestrian facilities are present.

PROWAG standards must be followed to the maximum extent feasible. Where existing physical constraints make compliance technically infeasible, compliance is required to the maximum extent feasible. Physical constraints include, but are not limited to, underlying terrain, underground structures, adjacent developed facilities, drainage, or the presence of a significant natural or historic feature. Where the State Historic Preservation Officer or Advisory Council on Historic Preservation determines that compliance with the applicable requirement of these guidelines would threaten or destroy the historic significance of a qualified historic building or facility, compliance with that requirement is required to the maximum extent feasible without threatening or destroying the historic significance of the qualified historic building or facility.

If a pedestrian facility is altered, the alteration shall not decrease the accessibility of an existing pedestrian facility. In other words, if a pedestrian facility exists, it cannot be eliminated as an alternative to being brought up to PROWAG.

Pedestrian Pushbuttons

PROWAG no longer references the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) for pedestrian push button and signal walk indications. The PROWAG sections R307 and R308 now provide standards on tactile, audible and vibrating requirements, speech messaging, pedestrian interval timing, push button locations, signal head indications and percussive and locator tones.

On-Street Parking

Accessible parking must be provided for on-street parking stalls. Exceptions to this requirement are residential parking, spaces exclusively for commercial or law

enforcement, and existing on-street parking not affected by improvement projects.

Parking Stall Dimensions. Parallel on-street parking spaces are required to be a minimum of 13 feet wide and 24 feet long. PROWAG provides several exceptions where the accessible parking dimensions may match the existing parking stalls based on scope of work, access to curb ramps and/or location next to crosswalks. Refer to section R310 for full details.

If angled or perpendicular parking stalls are implemented, the width must be a minimum of 132 inches and 96 inches, respectively. Each parking stall must have access to a 60-inch-wide access aisle. Although PROWAG provides guidance on angled and perpendicular parking, TEA recommends utilizing parallel parking where feasible to minimize traffic conflicts.

Connection to Access Routes. Parallel, angled and perpendicular on-street parking spaces shall connect to pedestrian access routes. Where curb ramps are used, they shall not reduce the required width or length of the parking spaces or access aisles and shall be located at either end of the parallel parking space or at the access aisle for angled and perpendicular parking. Detectable warning surfaces are not required on curb ramps used exclusively to connect accessible on-street parking spaces to pedestrian access routes.

Design Considerations

There are several design considerations that are governed by PROWAG and are identified in this section.

Changes in Level. Under the final rule, PROWAG updated the terminology from “vertical surface discontinuity” to “changes in level” in addition to changes to the technical standards. Changes in the level of the pedestrian access route must comply as follows:

- ☑ Changes in level up to ¼ inch may be vertical.
- ☑ Changes in level of ¼ inch to ½ inch must be beveled with a slope no greater than 50 percent.
- ☑ Changes in level of greater than ½ inch up to 6 inches shall have an 8.3 percent maximum slope.
- ☑ Changes in level greater than 6 inches follow normal grade requirements for an access route.

Detectable Warning Surface. As with ADA and ABA, a detectable warning surface (DWS), or a grid of truncated domes, must be provided on all ramps crossing roadways.

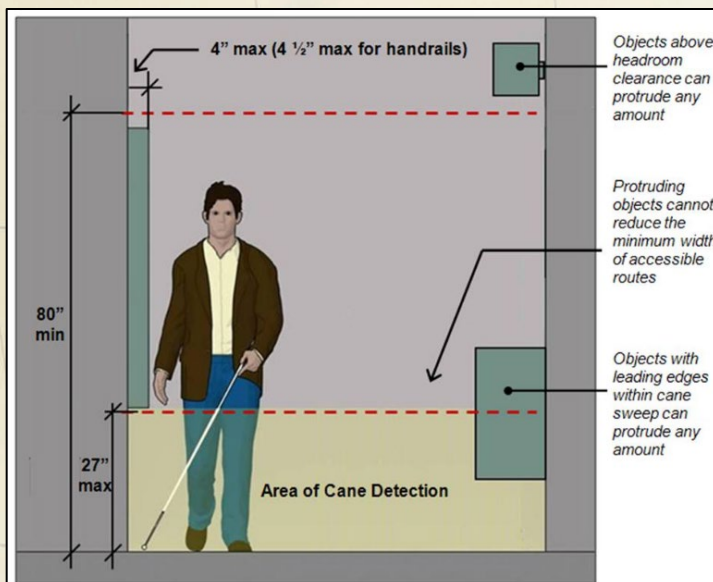
The following changes to DWS requirements were made under the final rule:

- ☑ Required on pedestrian circulation paths at driveway locations that are controlled by a stop, yield, or signal control.
- ☑ At pedestrian refuge islands, DWS shall be located no greater than 6 inches from the edge of the island or back of curb and be separated by a minimum of 24 inches.
- ☑ DWS is not required on curb ramps and blended transitions used exclusively to connect pedestrian access routes with access isles.
- ☑ Where a concrete border is required, it shall not exceed 2 inches on all sides of the DWS with exception at the edge of pavement where a setback is already permitted.

Protrusion Limits. Objects with leading edges more than 27 inches and less than 80 inches above the walking surface shall not protrude horizontally more than 4 inches into pedestrian circulation paths. An exception is a handrail, which may extend 4.5 inches into the pedestrian circulation path. Protruding objects cannot reduce the clear width required for pedestrian access.

Protrusion Limit Example

Image Source: US Access Board



Prohibited Crossing Locations. At intersections, midblock locations, and roundabouts where pedestrian crossings are prohibited, curb ramps shall not be provided. The pedestrian circulation path must either be separated from the roadway with landscaping or other nonprepared surface or provide vertical edge treatment with a bottom edge 15 inches maximum above the pedestrian circulation path.

At roundabouts (from crosswalk to crosswalk), since pedestrian crossings are not intended within the circulatory road of the roundabout, the pedestrian crossing path to the outside of this circulatory road must be separated from the curb. This can be accomplished by landscaping or other nonprepared surface with a minimum width of 24 inches. If the pedestrian circulation path is along (attached) to the curb, the path must have a continuous and detectable vertical edge treatment along the street side of the pedestrian circulation path, from crosswalk to crosswalk.

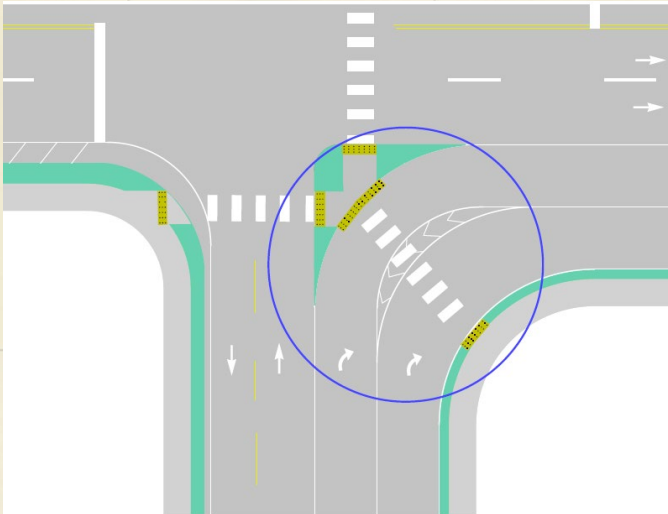
Vertical Edge Treatment Example

Image Source: Access Board

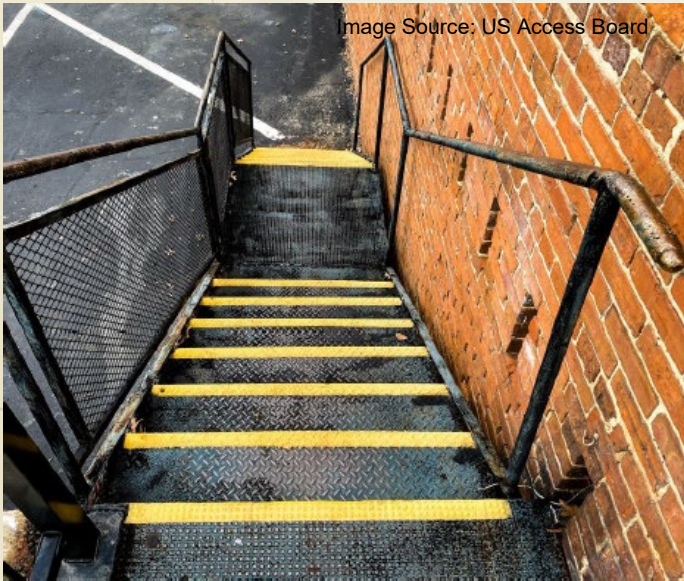


Crosswalks at Multilane Roundabouts and Multilane Turn Lanes. At multilane roundabouts where approach roadway segments contain a crosswalk, or at multilane channelized right-turn lanes at traditional signalized intersections, the crosswalk must be enhanced utilizing one of the four traffic controls; a conventional traffic signal with pedestrian signal heads, a pedestrian hybrid beacon, a pedestrian actuated rectangular rapid flashing beacon, or a raised crossing.

Channelized Right Turn Treatment Example



Stairways. Stairways may be implemented in addition to ramps. Many people with disabilities often prefer the shortest route possible and will utilize stairways instead of long, often winding sidewalks and ramps. The new PROWAG standards now requires visual contrast marking on the leading edge of each step tread and top landing.



Pedestrian Access Route Closures. In the updated guidance, PROWAG no longer references the MUTCD regarding Pedestrian Access Route Closure. Instead, the requirements are now incorporated directly within the PROWAG document.

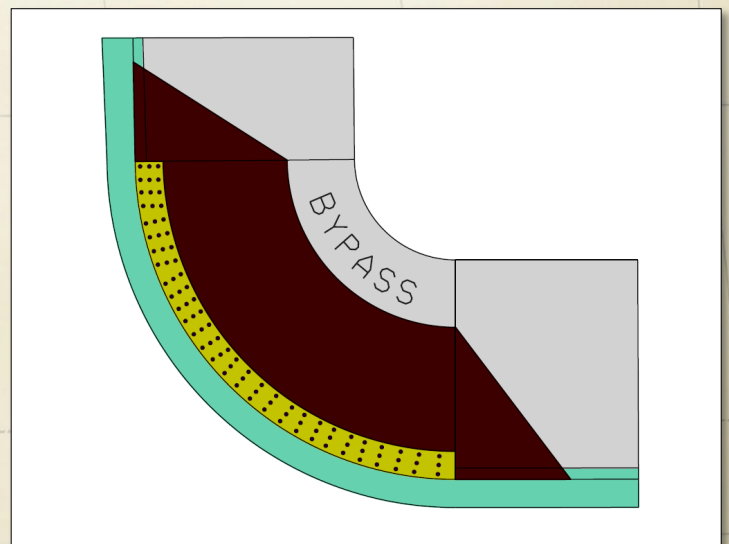
Where a pedestrian circulation path is temporarily closed by construction, maintenance operations, or similar conditions, an alternate pedestrian access route shall be provided. Signs identifying alternate pedestrian access routes shall be provided in advance of decision points. Within the public right-of-way, proximity actuated audible

signs or other non-visual means of conveying the information that identifies the alternate pedestrian access route shall also be provided. The temporary pedestrian route may be no less accessible (all accessibility guidelines apply) than the route it detours. Signs identifying the alternate pedestrian access route must be provided. Proximity-actuated audible signs or other nonvisual means must also be provided to convey the information. Where temporary pedestrian signal heads are provided at a crosswalk that is part of an alternate pedestrian access route, accessible pedestrian signals or passive detection devices must also be provided. If an alternate route is infeasible, then alternate means of providing access is permitted, such as a shuttle service.

Pedestrian Signs. Signs intended solely for pedestrians, including transit signs, and all signs serving shared use paths, shall comply with standards. There are exceptions, which include transit schedules, timetables and maps, as well as pedestrian pushbutton signing. The standards for signing relate to character height with respect to horizontal viewing distance, stroke thickness, character spacing, line spacing, and the required height above the ground surface.

Bypass Lane for Blended Transitions. Under final rule, where a blended transition serving more than one pedestrian circulation path has a running slope greater than 1:48 (2.1%), a pedestrian access route shall be provided so that a pedestrian not crossing the street may bypass the blended transition.

Bypass Lane Example



Landings. To maintain consistent terminology with ADA/ABA standards, turning spaces are now referred to as landings.

Revised Clear Space Requirement. As part of the final rule, clear space is only required at perpendicular curb ramps. Per the ruling, a clear area 48 inches wide minimum by 48 inches long minimum shall be provided beyond the bottom grade break of the perpendicular curb ramp run and within the width of the crosswalk. At shared use paths, the clear area shall be as wide as the shared use path.

Accessibility Signage at Passenger Loading Zones. Passenger loading zones are considered any area that is specifically designated or designed for passenger loading excluding areas that exclusively serve buses. For example, a passenger pick-up or drop-off area found at an airport, arena, or hotel entrance. As part of the final ruling, signs displaying the International Symbol of Accessibility are no longer required at accessible passenger loading zones. Note that accessibility standards still apply for the loading zone, but it just no longer needs to be signed.



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for pamphlets, bulletins and studies

Reference List

- ☑ [U.S. Access Board Homepage.](#)
- ☑ [Transportation Engineering Agency \(TEA\) Homepage](#)
- ☑ [*Better Military Traffic Engineering*, SDDCTEA Pamphlet 55-17. 2016.](#)
- ☑ [Addendum to SDDCTEA Pamphlet 55-17, *Crosswalk Warrants and Guidelines*, 1 February 2024.](#)
- ☑ [Federal Highway Administration: Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, 11th Edition.](#)
- ☑ [DOD Supplement to the MUTCD, TEA, 2015](#)

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