



ACCESS CURRENTS

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Board Holds Public Hearings on Guidelines for Federal Outdoor Sites

In September the Board held public hearings on guidelines it has proposed for Federal parks and recreation areas. Held in Washington, D.C. on September 6th and Indianapolis on September 26th, the hearings provided an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on the guidelines directly to the Board. These guidelines, which cover trails, beach access routes, and picnic and camping areas, are intended to clarify how, and to what extent, access can be achieved in developing or altering Federal outdoor sites.



Board members hear testimony from Janet Zeller of the U.S. Forest Service at the Washington, D.C. hearing.

The Board received input from various industry and consumer organizations, among them the National Recreation and Park Association, the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the American Council of the Blind, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Federal land management agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Interior, also weighed in on the guidelines, as did representatives from assorted organizations, such as the National Center on Accessibility and the International Code Council. Trail designers, park operators, product manufacturers, independent living centers, and others also provided testimony.

Many commenters generally endorsed the guidelines, including their overall approach, and urged the Board to complete action promptly and to follow-up with guidelines for non-Federal sites due to the long standing confusion that exists on providing access to outdoor environments. The U.S. Forest Service highlighted considerations and provided recommendations based on its experience applying similar accessibility criteria to sites and trails under its jurisdiction.

Most comments addressed trails and outdoor access routes. Trail operators and designers provided information on the results of their efforts to improve access and flagged topics of inquiry, such as alternative methods for measuring surface firmness and stability. Recommendations were received on trail signage and map systems and other subjects in response to questions posed by the Board in its published proposal. Participants also addressed beach access, including proposed criteria for access routes, compliance and maintenance concerns, boardwalks, and available mat systems for routes. In addition, comments were received that highlighted subjects that should be further clarified or explored, including the guidelines' scope of coverage and applicability to certain types of sites and documentation of compliance. Speakers also stressed the need for supplementary guidance materials and training once the guidelines are completed.

Testimony received at the hearings, including an earlier one held in Denver, is posted on the Board's website along with other comments submitted by mail and email. The comment period closed October 18th. The Board will revise the proposed guidelines based on this input. For further information, visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/outdoor/ or contact Bill Botten at botten@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0014 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Advisory Committee on Emergency Transportable Housing Convenes

A new Board advisory committee on emergency transportable housing held its first meeting September 24th and 25th in Washington, D.C. The Board organized this committee, which includes representation from disability groups, industry and code groups, and government agencies, to provide recommendations on supplementing its guidelines to specifically cover emergency transportable housing. Access to such housing proved problematic in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and, after verifying and examining the issues involved, the Board has determined that supplementary guidelines may be needed.



The committee heard presentations from members on transportable housing used in emergencies.

The Board opened the meeting with briefings on the committee's charter and rules governing the work of Federal advisory committees. This was followed by presentations from each of the committee's 13 members on the organizations they represent and issues that need to be addressed by the committee. Members called attention to the need to clearly define and delineate the types of units covered and the importance of consistency with industry and regulatory terminology and unit classifications. Discussion also focused on verifying any design requirements or engineering constraints that conflict with accessibility criteria as a committee priority. The committee organized two subcommittees that will examine issues of coverage and design conflicts and will develop recommendations for the full committee's consideration. The subcommittees are scheduled to meet by teleconference in between committee meetings.

The committee's next meetings are scheduled for November 19th and 20th and January 24th and 25th. Committee meetings are open to the public. For further information, contact Marsha Mazz at mazz@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0020 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY), or visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/eth/index.htm.

Committee to Examine Access to Vessel Alarm Systems

The Passenger Vessel Emergency Alarms Advisory Committee, another newly chartered Board committee, recently convened for the first time. This committee is examining vessel emergency alarm systems and notification procedures in relation to the needs of passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing. The committee's recommendations will advance the Board's development of new guidelines for passenger vessels which are to include criteria for emergency alarm systems. The committee's membership includes representatives from disability organizations, the vessel and cruise ship industry and trade groups, and the National Fire Protection Association, among others.

Meeting on September 19th and 20th in Washington, D.C., the committee reviewed and finalized its operating protocols and received briefings from the Board delineating issues of inquiry. Members representing industry made presentations on current practices for notifying passengers of emergencies aboard various types of vessels, including cruise ships, ferries, excursion vessels, and gaming boats. Members representing advocacy organizations briefed members on the varied population of people with hearing impairments and common methods and technologies for providing communication access.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for November 28th and 29th in Washington, D.C. For further information, contact Paul Beatty at pvag@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0012 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY). Additional information is available on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/pvaac/alarms/index.htm.

Committee Work Progresses on Update of the Section 508 Standards

The Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee (TEITAC), which is developing recommendations to the Board on updating its 508 standards for electronic and information technology and its Telecommunications Act guidelines, held its most recent meeting in early September. The committee continued review of recommended changes to the standards and guidelines prepared by eight subcommittees. Subcommittee deliberations have been completed and all further discussion is being conducted by the committee as a whole. In addition, the committee identified unresolved issues.

The Committee is convening weekly by teleconference in October to discuss remaining issues in preparation for its next meeting in November. The Committee plans to present its recommendations to the Board in January. The November meeting will take place at the National Science Foundation (NSF), Room II-555, 4201 Wilson Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia. Persons wishing to attend must pre-register and follow NSF procedures, including its computer security policy. For more information, visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/sec508/update-index.htm, the committee's website at <http://teitac.org/>, or contact Tim Creagan at creagan@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0016 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

TEITAC Meeting Schedule

- November 13-16 – Meeting
- December 18 (1-3 EST) – Teleconference
- January 7-9 – Presentation to the Board

Board Co-Hosts Evaluation of Work Zone Devices

The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), along with the Board, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Maryland Department of Transportation organized a consumer evaluation of devices used for directing pedestrian traffic around work zones in the public right-of-way. Held at Maryland state Department of Transportation headquarters in Hanover, Maryland, the event enabled volunteers with blindness or low vision to test and evaluate various products, including barricades, channelizing devices, "talking" lights, and detectable warnings. In opening remarks, Access Board Chair Tricia Mason noted that the goal is to provide adequate detection for all pedestrians, including those with residual vision and those who use canes, dog guides, and hand-trailing techniques. Manufacturers were in attendance and received suggestions from test participants on possible ways to improve the effectiveness of their products. The evaluation results will be compiled, analyzed, and disseminated to the industry, regulatory agencies, and others. For further information, contact Lois Thibault at thibault@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0023 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

ICDR Hosts Conference on Transfer Technologies and Strategies

In September the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) held a two-day conference on state-of-the-art transfer technologies and strategies. The event brought together experts in the field to share information on independent and assisted transfer of people with mobility impairments and to identify areas for future research. Speakers and moderators included researchers, people with disabilities, industry representatives, program analysts, and others.

The conference event featured panel discussions on user perspectives, research and policy issues, assisted transfer, and new mobility and assistive technologies, as well as exhibits and demonstrations of transfer devices. Representatives from the Board, which is currently sponsoring research on transfer, provided a briefing on Federal research efforts and on specifications in the Board's accessibility guidelines that relate to transfer.

Access Board Training

The Access Board routinely provides training on accessible design and its guidelines and standards at various conferences and events across the country. Most training pertains to design criteria for facilities, transportation systems and vehicles, and communication and information technologies. Sessions are usually tailored to the needs and interests of the audience and may focus on specific aspects of accessibility. For example, recently the Board conducted a session on courthouse accessibility with members of its former Courthouse Access Advisory Committee at the annual conference of the American Institute of Architect's Academy of Architecture for Justice in New York City. Other programs are more extensive, such as full-day sessions covering the revised ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines. The Board has conducted a series of these sessions for various Federal agencies subject to updated standards based on these guidelines.



Upcoming Board Training Events

- Interagency Disability Education Awareness Showcase, Washington, D.C. (Nov. 1)
- Baltimore Mayor's Commission on Disability and AIA Chapter, Baltimore, MD (Nov. 2)
- ADA Symposium, Portland, OR (Nov. 5-7)
- Build Boston, Boston, MA (Nov. 13-15)
- International Code Council (local chapter), Lancaster, PA (Nov. 20)
- Perspectives Conference, Bethesda, MD (Dec. 5-7)
- ProGreen Expo, Denver, CO (Jan. 25)
- Ohio Recreation and Park Association Annual Conference, Dayton, OH (Feb. 12)

For more information on the Board's training program or scheduling a session, contact Peggy Greenwell, Training Coordinator, at training@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0017 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY), or visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/training.htm.

Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.

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