

From the ADA Floor to the Accessible Ceiling

Arizona Transit Association

June 17, 2021

People with Disabilities are Not a Niche Market

25% of Americans have at least one disability.

- Physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities
- Hidden disabilities
- People who have a history of a disability or are regarded as having one

53% of Americans are closely connected to a person with disabilities.

- Close family member
- Friend
- Close colleague or coworker

The Path to Here

Laws protecting at least some people with disabilities go back to the late 1700's

Focus on disabled veterans returning from WWI

Expanded protections resulting from the US Civil Rights movement

- Architectural barrier removal in the late 1960's
- The Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Non-discrimination in housing and air travel in the 1980's
- The ADA of 1990
- Access to telecommunications and digital information.

From Here to Accessibility

The legal framework exists.

The accessibility journey is far from over.

- Barriers to physical, programmatic and digital accessibility remain.
- PWDs experience higher rates of unemployment, under-employment and poverty.

But What About Transit?

Transit has done a lot:

- Physical accessibility is relatively good.
- All transit agencies provide paratransit for PWDs who cannot use fixed-route system.
- The industry is improving accessibility in other areas.

Yet: PWDs list access to transportation as one of the top two or three barriers to equal participation in society.

The Premise

Compliance begets compliance. If we want to reach true accessibility, we need to aim higher.

An Analogy- From ADA Floor to Accessible Ceiling

Building a Solid Foundation

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Using an Inclusive Culture to Build a Safe Space for PWDs

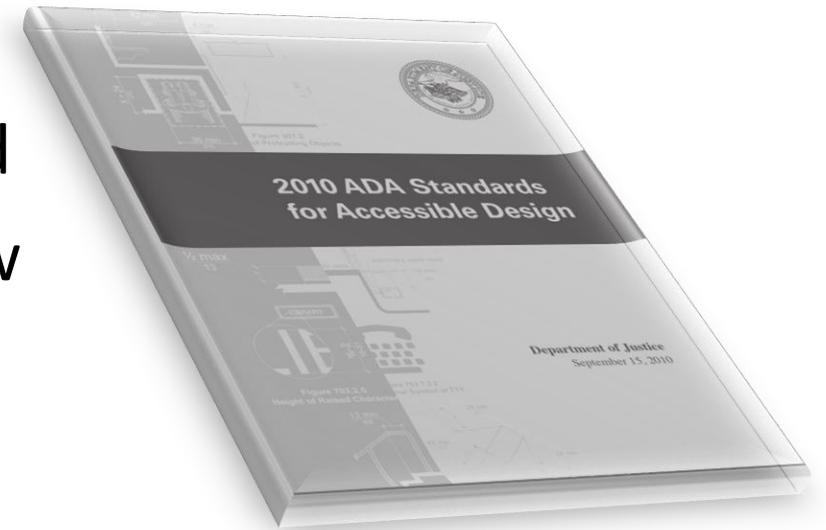
Michelle Witman, Asset Based Consulting

Information that Opens Doors and Raises the Roof

Ron Brooks, Accessible Avenue

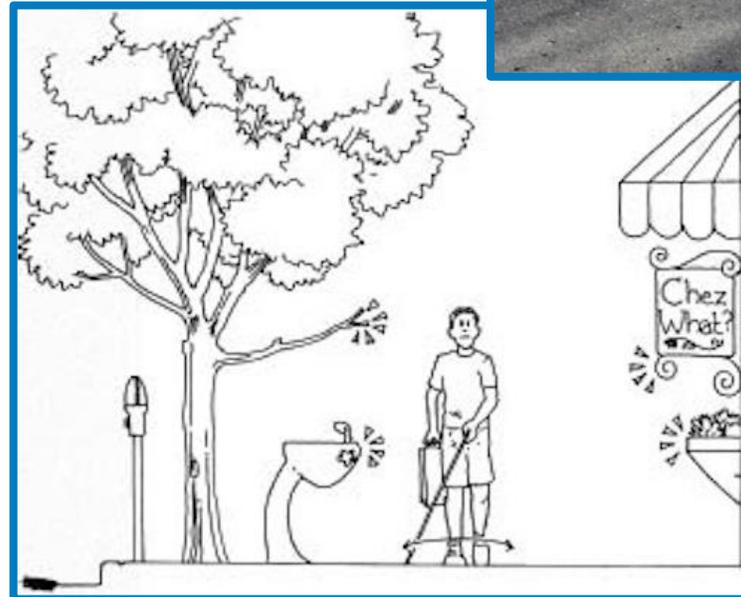
From ADA Floor to Accessible Ceiling

- The ADA is a bare minimum
- The spirit of the law goes far beyond
- Universal Design helps all of us...now and in the future
- How you build says a lot about who you value



Paths of Travel

- Sidewalk width & stability
- Running and cross slopes
- Curb ramps
- Ramps
- Trees & Protrusions
- Wayfinding



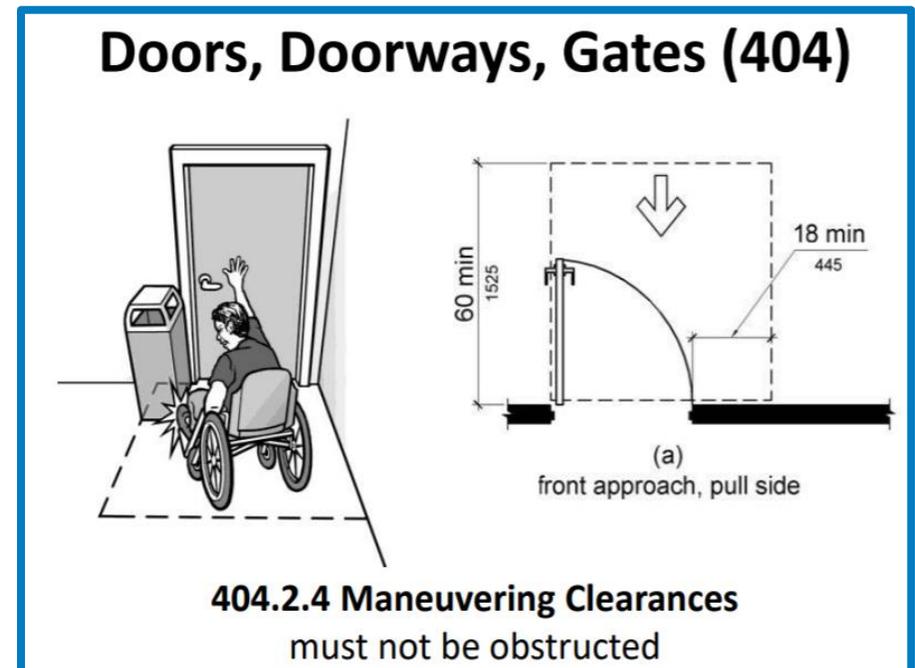
Travel & Rest Amenities

- Bus stops, shelters & shade
- Visual & audio bus indicators
- Buses
- Well-trained staff (securement)
- Transit Centers...



Transit Center Entrances

- Signage to or at accessible entrances or amenities
- Path to door and clearance
- Door hardware
- Door stops
- Weight & speed of doors



Transit Center Amenities

- Counters
- Drinking fountains
- Vending machines
- Dispensers
- Handouts and materials
- Tables and seating options

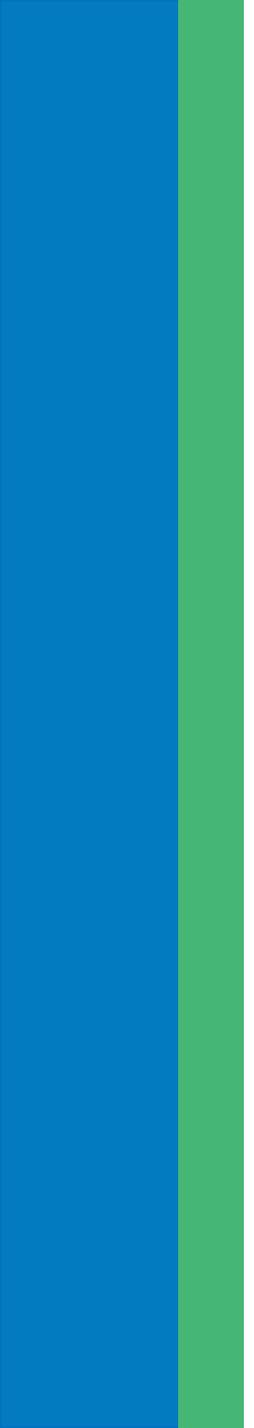


Public Meeting Checklist:

- Parking, paths of travel & signage
- Entrances & paths to amenities
- Meeting rooms with inclusive seating & effective communication options
- Materials including “Learner friendly” & alternative formats
- Restrooms
- Food & beverage options & considerations

Nothing About Us Without Us

- Job Fairs: Ensure access, inclusion and an Invitation
- Community Feedback: It's critical to include those who will be impacted the most.
- Just posting may not be enough.
- Reach out to your location Disability Commissions and organizations
- And Really Listen



PERCEPTION IS EVERYTHING

**So, who's invited to the table?
And are you ready?**

Building an Inclusive Environment

- 20% of people in the American workforce have a disability (either visible or invisible)
- What is your disclosure rate?
- What are your current protocols when an employee discloses disability?
- Having disabled employees is a fantastic return on investment. We provide optics, firsthand experiences. We are your consumers.

The goal is to create a place where PWDs want to work. That's what we mean when we talk about building an inclusive culture.

Understanding Current Culture: Ableism

Let's Consider:

- education experience
- representation in media
- paradigm shift

Ableism:

Ableism is the discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities or who are perceived to have disabilities.

Understanding Current Culture: Access

Access: the ability to fully participate.

You may use a **level playing field** to already indicate fairness, a chance for everyone to participate.

It is:

- A chance to succeed or fail.
- A level playing field does not guarantee outcome but provides equal opportunity.

*“Everybody is a genius,
but if you judge a fish by
its ability to climb a tree,
it will live its whole life
believing that it is stupid.”*
–Albert Einstein

This is the heart of disability inclusion!

Building an Inclusive Environment:

As individuals and as organizations we can work to create a culture that is inclusive of people with disabilities.

- We can incorporate Universal Design
- We can understand the disclosure and accommodation process
- We can take steps to promote a healthy workplace culture

Recalling an Experience

Recall a recent errand or trip you went on that was smooth. Try filling in the following sentence frame:

1. The most efficient errand I went on was when I went to _____ and bought _____. It was so easy, it was seamless!
2. Why do you think that was so easy?
3. I think it was so easy because _____.

Universal Design Simplified

UNIVERSAL DESIGN is the process of creating products, services and presentations that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities and other characteristics.

Everyone benefits and access becomes normalized.

SIMPLIFIED: Where are there potential pebbles, rocks and boulders?

- Where might someone stumble?
- What can I do ahead of time to remove them?
- A frictionless (smooth) experience is preferable to one that is filled with friction!

Building an Inclusive Environment: Creating a Soft Landing

1. Say thank you, and then listen (hush the inner voice)
2. Hold off on all assumptions
3. Let them know they are an asset.
4. Ask: What can we do to help you be successful?
Determine reasonable accommodations.
5. Be explicit around confidentiality.
6. Spread the word.

Building an Inclusive Environment: Cultural Invitations

Ask the challenging questions:

1. Is disability on our radar?
2. Is the table accessible?
3. What does the disclosure rate look like?
4. What do we need to do to ATTRACT and retain employees?
(Where are our GAPS?)

Building an Inclusive Environment: Personal Invitations

1. Incorporate Universal Design features into your presentations, meetings, workday.
2. Be open to language refinement.
3. Be intentional around disclosure.
4. Volunteer and lift your colleagues with disabilities.
5. Build emotional rapport with your colleagues.
6. Friend, What can I do to help you be successful?
7. Listen and say: I see you. I hear you. Let's work together.

Information that Opens Doors and Raises the Roof

- Opens doors for both people with disabilities and everyone else.
- Raises the level of opportunities and success.

Defining Information

For Customers: Information needed to access a program, good or service

- What it is and who its for
- Where it is and how to get there

For Employees: Information required to get, keep and/or advance work

- Career Opportunities and other job listings
- Training and development materials
- Information necessary to do the job
- Performance feedback
- Information regarding reasonable accommodations

Example- Wayfinding

Information and technology that assists people to navigate within the built environment:

- Within a neighborhood
- Between a trip's origin and its destination
- Can be indoors, outdoors, transit, paratransit or any combination

Examples:

- Paper- based maps and directions
- Remote assistance via smartphone
- Electronic beacons, geofences and other digital technologies.

Making Information Accessible to Everyone

Information that empowers people to use a program, good or service

Designing content to be accessible for people, regardless of the way they consume the information:

- Printed materials in a range of accessible formats
- Websites that are WCAG 2.0 or 2.1 Level AA compliant.
- Mobile apps that are built and maintained to meet current developer standards
- Access to human- provided assistance when other methods are not otherwise available or accessible.

Making Information Accessible to Everyone

Approaches:

- A statement affirming the agency's commitment to the accessibility of all digital information.
- Use of a third-party accessibility validator with annual recertification.
- Open purchase agreement with an organization that can prepare documents in alternative formats upon request.

How the Roof Gets Raised

Having a more equal opportunity to information means more equal access to the products, goods and services that the information unlocks.

Transit and wayfinding = more mobility

Career/employment = economic and societal
benefits

Both in combination = a virtuous cycle



Accessible Avenue

Where Universal Design Meets Mobility

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You have the power to make disability an asset.

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Compliance, Access & Inclusion is Within Reach

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THANK YOU!