2026 ADA Transition Plan Update

Virtual Open House Video Transcript

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Hello and thank you for taking time to check out the Montana Department of Transportation's draft ADA Transition Plan Update! This plan is an update to MDT's previous plan, which was completed in 2021. We wanted to share this brief video to walk you through the update process, key findings from our efforts, and what's new in the plan.

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So, what is the ADA Transition Plan? Basically, it guides MDT's efforts to remove accessibility barriers so people of all abilities can use Montana's transportation system. It also documents the methods MDT uses to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA. The plan covers three main areas, including:

- the public right-of-way on MDT-maintained routes, including curb ramps, sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals;
- MDT's building facilities, such as rest areas, offices, maintenance buildings, and scale sites; and
- MDT's public programs and services.

The MDT Director is responsible for implementing the plan across the department.

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The transition plan is intended to be a living document, and every five years MDT reviews the full plan to make sure it reflects how the ADA program operates today. The 2026 update is minor and administrative in nature, so you won't see sweeping changes. Instead, the update focuses on a few key items.

- First, it reflects MDT's recent reorganization, including updated program areas and responsibilities.
- It also incorporates current federal regulations and guidance.
- It refreshes the related MDT plans and guidance documents that support the ADA program.
- And finally, it documents the progress MDT has made in removing accessibility barriers since the 2021 plan.

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Over the past several months, MDT and the consulting team took a close look at how MDT's External ADA program is working today. We interviewed MDT leadership and staff, reviewed current regulations and related MDT documents, looked at how peer agencies run their ADA programs, and reviewed MDT's ADA data and tools.

Findings from all these activities helped shape the draft plan update, which is now available for your review.

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So, what did we find? The good news is that what MDT is currently doing is working well. We learned that MDT's External ADA program is sound and well integrated with the department's other processes, with strong coordination across divisions. Because of that, only a few changes were needed to the plan's methods, mostly to clarify and accurately describe current practices and update roles.

Some opportunities were identified, including additional ADA training for new staff and those involved in design and construction, easier access to ADA data for designers, planners, and district staff, and clearer communication about progress and priorities. MDT will continue to work on these opportunities over the coming years.

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We also reviewed ADA programs at six other state departments of transportation, chosen for their similarities to MDT, along with three local agencies known for using new technology to conduct ADA assessments. Overall, we found that MDT's approach to its inventory, scoring, and prioritization is broadly consistent with its peers. Most agencies prioritize improvements based on ADA compliance, and many also consider pedestrian demand, like MDT does. Several agencies inventory more than curb ramps, such as pedestrian signals, sidewalks, paths, and buildings. And like MDT, most deliver ADA improvements both through dedicated ADA projects and as part of broader roadway work.

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We also took a look at emerging technology. Some agencies, especially at the local level, are exploring new tools such as artificial intelligence, mobile LiDAR (or Light Detection and Ranging technology), robotic data collection, and automated condition assessments. Most state DOTs, however, still rely on GIS databases and in-person field assessments. Interestingly, MDT already uses LiDAR for pavement condition assessments, which may help streamline ADA data collection in the future.

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So, what stayed the same? The plan's core approach is unchanged. It still includes the same 32 program methods, the same curb ramp scoring process, and the same processes MDT uses to identify and deliver projects, whether through stand-alone ADA projects or as part of other roadway projects. MDT also continues to update its curb ramp inventory and review the transition plan every five years.

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Let's take a closer look at how curb ramps are scored. Each curb ramp receives a demand score from 1 to 10, based on how close it is to destinations like government offices, transportation and transit facilities, places of public accommodation, and employers. Each ramp also receives a compliance score from 0 to 10, based on the number of non-compliant features, such as the ramp, landing, and flares. A lower score indicates a ramp with fewer barriers. The two scores are then multiplied together for a composite score of up to 100, where a higher score indicates a higher need. Scores are then compared by MDT district, county, urban area, and community.

This process is unchanged from the 2021 plan, and scoring was re-run for this 2026 update using the same process with updated inputs.

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So what did we change? First, the plan now reflects MDT's recent reorganization. Roles and responsibilities were updated to match MDT's new program areas, including Asset Strategy, Operations and Maintenance; General Operations; Project Development and Delivery; and Statewide Planning and Modal Operations.

Second, we made minor updates to the program methods to reflect how MDT works today and to clarify current practices and responsibilities.

Third, the plan incorporates current state and federal guidance, including the final rule for the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines, known as PROWAG; the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines; the 11th Edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices; and several recent or updated MDT plans, design guidance, and standard drawings.

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Since the 2021 Transition Plan was completed, MDT has continued to make steady progress in removing accessibility barriers. Between 2022 and 2026, MDT completed or began construction on 57 projects with ADA upgrades, either as stand-alone ADA projects or as part of other roadway projects. These projects provided 1,303 ADA-compliant curb ramps, 325 accessible pedestrian signals, and the approximate equivalent of 92,000 feet, or about 17 and a half miles, of new sidewalk. These upgrades were implemented in 41 Montana communities across all five MDT districts.

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MDT has also continued to update its curb ramp inventory. Comparing the 2021 and 2026 assessments, the inventory grew by 548 curb ramps, or 3.6 percent statewide. Over the same period, the average compliance score improved by 10 percent, and the average composite score improved by about 11 percent. Since lower scores mean fewer barriers, these results show improved accessibility in all five MDT districts. You can find more details, broken down by district, urban area, and community in Appendix E of the draft plan.

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Looking ahead, MDT's Active Projects map currently shows 25 planned ADA improvement projects on MDT-maintained routes over the next five years. Other planned projects may also include ADA improvements depending on final project scope, so these numbers will change as projects are added, removed, or rescoped.

To track progress, MDT completes a program review every two years, which is reported in the MDT Fact Book, and reviews the full transition plan every five years.

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For more information about the plan, we encourage you to visit the plan website at mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/ada. To submit comments or to request the plan in an alternative accessible format, contact the MDT External ADA Coordinator Matt Maze by telephone at 406-444-5416, or by email at mdtaccessibilityrequest@mt.gov, or you may use Montana Relay Service at 711.

Please submit all comments by **Friday, November 20th**. MDT will consider all feedback and summarize the comments received in the final Transition Plan Update.

We look forward to hearing from you. Thanks again for your interest in the plan!