

New Jersey Department of Transportation
Bureau of Research

Technical Brief



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Data Inventory Collection and Analysis Program

This project provided guidance to NJDOT's Division of Civil Rights in addressing the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) 2009 oversight findings to increase program awareness and visibility of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The project developed a framework for internal and external communication, including drafting an overarching Mission and Vision Statement for the Section 504/Title II program and creating a program brochure (English and Spanish language versions). The project also developed website content to educate the public about the program, its required elements, NJDOT's approach and roles, links to ADA resources and best practices, and contact information. Finally, the project compiled content for inclusion in the Department's internal sharing site and finalized ADA training materials to support the Division of Civil Rights' ongoing internal and external training efforts. The outreach component of the project included organizing two preliminary outreach sessions with select disability advocacy groups and their members, and developed presentation and background materials to support those sessions.

Background

As part of its 2009 program oversight activities, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) directed NJDOT's Division of Civil Rights to amplify its focus and to accelerate program efforts on accessibility to public facilities and services by persons with disabilities. In addition to following FHWA guidance regarding the need for greater program visibility and improved communication, public outreach efforts directly address the requirements of the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan elements that NJDOT must fulfill as part of Title II. Active communication, education, and training directed at NJDOT's sub-recipients also ensures that local New Jersey counties and municipalities conform to the spirit of the law regarding discrimination on the basis of disability. Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of the ADA Coordinator and their success in advancing compliance activities, rely on effective communication and collaboration with local governments, advocacy groups, and the public.



Research Objectives and Approach

The objectives of the research activity were to enhance the NJDOT's Division of Civil Rights communication and outreach tools to expand the reach of its Section 504/Title II program to other personnel within the Department; to local public agencies and other sub-recipients of Federal funds that must comply with Title II; and to the public-at-large and other external stakeholders – principally members of disability groups, whose feedback and input is required to address accessibility barriers. NJDOT's approach is to gain direct insight from all pedestrians, and especially persons with disabilities, in order to gather information on specific problem areas and ADA-related concerns to guide future project prioritization efforts. The Division of Civil Rights aims to create an ongoing partnership with interested stakeholders, and to use this collaborative approach to shape the development of its Title II program over time.

Findings

The key research findings from this research effort are as follows:

- As documented in the 2010 Draft Transition Plan, the Division of Civil Rights should build upon, sustain, and increase its outreach efforts over time to include more stakeholders who are interested in providing specific feedback and input. Of immediate priority is the assembling of an informal or formal external advisory/stakeholder group for providing input for the pending Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan efforts.
- The Division of Civil Rights should disseminate ADA Title II information using a broader array of media and tools. At the completion of this project, NJDOT created dedicated pages on its website to provide information about ADA. Posting the information in bus shelters, public transit stops, other public facilities or broadcasting any notices as public service announcements on local radio and television stations are some examples. Other cost-effective approaches include the use of existing information channels, such as active disability or pedestrian advocacy groups, to broadcast information and spur more public involvement to other members.

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A final report is available on-line at: <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/refdata/research/>. If you would like a copy of the full report, send an e-mail to: Research.Bureau@dot.state.nj.us.

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