Settlement Paves Way for Accessible NYC Streets

NEW YORK – Advocates for people with disabilities are calling the settlement of two class-action lawsuits in New York City "historic."

The agreement is good news for members of the city's disability community, who have struggled with missing or deteriorating curb cuts, missing detectable traffic warnings and ramps that are too steep. The Center for Independence of the Disabled New York joined with Disability Rights Advocates in filing one of the lawsuits five years ago.

Almost 30 years after passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, said Susan Dooha, CIDNY's executive director, this settlement sets an important example for jurisdictions around the country.

"Sometimes, the way to get across the street is through the courtroom," she said. "For people who are blind or who use walkers and wheelchairs, it shouldn't be necessary to take your life into your own hands when you're crossing the street."

Under the settlement, the city agreed to conduct a citywide survey of corners, prepare a schedule for necessary work and undergo oversight by a third-party monitor. The agreement also settled a 1994 lawsuit filed on behalf of an organization now known as the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, soon after passage of the ADA.

Dooha said she hopes it will serve as a model for other cities.

"There are very few precedents for settlement agreements that are this detailed," she said, "and we're excited to begin the work of bringing about real change."

Eight other disability-rights organizations participated in negotiations and have signed on to the agreement.

Too often, Dooha said, poorly maintained or missing curb cuts put people who use wheelchairs or walkers at risk of falling or being stranded in traffic.

"I hope that this agreement will also put cities on notice that they need to make streets safer and reduce traffic fatalities for people with disabilities," she said.

Curb cuts also are vital safety features for people with strollers, luggage carriers and people delivering packages, Dooha said.

More information is online at dralegal.org.

This story by Andrea Sears originally appeared in Public News Service and is reprinted with permission. It is also available in Spanish.

We Still Need Your MTA Stories

Federal Judge Edgardo Ramos of the Southern District of New York ruled in early March that renovations made by the MTA at a subway station in the Bronx triggered accessibility obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act regardless of how much those accessibility improvements cost. The ruling casts a spotlight on MTA's practice of not installing elevators when it makes renovations to subway stations.

The New York City subway system is the least accessible major transportation system in the country. Less than 25% of stations have elevators, making entire neighborhoods inaccessible to residents and visitors to the city who cannot climb stairs.

The MTA renovated the Middletown Road subway station in the Bronx during a seven-month period between October 2013 and May 2014. During the renovations, the MTA completely replaced the staircases, renovated the mezzanine and platform floors, reconstructed platform edges, replaced concrete platforms, and installed new lighting. However, they never considered building elevators that would make the station accessible to individuals with disabilities. In dueling motions, Plaintiffs, the U.S. Government, and
Defendants presented conflicting legal arguments as to whether MTA was obligated to consider elevator installation or not. In an important civil rights victory, Plaintiffs’ and the U.S. Government’s Motion for Partial Summary Judgment was granted and Defendants’ cross-motion was denied.

Michelle Caiola, Managing Director at Disability Rights Advocates, said, “This ruling highlights why the New York City subway system remains overwhelmingly inaccessible to people who cannot use stairs. If MTA had been complying with the ADA over the past twenty-five years by installing elevators when it performs station renovations, we would be closer to full accessibility today. Clearly, MTA must change its practices related to accessibility as soon as possible.”

If you or someone you know are a person with a disability who lives in, works in, or travels to locations in the vicinity of any of these stations and who is impacted by the fact that they’re not accessible, we’d love to talk with you.

- Broadway Junction (J/Z Lines Only)
- Bay Ridge Avenue (R)
- Bay Parkway (N)
- Borough Hall (4/5 Lines Only)
- 30th Avenue (N/W Lines)
- Broadway (N/W Lines)
- Court Square (G Line Only)
- Metropolitan Avenue (G/L).
- 238th St. (1)
- 168 Street (1)
- 181 St (A)
- 191 St (1)
- 190 St (A)
- 181 St (1)

Please fill out this form so we can contact you: https://www.cidny.org/subway_elevator_stories/.

All of Us Includes People with Disabilities

The All of Us Research Program is YOUR chance to make an impact and get involved in direct, cutting-edge research to find solutions that could help people with disabilities. For the first time, people with disabilities are being encouraged to participate and are being asked to enroll in a study that can directly impact how health care is received in the future. If we truly believe in the concept of “nothing about us without us,” then we must answer the call when asked to participate. If you missed our special guest presentation on All of Us, you can still watch it on Facebook Live. Register at https://www.joinallofus.org/together.

We’re Hiring!

CIDNY is hiring for multiple positions. Please check our website at https://www.cidny.org/jobs/ for the latest postings.

ReelAbilities Film Festival

Founded in 2007 by the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York is the largest festival in the country dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities. The weeklong festival is renowned for its wide-ranging international film selection, riveting conversations, and performances, presented annually in dozens of venues across the New York metropolitan area. In 2010, ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York expanded into a national program, presenting its one of a kind programming in cities throughout the United States.

For more info, visit: https://reelabilities.org/newyork/about/#about.

Writer’s Workshop Reading

In celebration of the second book of writing, The Baggage Carriers, produced by members of our Writer’s Workshop, in collaboration with NY Writers Coalition, a reading will be hosted in Brooklyn on Thursday, April 4th at 3:30pm. It will be held at 80 Hanson Place on the 4th floor and there will be light refreshments. Please join us if you can.
NEED HELP?

Walk-in/drop-in to get the help you need. Staff will be available during these times for housing and benefits-related help.

Walk-In Days—Manhattan
Every Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Walk-In Day—Queens
Every Monday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Important Dates
April 15 – Tax Day
April 20 – Passover
April 21 – Easter Sunday

CIDNY’s Writer’s Group
Thursdays from 3:30-5:30 p.m.
A facilitated, non-judgmental writing group that promotes individual expression and creativity in a supportive atmosphere.

Housing Workshops
Wednesday, April 10, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. – Manhattan
Wednesday, April 24, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. – Queens
CIDNY’s housing workshop covers housing options: NYCHA, HPD, HUD listings; NYC Housing Connect and other programs; what you qualify for; income and family size; and how to get and go over your credit report. CIDNY is a full-service center and other benefits will be discussed; we don’t offer housing, but can provide information and assist with applications.

Movie Night
Will resume in the spring.

CIDNY Action Network (CAN) Meeting
Wednesday, April 10, 1-3 p.m. – Queens
Wednesday, April 17, 1-3 p.m. – Manhattan

Mark your calendars! NYAIL’s Legislative Day 2019 is Monday, May 1st. We had a remarkable showing in Albany on February 11th. Let’s try to do the same this time. We will meet with our legislators, discuss what bills they have proposed, why we support or oppose them by sharing our experiences.

You must attend one of these trainings to go to Albany.

¡Marque sus calendarios! El Día Legislativo 2019 de NYAIL es el lunes 1 de mayo. Tuvimos una atendencia notable en Albany el 11 de febrero. Intentemos hacer lo mismo esta vez. Nos reuniremos con nuestros legisladores, discutiremos los proyectos de ley que han propuesto, por qué los apoyamos o nos oponemos, compartiendo nuestras experiencias.

El entrenamiento se llevará a cabo de 1:00 pm a 3:00 pm el miércoles 10 de abril de 2019, en la oficina de Queens, y 1 p.m. -3 p.m., miércoles 17 de abril de 2019 en la oficina de Manhattan. Debes asistir a uno de estos entrenamientos para ir a Albany.

Por favor confirme su atendencia a José Luis Mera (646) 442-1520. Si necesita una acomodación, como servicios de interpretación o letra grande, avísenos antes del miércoles 3 de abril de 2019. Se servirán refrescos.

MTA Board Meeting
Wednesday, April 17, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at MTA Headquarters, 2 Broadway.
Please arrive 45 minutes early and bring a photo ID. Upon arrival, people can choose to sign up to speak during the meeting. There is a two-minute limit for speakers. Join with us and other advocates as we make our voices heard. RSVP required.

All events are at CIDNY, 841 Broadway, Suite 301, New York, NY 10003, unless otherwise noted. To RSVP, contact Laurette at 212/674-2300 or lhamilton@cidny.org. For events in Queens or if you speak Spanish, RSVP to Jose at 646/442-1520 or jmera@cidny.org. If you need an accommodation, such as large print or interpretation services, let us know by Wednesday, April 3.

Join the conversation: online at www.cidny.org; on Facebook (www.facebook.com/CIDNYInc), on Twitter (@CID_NY) and IG (@cid_ny)
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