

Physical Activity Outdoors: *Transportation and Pedestrian Considerations* *Staying Current on The United States Access Board*

As the American public takes to the streets in increasing numbers to bike, roll, run, ride, and walk, transportation and pedestrian considerations increasingly play a role in discussions of safe outdoor physical activity. In recent months, the United States Access Board - an independent Federal agency devoted to accessibility for people with disabilities which develops and maintains design criteria for the built environment, transit vehicles, telecommunications equipment, and for electronic and information technology – has released a number of guidelines and comment notices related to transportation issues including pedestrian access routes, street elements, and transportation surfaces.

It is important that communities across the country familiarize themselves with these new guidelines so that they may remain compliant as any new trails or roadways are planned. Additionally, BlazeSports encourages the general public to familiarize yourself with these issues so that you might be prepared to comment on or advocate for changes in your community. A summary of three of the major actions by the Access Board on transportation issues is below along with links to the Access Board website for more information.

Guidelines for Public Rights-of-Way (*Proposed*)

On July 26, 2011, the US Access Board released proposed guidelines for public rights-of-ways (<http://www.access-board.gov/news/row-nprm.htm>) providing design criteria for public streets and sidewalks, including pedestrian access routes, street crossings, curb ramps and blended transitions, on-street parking, street furniture, and other elements. Many provisions are designed to “ensure that public rights-of-ways contain a continuous accessible route that accommodates all pedestrians, including those who use mobility aids.”

The specifications are the first of their kind in detailing how to design and build public streets and sidewalks to serve all pedestrians, including those with disabilities, while still taking into account conditions typical of road geometry and common constraints unique to public rights-of-way. The proposed guidelines may play a significant role in facilitating potential hazards along public streets and sidewalks, especially for individuals who are blind or who have low vision. Additionally, the guidelines also cover features such as tactile warnings, accessible pedestrian signals, and signalization at traffic roundabouts.

Once the guidelines are finalized and implemented, all newly constructed or altered portions of public rights-of-way built or altered with funding from the Federal government under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) and the Rehabilitation Act will be required to comply with these guidelines.

More information about this rulemaking is available on the Access Board website at: <http://www.access-board.gov/prowac/index.htm> including an overview of the rule, the text of the proposed guidelines, a webinar on the proposal and other briefing and background materials.

Access to Shared Use Paths (*Pending*)

On March 28, 2011, the Access Board published a notice inviting comment on a new initiative to develop accessibility guidelines for shared use paths which provide a means of transportation and recreation for various users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, skaters, and others, including people with disabilities. It is anticipated that the new guidelines will provide technical provisions for incorporating accessibility into the construction or alteration of shared use paths covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act and, in the case of those federally funded, the Architectural Barriers Act.

Through a notice the Board invited comment on the guidelines to be developed - including their scope of coverage and the definition of "shared use paths", and drafts of technical provisions that address various features of paths, including surface characteristics, width, grade and cross slopes, changes in level, surface joints and openings, protruding objects, gates and barriers, and intersections and curb ramps.

This rulemaking will complement guidelines the Board is developing for outdoor developed areas, including trails, and public rights-of-way guidelines discussed above. At this time, the period for comment has closed as the Access Board considers the issue further. Stay tuned to BlazeSports.org and the Access Board's Shared Use Paths webpage <http://www.access-board.gov/sup/anprm.htm> for more information and updates on this topic.

Dimensional Tolerances for Accessible Surfaces

On February 23, 2011, the United States Access Board released a report entitled, "Dimensional Tolerances for Surface Accessibility," that summarizes the findings of a construction industry initiative to develop information on specific tolerances, as well as dimensioning and measurement conventions for accessible surfaces. Generally, accessibility guidelines and standards, including those issued under the ADA, recognize construction tolerances yet they do not identify acceptable tolerances for specific dimensions. Tolerances must be based on the construction methods and materials used. Most guidance on tolerances available from industry and other sources does not specifically address requirements in accessibility such as the ADA standards. This effort, and subsequent report, sought to address that gap.

The study focused on specifications for the surface of exterior and interior routes, including ramps. Representatives from industry, trade groups, professional organizations (including the American Institute of Architects and the Construction Specifications Institute), design professionals, contractors, code officials, and others collaborated on the initiative.

The report released in February 2011 by the Access Board (<http://www.access-board.gov/research/tolerances/final-report.htm>), will assist industry by providing dimensioning and measurement conventions appropriate to the different materials and methods used in exterior and interior walking/rolling surfaces so that practitioners and regulatory agencies could refer to them for guidance. It also provides design recommendations to accommodate tolerances and construction variations. For example, the report notes that designing ramps with a more gradual slope (7.5% instead of the 8.33% maximum) will accommodate tolerances for common methods of constructing ramps with concrete, asphalt, and pavers. The report summarizes the efforts of the Tile Council of North America, the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute, and the work begun by the Brick Industry Association and the concrete industry to develop tolerances and measurement protocols.