



U.S. Department of Transportation's Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue

**July 30 – August 23, 2020
Final Summary Report**



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Introduction

Background

For three weeks beginning July 30, 2020, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) hosted the *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue* to solicit ideas and feedback as they develop their first-ever accessibility strategic plan. DOT's plan will focus on making transportation more accessible to people with disabilities. The framework will serve as a starting document that will guide the development of the full strategic plan. DOT hosted the ePolicyWorks national online dialogue to provide an innovative opportunity for transportation providers, users, and experts, along with disability advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders, to play a key role in informing their efforts to ensure all Americans are able to take advantage of accessible transportation options and participate fully in our economy.

The dialogue opened for ideas, comments, and votes during the "Breaking Down Barriers: Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act" virtual event on July 30 and ran through the end of the day, Sunday, August 23. During the national online dialogue, 1,123 stakeholders visited the dialogue and, in addition to providing feedback on the overall framework, shared ideas on five specific goals including: (1) remove unnecessary barriers; (2) enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to walk, roll, cycle, & use micromobility; (3) improve access for individuals with disabilities to passenger & commercial vehicles; (4) support the development and diversification of the public transit systems; and (5) advance accessible intercity transportation systems.

Moving forward, DOT will use the results of the online dialogue to inform policy and when drafting the final version of the strategic plan that will be published in the Federal Registry later this year.

Online Dialogue Campaigns

The *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue* contained six different campaigns. One of the campaigns asked for feedback on the overall framework while the others asked for ideas, comments, and votes on five specific goals.

1. Overall Feedback on the Framework

DOT asked dialogue participants to provide feedback to the overall framework document as a whole.

2. Goal 1: Remove unnecessary barriers

DOT asked stakeholders to share ideas about removing unnecessary barriers to multimodal accessibility of public rights of way. Barriers to accessibility include design, signage, service standards, and planning processes.

3. Goal 2: Enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to walk, roll, cycle, & use micromobility

DOT asked dialogue participants to share ideas about enhancing opportunities for people with disabilities to walk, roll, cycle, and use micromobility services to the greatest extent possible.

4. Goal 3: Improve access for individuals with disabilities to passenger & commercial vehicles

DOT asked all participants to weigh in on improving access for individuals with disabilities seeking licensure for, operating, and/or riding in passenger and commercial vehicles.

5. Goal 4: Support the development and diversification of the public transit systems

DOT asked stakeholders to share different ideas for supporting the development and diversification of the Nation's public transit systems and mobility providers in order to provide accessibility for people with disabilities.

6. Goal 5: Advance accessible intercity transportation systems

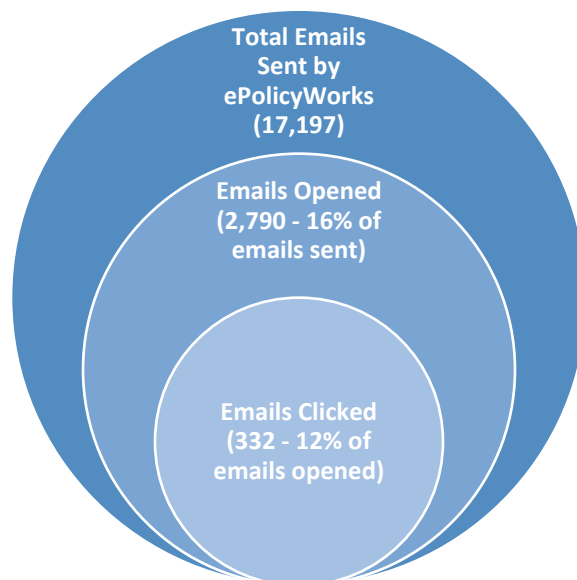
DOT looked to dialogue participants for ideas how to best link our Nation's cities and regions with accessible transportation systems that will provide the widest range of options to ensure every member of our community can participate in economic, recreational, and social opportunities.

Outreach Efforts

The *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue* asked transportation users, providers, researchers, and disability advocacy organization, along with other stakeholders, to share their ideas and take part in the important discussion around the accessibility of America's transportation system. To ensure a wide range of participants, ePolicyWorks conducted numerous strategic outreach efforts, including distributing targeted eblasts and social media posts and sharing promotional materials with the DOT partners. ePolicyWorks sent eblasts to the registrants of the previous *ePolicyWorks Transportation Innovation Online Dialogues* in addition to others in the ePolicyWorks community, as well as organizations that represent employers and workers, state and local government officials, and other key stakeholders, including members of the disability community.

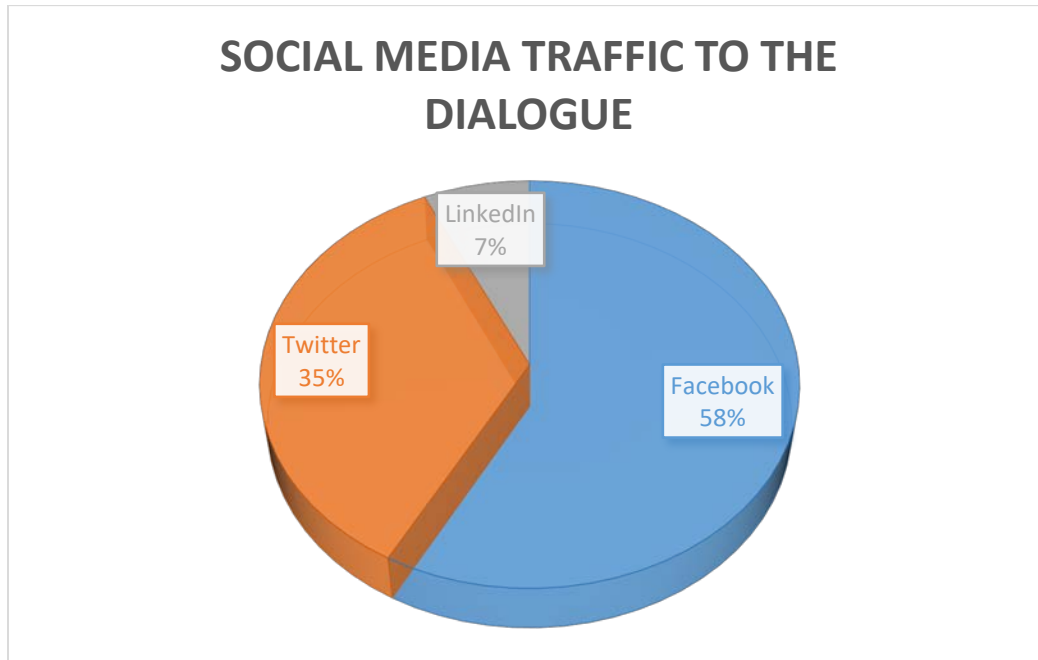
Total ePolicyWorks Outreach

- Email Campaigns: 5 (dialogue launch invitation, last week reminder, last chance reminder, extension announcement, last day reminder)
- Emails Delivered: 17,197
- Emails Opened: 2,790
- Total number of clicks on links in emails (excluding multiple clicks of the same link): 332



- Number of @ePolicyWorks impressions of online dialogue promotions: 5,914 (from 16 online dialogue promotion tweets)
- Of the 1,123 visits to the dialogue, 143 visits, or approximately 12.73% of the total traffic to the online dialogue, came from social media.

- Distribution of source of social media traffic to the online dialogue:
 - Facebook: 58%
 - Twitter: 35%
 - LinkedIn: 7%



Independent Online Dialogue Promotion

Over the course of the online dialogue, many organizations promoted the online dialogue through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, emails, blogs, newsletters, and action alerts. Below is a sampling of the organizations that published details regarding the online event:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation & Community Providers Association • American Council of the Blind of Texas • National Aging and Disability Transportation Center • WTS International • National Center for Applied Transit Technology • Independent Living Research Utilization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwest ADA Center • Pacific ADA Center • United Spinal • InFocus Mobility • Hearing Loss Association of America, California State Association, Inc. • TLC Mobility Foundation |
|---|---|

Online Dialogue Participant Summary

The *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue* opened for participation on July 30, 2020 and closed at the end of the day on August 23, 2020. Detailed below is the information on the contributions to the dialogue – ideas, comments, and votes, along with the number of online dialogue visits*, registrants, participation rates, location of registrants, and profile information provided by registrants during the registration process.

Total Contributions to the Online Dialogue

Total number of ideas in the online dialogue: 128

- Ideas in the “Overall Feedback on the Framework” campaign: 17
- Ideas in the “Goal 1: Remove unnecessary barriers” campaign: 25
- Ideas in the “Goal 2: Enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to walk, roll, cycle, & use micromobility” campaign: 22
- Ideas in the “Goal 3: Improve access for individuals with disabilities to passenger & commercial vehicles” campaign: 30
- Ideas in the “Goal 4: Support the development and diversification of the public transit systems” campaign: 17
- Ideas in the “Goal 5: Advance accessible intercity transportation systems” campaign: 17

Total number of comments in the online dialogue: 83

- Comments in the “Overall Feedback on the Framework” campaign: 18
- Comments in the “Goal 1: Remove unnecessary barriers” campaign: 28
- Comments in the “Goal 2: Enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to walk, roll, cycle, & use micromobility” campaign: 14
- Comments in the “Goal 3: Improve access for individuals with disabilities to passenger & commercial vehicles” campaign: 15
- Comments in the “Goal 4: Support the development and diversification of the public transit systems” campaign: 6
- Comments in the “Goal 5: Advance accessible intercity transportation systems” campaign: 2

Total number of votes in the online dialogue: 968

- Votes in the “Overall Feedback on the Framework” campaign: 134
- Votes in the “Goal 1: Remove unnecessary barriers” campaign: 249
- Votes in the “Goal 2: Enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to walk, roll, cycle, & use micromobility” campaign: 150
- Votes in the “Goal 3: Improve access for individuals with disabilities to passenger & commercial vehicles” campaign: 225

- Votes in the “Goal 4: Support the development and diversification of the public transit systems” campaign: 89
- Votes in the “Goal 5: Advance accessible intercity transportation systems” campaign: 121

Total Visits and Visitors during the Online Dialogue

Information on the visits to the online dialogue

- Total unique visits to the online dialogue: 1,945
- Total page views: 7,243
- Average pages views per visit: 3.72
- Average visit duration (minutes): 4:51
- Bounce rate (percentage of visitor who leave after viewing the first page of the online dialogue): 50%

Information on the visitors to the online dialogue

- Total unique visitors*: 1,123
- Average number of sessions per visitor: 1.73
- Returning visitors: 20%
- Total number of visitors who completed the registration: 128 (11% of unique visitors)
- Total number of registrants who participated**: 95 (74% of registrants)

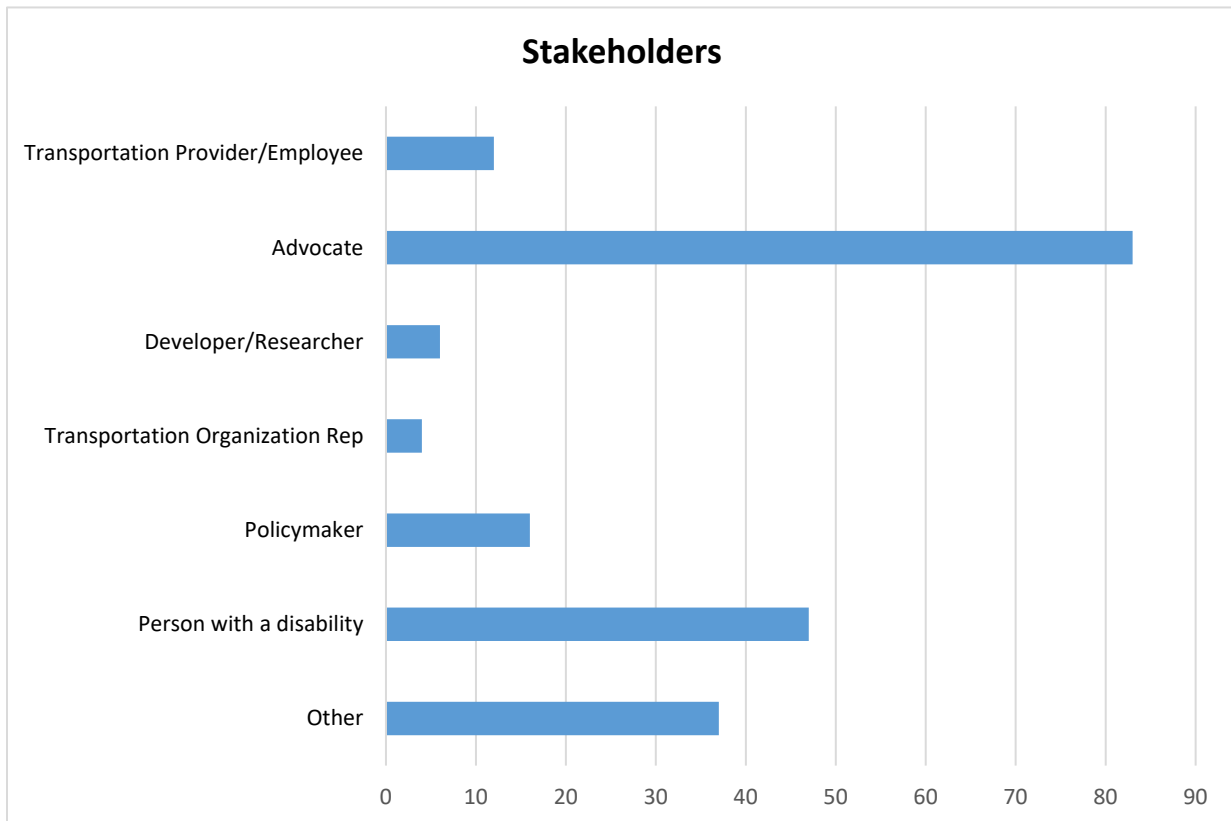
**Visitors are all individuals who have viewed the online dialogue. This includes individuals who did not completed the registration process.*

***“Participation” includes registering and submitting ideas, comments or votes to the dialogue’s online platform.*

Online Dialogue Registrant Profiles

When registering for the *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue*, participants were asked to characterize their interest in accessible transportation. The choices were predetermined for this question and participants were allowed to choose all the answers that applied. Below is a summary of the responses:

Stakeholder Group	Number of Dialogue Participants
Person with a disability	47
Policymaker	16
Transportation Organization Rep	4
Developer/Researcher	6
Advocate	83
Transportation Provider/Employee	12
Other	37



Review and Analysis of Online Dialogue Contributions

Over the course of the *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue*, participants from across the U.S. shared thought-provoking and innovative suggestions and feedback on the ways DOT's Accessibility Strategic Plan could support accessible transportation for all American's including those with disabilities. The range and depth of the ideas submitted and discussed during the online dialogue demonstrates the immense value of engaging citizens in collaboration efforts. Travelers, researchers, organizations, advocacy groups, and state and local government representatives jointly contributed 128 ideas, 83 comments, and 968 votes to the dialogue. Based on these contributions, several themes emerged as key ideas among the stakeholders in the discussion around the framework and the importance of different aspects of accessible transportation overall.

Key Themes and Takeaways

Access to different types of transportation including trains and airplanes

Many of the most popular ideas addressed concerns around transportation outside of those covered by paratransit. One participant discussed barriers wheelchair users and others face in trying to utilize airline travel. Similar obstacles were brought to light in ideas around train and light rail transportation. It is clear from the discussions that the framework needs to be sure to be inclusive of all types of transportation.

Consider hardscape in accessible transportation planning

Numerous participants discussed the need to improve intersections and sidewalks. One participant submitted a photo of a roadside median that was not accessible to wheelchairs or anyone needing an assistive device. Often hardscapes are overlooked in accessibility plans. It is important that intersections, crosswalks, medians, stations, and other areas which can include barriers are part of the framework.

Continue to enforce ADA requirements

With the 30th anniversary of the ADA, several participants pointed out specific issues that did not comply with ADA regulations. Almost 25% of the ideas in the dialogue referenced the ADA and the need for better enforcement around transportation. Clearly, compliance with the ADA is still a concern and it needs to be specifically addressed in the framework.

Include insurance and workforce issues in the plan

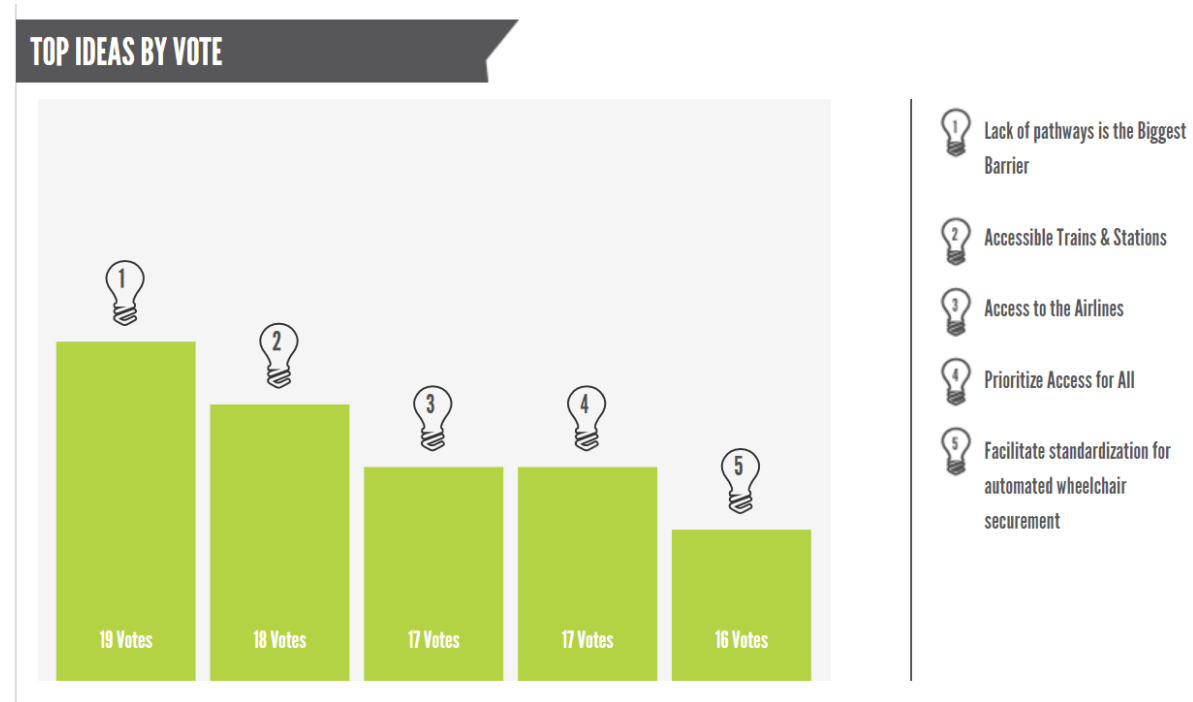
One popular idea discussed the lack of diversity, specifically disability, in the transportation workforce and the need to have individuals with disabilities as decision-makers. Having a pipeline for youth with disabilities to find training, apprenticeships, and education in transportation-related fields is an important factor in ensuring diversity in the workforce. Others discussed the need for research and discussions to ensure that insurance rates do not have a

negative impact on accessibility. Many times, costly insurance can make providing accessibility features prohibitive.

Top Ideas by Vote

Below are the five top ideas by vote from the *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue*.

The ideas listed in the following section include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the revised posts.



Lack of pathways is the Biggest Barrier

Goal 1: Remove unnecessary barriers

19 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 19 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 1

Attachments: 1

Many suburban residential developments – especially in the South – are based on pipestem off collector roads or walled communities. Posted speeds inside those communities are 25 mph or less. Most residents feel safe on the pavement. However, they don't feel safe walking, rolling, or cycling on collector or arterial roads. We lack continuous pathways along collector and arterial roads. The Transportation Reauthorization bill should set standards and objectives for planning and paving continuous pathways along collector and arterial roads.

Accessible Trains & Stations

Goal 5: Advance accessible intercity transportation systems

18 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 18 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 1

USDOT should continue to enforce Amtrak and other rail operators' ADA obligations. 30 years after the passage of the ADA, trains and stations must be accessible, and providers should consider the necessity of stations agents to assist when needed. Trains should provide level boarding, clear audible announcements for the blind and visually impaired, and visual announcements for the deaf and hard of hearing. State and local entities that own stations must also be reminded of their ADA obligations.

Access to the Airlines

Goal 5: Advance accessible intercity transportation systems

17 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 17 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 3

We call on DOT to challenge the Airlines and OEM's to provide access to passengers with disabilities that is barrier free. Too often passenger with disabilities have incurred bodily harm from being dropped while making transfers out of their personal wheelchairs onto an airline boarding aisle chair or mishandled by ill trained staff in boarding the plane. Furthermore, there are times when the passenger's wheelchair or assistive devices are damaged during the flight only to be returned in a condition that jeopardizes the passenger's independence and possible health and wellbeing. As airlines have monetized the experience of flying into different paid classes, we must remember that people with disabilities have a right to dignified safe and accessible air travel. DOT must also hold carriers accountable to the requirements of the Air Carrier Access Act by more stringently enforcing the law.

Prioritize Access for All

Goal 4: Support the development and diversification of the public transit systems

17 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 17 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 1

When considering the future and development of the nation's public transit systems, access for all must be a priority, including for disabled and nondisabled travelers who are also Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; and those who are low income or who live in rural, tribal or other underserved areas. Measures must be taken to ensure access to service for unbanked individuals or those without a smartphone, and access in all neighborhoods where a need has been identified must be prioritized. Fare free and discount programs should be supported. The

ADA as well as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 should provide a framework.

Facilitate standardization for automated wheelchair securement

Goal 3: Improve access for individuals with disabilities to passenger & commercial vehicles

16 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 16 Net Votes

Comments: 2

Followers: 1

Volkswagen Group of America supports DOT's focus on accessible transportation, including its announcement to create an online resource or library to house industry-produced accessible design standards and best practices and funding preliminary research work to begin the process of developing voluntary standards for vehicle accessibility developed by a private Standards Development Organization.

Despite fully self-driving vehicles being still some years away, significant efforts are required now to ensure vehicle designs and functionality deliver on the potential to provide increased mobility to those that are currently underserved. For a truly accessible automated vehicle experience, automated vehicles will need an accessible system level HMI, hardware compatibility with various assistive devices, and accessible physical features such as doors, controls, and ramps. Given the long vehicle design lead-time and the need to design hardware solutions at the beginning of a design cycle, the auto industry in collaboration with disability organizations identified the accessibility topic of wheelchair-accessible vehicles and automated wheelchair-securement as an urgent priority to tackle now. The wheelchair and occupant securement within autonomous and electric wheelchair-accessible vehicles should be possible without assistance from another person. A key barrier to this concept is the large variation in wheelchair types and lack of standards that enable a universal self-securement solution. Work must begin in earnest to establish a new cross-industry standard for the physical docking interface between the wheelchair & vehicle as well as a standard for the crashworthiness of wheelchairs.

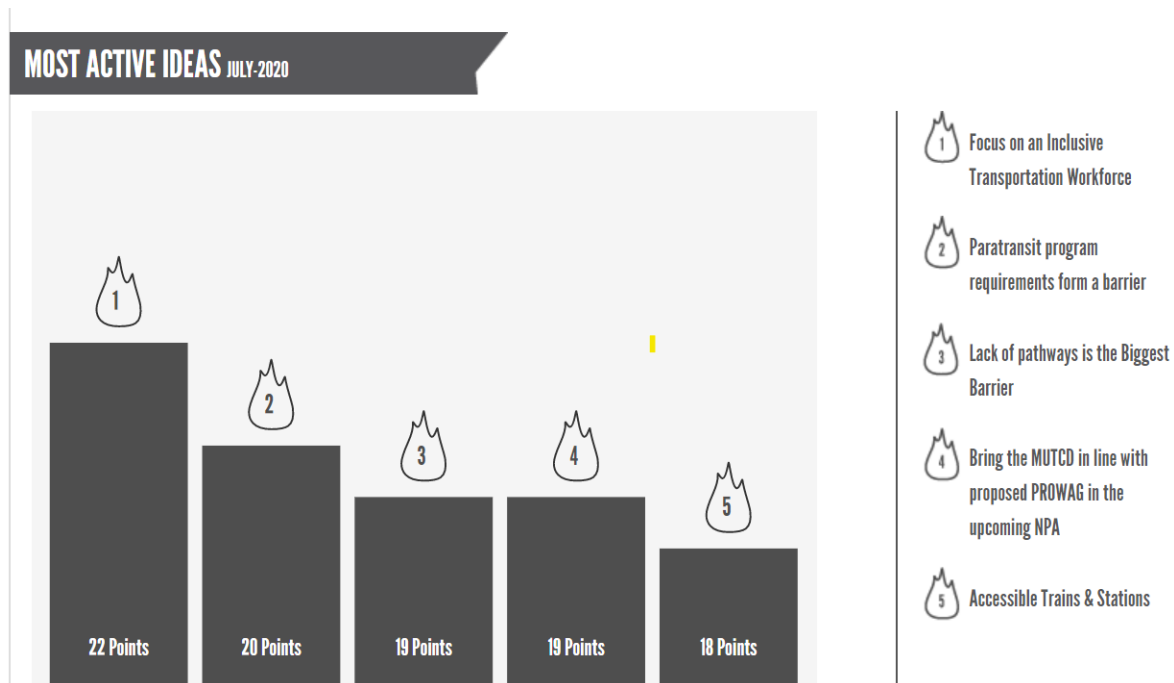
DOT can be an important catalyst for this work. It can bring together the necessary stakeholders, including wheelchair manufacturers, to begin shaping these new emerging cross-industry standards through SAE or other standards bodies that will need to be in place in order for AVs to be accessible. The accessibility strategic plan should include specific DOT actions and goals to facilitate the development of standardization for automated wheelchair and occupant securement as well as for wheelchair crash worthiness.

Most Active Ideas

Below are the most active ideas from the *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue*. Most active is determined based on the idea's total number of views, comments, votes, and followers over the course of the dialogue.

Two of the most active ideas, **Lack of pathways is the Biggest Barrier**, and **Accessible Trains & Stations**, were also two of the top ideas by votes. See the Top Ideas by Votes section for a full description. Below are the three other top trending ideas.

The ideas listed in the following section include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the revised posts.



Focus on an Inclusive Transportation Workforce

Overall Feedback on the Framework

15 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 15 Net Votes

Comments: 7

Followers: 2

When I participate in large transportation-related events, such as APTA, CTAA, NADO, etc., it is apparent that the transportation industry workforce lacks diversity regarding individuals with disabilities. One way to influence transportation operations and services is to have individuals with disabilities as decision-makers in the transportation workforce. To enhance awareness of employment opportunities, youth with disabilities need to have career-related experience in transportation positions and educators and youth transition professionals need training regarding labor market needs in transportation sectors.

Paratransit program requirements form a barrier

Goal 1: Remove unnecessary barriers

13 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 13 Net Votes

Comments: 7

Followers: 3

- The pick-up window on paratransit is a large barrier for people with disabilities. Shortening this window would significantly make transportation much more accessible for people with disabilities.

- The cost allowed for paratransit is significant for low-income individuals. Some people with disabilities choose not to take trips as they cannot afford the fare.

- The advance scheduling requirement forms a barrier. Spontaneous trips are almost impossible.

Bring the MUTCD in line with proposed PROWAG in the upcoming NPA

Goal 1: Remove unnecessary barriers

14 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 14 Net Votes

Comments: 5

Followers: 3

Do not delay in advancing national standards on rights-of-way accessibility. I'm aware that the MUTCD team is working on an NPA. Make sure that NPA incorporates accessibility issues.

In particular, FHWA should move forward in requiring accessible pedestrian signals where pedestrian signals are installed. As I noted in earlier comments, the complexity of signal systems and timing make previous techniques obsolete. Proposed PROWAG required accessible pedestrian signals where pedestrian signals are installed. This needs to be implemented now! Pedestrians who are blind or who have low vision are essentially guessing about the proper time to cross by using the movement of traffic on the parallel street. There are too many potential variations in signal phasing and timing for those techniques to provide adequate information and safety. This revision of the MUTCD needs to require APS where pedestrian signals are installed in order to meet the ADA requirements for effective communication and the improved safety for those who are blind, who have low vision

Proposed PROWAG also referred to the MUTCD Part 6 for construction and work zone accessibility. There are some suggested revisions to graphics, proposed by the NCUTCD, that should be incorporated to clarify the standards and guidance provided.

In addition, standards for other features such as RRFBs should incorporate accessibility features.

Most Popular Ideas

Below are the two most popular ideas from each of the *Accessibility Strategic Plan Framework Online Dialogue's* six campaigns. Most popular is determined based on the idea's total number up votes, comments, and followers at the conclusion of the dialogue.

The ideas listed in the following section include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the revised posts.

Most Popular Ideas from the "Overall Feedback on the Framework" Campaign

- 1. Focus on an Inclusive Transportation Workforce** *(the full description of this idea can be found under **Most Active Ideas**)*

15 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 15 Net Votes

Comments: 7

Followers: 2

- 2. Add a goal that addresses design of intersections**

15 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 15 Net Votes

Comments: 1

Followers: 2

I encourage the addition of a goal that addresses the design needs at intersections more explicitly, considering the needs of motorists, bicyclists and users of other shared mobility devices and pedestrians, in particular, pedestrians who are blind at intersections and street crossings. I don't really see that covered in the goals presented here.

Most Popular Ideas from the "Goal 1: Remove Unnecessary Barriers Campaign

- 1. Lack of pathways is the Biggest Barrier** *(the full description of this idea can be found under **Top Ideas by Vote**)*

19 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 19 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 1

Attachments: 1

- 2. Enforce ADA Req's & Encourage Best Practice Transition Plans**

15 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 15 Net Votes

Comments: 2

Followers: 2

DOT should continue to enforce agency ADA obligations, and provide assistance to state DOT's, MPO's and providers seeking to improve their level of service to the disability community.

Most Popular Ideas from the “Goal 2: Enhance Opportunities for People with Disabilities to Walk, Roll, Cycle, & Use Micromobility” Campaign

1. Educate Stakeholders on Accessible PROW

15 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 15 Net Votes

Comments: 2

Followers: 1

Highlight best PROW practices and encourage state-level adoption of the US Access Board's 2011 PROW guidelines. Encourage cities, states and agencies to consider how new modes and emergency responses can impact people with disabilities who are walking and using wheeled mobility devices; including how dockless bikeshare and scooters may create unintended barriers to access by blocking sidewalks or access to transit. This problem, already significant, is heightened today as restaurants and other services move to sidewalks during COVID-19.

2. We need more accessible sidewalks

13 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 13 Net Votes

Comments: 2

Followers: 2

Not knowing if a sidewalk will be complete, have curb cuts, or be free of snow makes it very difficult for people with disabilities to have full mobility.

Most Popular Ideas from the “Goal 3: Improve Access for Individuals with Disabilities to Passenger & Commercial Vehicles” Campaign

1. Facilitate standardization for automated wheelchair securement *(the full description of this idea can be found under Top Ideas by Vote)*

16 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 16 Net Votes

Comments: 2

Followers: 1

2. Anti-Discriminatory Insurance Policies

14 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 14 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 1

In addition to anti-discriminatory licensing, USDOT should highlight existing ADA requirements that prohibit refusal of service because of insurance company conditions, coverage or rates. Research, discussions and other steps should be undertaken to ensure insurance rates for vehicles with ramps, lifts and additional accessibility features are not prohibitive and do not stall testing and deployment. In addition, if passengers of Level 4

or 5 passenger vehicles are ultimately required to obtain insurance, rates and coverage must not discriminate against those who might not otherwise drive, including blind and low vision passengers.?

Most Popular Ideas from the “Goal 4: Support the Development and Diversification of The Public Transit Systems” Campaign

1. **Prioritize Access for All** *(the full description of this idea can be found under Top Ideas by Vote)*

17 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 17 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 1

2. **Safer, More Accessible Transit Vehicles**

11 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 11 Net Votes

Comments: 2

Followers: 1

New buses and transit vehicles should include lifts that hold greater weights, clearer audible announcements for blind and visually impaired passengers and visual announcements for the deaf and hard of hearing. In addition, new airflow and filtration systems that provide safety assurance for driver and passengers. USDOT should also make it clear that adequate heat in cold weather, and adequate cooling in hot weather are disability access issues.

Most Popular Ideas from the “Goal 5: Advance Accessible Intercity Transportation Systems” Campaign

1. **Accessible Trains & Stations** *(the full description of this idea can be found under Most Active Ideas)*

18 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 18 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 1

2. **Access to the Airlines** *(the full description of this idea can be found under Top Ideas by Vote)*

17 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 17 Net Votes

Comments: 0

Followers: 3