

City of College Station ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

PUBLIC MEETING NOTES

May 5, 2015 – 6:30 PM

Project: Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

Location: College Station Utilities Training Facility

Attendees:

- Venessa Garza, City of College Station
- Public Meeting Attendees (see attached list)
- Brian Shamburger, Kimley-Horn
- Erin Eurek, Kimley-Horn
- Kristi Avalos, Accessology
- Steven Lewandowski, Accessology

Discussion Items (Comments and Questions from Attendees with Answers from staff):

- Current Issue: Roadway leading into College Station Utilities Training Facility has speed bumps across the entire roadway before you reach the accessible route into the building. Meeting attendee had difficulty in a power wheelchair traversing the speed bumps.
- Current Issue: Door at entrance to College Station Utility Training Facility was too heavy for a meeting attendee with dexterity issues to open.
- Q: How did the City choose the 3 miles of sidewalk? The sidewalk selected for this project are the same corridors that a group of citizens requested the City make more accessible about 20 years ago. Several sidewalks were rehabbed and curb ramps were installed as a result. Anderson St. from George Bush Dr. to Southwest Pkwy. and Wellborn Rd. are all bad corridors. Meeting attendee suggested that these corridors would have been more appropriate to evaluate.
A: The City selected the corridors based on the highest vehicle traffic volumes and frequently used pedestrian routes. The City had to start somewhere and the remainder of the sidewalks will be evaluated in future phases.
- Q: What sidewalks are the City responsible for maintaining (repairing/replacing)?
A: The City is responsible for sidewalks along public right-of-way (City and TxDOT) within the City limits.
- Q: Is the 3 miles of sidewalk selected for this project already set in stone? Was any public input considered for these sidewalk evaluation limits?
A: Yes, the sidewalk corridors are already set for this phase of the project. There are over 120 miles of sidewalk in the City and City Staff is looking for input now for future phases.
- Q: Are you going to look at improving sidewalk along Harvey Mitchell Pkwy. near Welsh Ave., specifically in the Southwood Valley area?
A: The City will note this area for consideration in future phases.

City of College Station ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

- Q: In all the training that was provided to City Staff as part of this project, how much pertained to the deaf community?
A: Two 2-hour Customer Contact training classes were provided on how to communicate with people who have visual or auditory impairments. The City would like citizen input on how to improve City-offered services and customer service.
- Q: City services that pertain to activities for children's sports, camps, and swimming lessons do not provide interpreting services. A meeting attendee is a parent of a child with a hearing impairment and has had to pay for interpreting services out of pocket to participate in City programs.
A: The City will be reviewing its programs, policies, and procedures to improve our services.
- Current Issue: A meeting attendee is deaf and frustrated with communication and interaction with police. A police officer refused to call for interpreting services and told the attendee to write on a piece of paper. The police officer misunderstood much of what was said without an interpreter, and the City needs to remove this communication barrier.
- Current Issue: The library and airport do not have video phones or TTY on public phones. Also, if there is a City-hosted event, there is no information about how to make accommodations ahead of time, and the meeting attendee has missed events because of it.

Note: The airport is a separate state entity and would need to be contacted with this request separately.

- Q: Non-compliant push buttons are being changed out with 2" push buttons but there are also Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS). Will all push buttons be upgraded to APS units? There are new signals on FM 2818, but APS units are not installed.
A: The City's intent is to upgrade all push buttons to APS units as the buttons need replacement. TxDOT may be responsible for the new FM 2818 signals. City Staff will speak to the City Public Works Department about this.
- Q: A meeting attendee is concerned that, regardless of the program, if there is not enforcement, compliance will not be met. How does ADA affect the private sector? There are ADA issues on private developments but issues either do not get fixed or are only partially fixed. The Consultant team said the Department of Justice (DOJ) enforces the ADA, but how does this enforcement happen? The meeting attendee lived in an apartment complex for 7 years and it took the apartment complex 7 years to realize there was not enough accessible parking. There does not seem to be a single entity responsible for enforcement.
A: If there are \$50,000 or more in construction costs, then an ADA review is required in the State of Texas. The engineering plans are required to be reviewed before and after construction by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR). Citizens can issue tickets when they see accessible parking space violations. Apartment complexes do not have a lot of enforcement because they are not covered under the ADA – only the leasing office. However, other private buildings and shopping centers that are reviewed by a TDLR Registered Accessibility Specialist (RAS) and are found to have deficiencies have 270 days to bring the deficiencies into compliance. After 270 days, TDLR reviews the file and issues

City of College Station ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

penalties to the owner until the violations are fixed. For City reviews and permitting, there are three (3) major categories: public rights-of-way (PROW), private sites and parking, and vertical buildings. Each of these categories are handled differently through the City. For PROW, the City is more involved in construction plans because the City will ultimately be responsible for maintaining those facilities. Newly constructed buildings are required to meet ADA standards; however, older buildings may have been built under different standards or ground settling has caused issues. Civil plans are reviewed by the City for private developments using the current ADA Standards. For vertical buildings, the buildings plans are reviewed from an architectural standpoint. ADA elements inside the building are also looked at during the review process. If an issue is overlooked during the review process, please let the City know. TDLR looks at issues on a project-by-project basis. The DOJ looks at the entire city.

- Q: There are some issues with the route from the public sidewalk to Palmetto Bank.
A: New construction is required to meet current standards, but older buildings were built to different standards. When requirements have changed for an element between the old standards and the current standards, these elements are not required to be brought into compliance with the current standards unless that element is being modified.
- Q: What is the point of ADA and this meeting? Are we only talking about wheelchairs?
A: We are taking questions from the public during this meeting and will answer any questions that are asked. We are not limiting the discussion to wheelchairs only. We want to receive feedback from everyone in attendance and receive comments on all types of issues.
- Q: What is the purpose of the ADA Liaison Committee? Also, the meeting attendee is with the Center for Independent Living and stated that it would have been nice to involve people that know more about what's going on the community.
A: The Liaison Committee is an internal committee composed of representatives from all City departments and was created to collect information to better understand all programs offered by the City, since the ADA Coordinator may not be aware of all the current programs, procedures, and policies in each department. The City tried to reach out to various disability organizations in the area. The Center for Independent Living was among the attendees at a Focus Group Meeting that consisted of both City Staff and representatives from several local disability organizations.
- Q: What were the results of the evaluations, specifically at Bachman Park? There were no results provided in the presentation.
A: The evaluations results are still being finalized, but the ADA Transition Plan will be available for public review and comment once the draft Plan is complete.
- Q: Meeting attendee has previously contacted the City's Chief of Police about communication training for the Police Department. There are still people with hearing impairments in the area being questioned by police without an interpreter.
A: There are several options for first responder training and it is up to each community to provide this training to their staff.

City of College Station ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

- Q: Who holds people accountable to make sure the issues identified in the Transition Plan get addressed?
 A: In College Station, the Plan will be brought to the City Council and the ADA Coordinator will be responsible for implementing the Plan, but each City runs their government differently. An architect or engineer can lose their license if they do not submit a project to TDLR for review in the State of Texas. The oversight system is not perfect, but Texas is the only state that has the additional review process through the State.
- Q: In emergency situations, a deaf meeting attendee has to rely on hearing the alarm and is not always aware of the emergency. Is there a light-based alert system?
 A: The City is reviewing the Emergency Evaluation Management Plan as part of this project.
- Q: Meeting attendee hopes a public feedback forum continues beyond this meeting. Not sure how this meeting was advertised. Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services (DARS) should be included in the discussions. The attendee also hopes the City is trying to make College Station a better place and not just doing this project because it's a requirement.
 A: Please provide feedback with suggestions on comment cards with what you think the City should be doing.
- Meeting attendee had broken their wheelchair wheel on an issue at the intersection of Rio Grande Blvd. and Rock Prairie Rd. within 3 weeks City had new ramps in place. The City is responsive if you call them.
- Q: A meeting attendee has a concern about fire alarms flashing instead beeping. Are these set up in public places so deaf people be alerted as well? That small beep does not help deaf people. Can the Fire Department come to my house?
 A: Yes, the Fire Department has visual fire alarms and can come to your house to install them for you. Alarms with audible and visual alerts are required in City facilities. The attendee should let the City know if they find any locations without visual alarms.
- A meeting attendee is a member of a disability organization and said he would pass along information from the public meeting via Facebook and let the City know if they receive additional feedback.
- Q: As citizens deal with private business (Title III entities) concerning ADA issues, is the City willing to be a resource for citizens? Not to fund private projects to address ADA issues on private property, but to serve as advocates for citizens. As citizens, we are trying to educate these businesses, but they just say it is not their problem and it is a "goose chase" to get someone to take responsibility.
 A: The City only has a responsibility for City-owned facilities and cannot be expected to be responsible for private entities. The public can file complaints on TDLR's website.
- Current Issue: At night, many areas throughout the City have poor lighting. Parks are dark and need better lighting. Not safe for people with disabilities to travel at night. The attendee will write down locations and send to the City.

City of College Station ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

- Q: Will there be a follow up meeting?
A: The next meeting for this project will be a City Council meeting. An ADA webpage will be created on the City website and the draft Transition Plan document will be posted for public review.
- Q: Does the City use video phones? No one uses TTY anymore, so it is not really accessible.
A: Texas Relay (TTY) is used by the City in accordance with federal statutes and will need to look into offering this additional service.