



SDOT POLICY MEMORANDUM

Date: July 11, 2018
To: Goran Sparrman, SDOT Interim Director
From: SDOT ADA Committee
Subject: SDOT Policy for Companion Curb Ramp Requirements

Statement of Intent

To establish a policy that memorializes the SDOT approach to identifying companion curb ramp installation requirements. This policy also intends to identify existing physical companion curb ramp or pedestrian route characteristics that are considered satisfactory in the effort of providing reasonable access for people living with disabilities. This policy applies within the public right-of-way and within the jurisdiction of the City of Seattle.

Background

The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 35.68.075 *et seq.* requires that when a curb ramp is constructed at one end of a crosswalk it must be matched by another ramp, i.e. a companion ramp, at the other end of the crosswalk. This provision helps to ensure that pedestrians using mobility assistive devices are not stranded within the roadway without an accessible means to exit onto a sidewalk or other available pedestrian feature. The RCW does not specify technical criteria for the companion ramp(s) other than the width. The RCW requires that "such ramps shall be at least thirty-six inches wide and so constructed as to allow reasonable access to the crosswalk for physically handicapped persons, without uniquely endangering blind persons." RCW 35.68.075(1).

This memorandum identifies additional curb ramp or pedestrian route minimum characteristics required of an existing condition to be considered usable or passable for people living with disabilities¹.

Note: Referenced guidelines, standards, and guidance for these issues are available and are outlined in a Technical Memorandum on file that precedes this document.

¹ The existing companion ramp may not be required to meet the 2010 ADA Standards (and/or 2006 DOT ADA Standards) due to the date it was installed.





Policy for Companion Curb Ramp Requirements

Where restorations or alterations are planned within the Seattle public right-of-way, curb ramps complying with the City of Seattle Standard Plans for Municipal Construction must be installed where the scope of work impacts the legal or marked crosswalk or sidewalks as identified by [SDOT Director's Rule 01-2017](#) (also known as the Right-of-Way Opening and Restoration Rule, or ROWORR).

In cases where planned project scope-of-work is limited and includes curb ramp installation on only one side of the street or crosswalk as permitted under the ROWORR, it must be verified that an existing accompanying companion ramp is provided on the opposite side of the street. If a companion ramp is not provided on the opposite side of the street, a curb ramp complying with the Standard Plans must be installed. The installation of a new companion ramp may trigger additional curb ramp installation obligations as identified in the ROWORR.

If there is an existing companion ramp on the opposite side of the street or crosswalk from the planned project scope-of-work, it may not be required to be removed and replaced. To be considered usable or passable for persons living with disabilities, existing companion ramps must comply with the following minimum requirements, in addition to being free of significant damage or disrepair:

- Must be accessible by means of a 36" minimum width route, clear of the parallel vehicular lane
- 36" minimum unobstructed curb ramp width
- ½" maximum vertical surface discontinuity between roadway surface and bottom of curb ramp
- ½" maximum openings or cracks on the surface of the curb ramp
- 12.5% maximum curb ramp running slope*
- 36" minimum unobstructed curb ramp upper landing width and depth

*The Engineer of Record has the authority to approve a steeper companion ramp running slope if it is built to the Maximum Extent Feasible (MEF), based on existing roadway slopes.

A roadway shoulder or non-traditional pedestrian treatment may be considered as adequate refuge in lieu of a companion ramp. Any such space identified must be clear of the vehicular and parking lane (where applicable) for a minimum depth and width of 36". The Engineer of Record may be required to apply engineering judgment in these cases, but the following are examples of spaces that cannot be deemed as adequate refuge:

- Non-hardscaped surfaces or routes, including dirt pathways
- Graveled areas or surfaces with loose stones or pavers
- Landscaped or areas blocked by vegetation
- Roadway shoulder area that is covered with loose gravel, standing water, or other unmaintained obstructions

