

Commission
on
Disability

Commission on Disability

DRAFT Meeting Agenda: September 9, 2026 at 5pm

**North Berkeley Senior Center, Aspen Room
1901 Hearst Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709**

Members of the public may join the meeting via Zoom by clicking [Join via Zoom](#) or by phoning 1-669-444-9171 (Meeting ID: 869 6107 7636; Passcode: 686820)

Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order by Chair Fischer
2. Land Acknowledgment recognizing Berkeley as the ancestral, unceded home of the Ohlone People.
3. Roll Call by Secretary
4. Public Comments

The public may comment about any item *not* on the agenda. Public comments on agenda items will be heard while the Commission is discussing that item. Public comments are limited to three minutes per speaker.

5. Approval of draft minutes: July 8, 2026* and May 13, 2026 meetings*
6. Approval: Order of Agenda*

Discussion/Action Items

7. Update on CoD and Public Works discussions on including PROWAG in the City bid and contracting process.**
8. Developing accessibility guidelines for electric vehicle (EV) charging that impacts the public right-of-way, e.g., when cables cross sidewalks.*
9. Hopkins Street redesign: ways for the CoD to proceed**
10. Work Plan Updates and Developments

Commissioner Reports/Announcements

Staff Updates

11. Log of Access Complaints*
12. Email and voicemail sent to the Commission*

Adjournment

- * Documents included in packet.
- ** Documents to be delivered at meeting.
- *** Documents previously distributed.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO AGENDA

Agenda posted: 1) on the bulletin board at Old City Hall (2134 MLK Jr. Way); 2) North Berkeley Senior Center (1901 Hearst Avenue); 3) On the Commission on Disability webpage of the [City of Berkeley website](#). Click the chevron (i.e., the blue V-shaped symbol) to the right of the monthly meeting date for a link to the agenda.

A link to the complete monthly agenda packet is available for public review by clicking the chevron (i.e., the blue V-shaped symbol) to the right of the monthly meeting date on the [Commission on Disability webpage](#). Physical agenda packets are reviewable during business hours at the Berkeley Central Library (2090 Kittredge St.) and at 1947 Center Street, 4th Floor.



ADA ACCOMMODATIONS

This meeting is being held in a wheelchair accessible location. To request a disability-related accommodation(s) to participate in the meeting, including remote participation, auxiliary aids or services, please contact the **ADA Program Coordinator at (510) 981-6418 (V), (510) 981-6347 (TDD)** or ada@berkeleyca.gov at least 72 hours before the meeting begins. Please refrain from wearing scented products to this meeting.

PUBLIC RECORD INFORMATION

Communications to Berkeley boards, commissions or committees are public record and will become part of the City's electronic records, which are accessible through the City's website. Please note: e-mail addresses, names, addresses, and other contact information are not required, but if included in any communication to a City board, commission or committee, will become part of the public record. If you do not want your e-mail address or any other contact information to be made public, you may deliver communications via U.S. Postal Service or in person to the secretary of the relevant board, commission or committee. If you do not want your contact information included in the public record, please do not include that information in your communication. Please contact the commission secretary for further information.

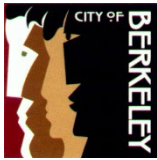
Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the Commission regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at 1947 Center Street, 4th Floor, during regular business hours. The Commission Agenda and Minutes may be viewed on the [City of Berkeley website](#).

Secretary:

Thomas Gregory
Public Works Department
(510) 981-6418
E-mail: tgregory@berkeleyca.gov

Mailing Address:

Commission on Disability
c/o Thomas Gregory
1947 Center Street
Berkeley, CA 94704



Commission
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Commission on Disability DRAFT Minutes re May 13, 2026 meeting

**North Berkeley Senior Center, Aspen Room
1901 Hearst Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709**

Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order by Chair Fischer at 5:05pm
2. Land Acknowledgment recognizing Berkeley as the ancestral, unceded home of the Ohlone People.
3. Roll Call by Secretary
Commissioners present: Helen Walsh, Rena Fischer, Kathi Pugh, Mina Sun, Bonnie Lewkowicz, Jae Mann, Fred Nisen, and Valerie Coleman. Absent: Richard Paz.
Staff present: Thomas Gregory.
4. Public Comments
5. Approval of draft minutes: March 11, 2026 meeting
“...to approve the minutes as drafted.” Moved by: Pugh. Seconded by: Fischer. Ayes: Walsh, Fischer, Pugh, Sun, Mann, Nisen, and Coleman. Abstention: Lewkowicz. The motion passes.
6. Approval: Order of Agenda
“...to approve the order of the agenda.” Moved by: Fischer. Seconded by: Lewkowicz. Ayes: Walsh, Fischer, Pugh, Sun, Lewkowicz, Mann, Nisen, and Coleman. The motion passes.

Discussion/Action Items

7. Updates from CoD subcommittees

a. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

Fischer reported that Crystel Hadley, the City’s Digital Communications Coordinator, is very effective at pushing the City toward WCAG compliance. Federal DOJ pushed the WCAG compliance deadline to April 2027.

The City has hired a consultant, Blind Institute of Technology, to conduct an audit of the City website and to advise in developing a transition plan to full compliance. CoD’s input will inform this plan. City-wide WCAG Task Force has met bi-weekly.

Approximately 35 apps are attached to the City website (e.g., to pay a parking ticket, to register for summer camp). These app providers will need to verify WCAG compliance in order to continue contracting with the City.

The City will buy form-building software so that currently PDF-based forms will become WCAG-compliant online forms. The City Manager sent an all-staff memo advancing WCAG compliance

b. Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)

Transportation Manager Mark Helmbrecht’s recommendation was to include language

requiring PROWAG compliance be added to operational specs only. COD's PROWAG recommendation needs to go back to the FITES Committee. Fischer's draft letter contains the CoD response with additional places to include the need to follow PROWAG. Commissioners should send input on the draft letter by 5/18.

c. Accessibility at City Meetings and Events

Fischer felt that this subject is too broad and recommended that it be broken into smaller categories (e.g., address accessibility at public meetings separately from addressing accessibility at public events). Fischer also recommended that the focus should be on approaches and toolkits rather than only adding accessibility statements to material promoting events.

Commissioner Reports/Announcements

Walsh: FEMA released its final report, which does not address functional access needs. The Center for Independent Living is collecting lived-experience stories from disabled people, caregivers, and allies about navigating protected bike lanes and sidewalks.

Sun: the US Attorney's Office responsible for Northern California recently took its entire staff to LightHouse for the Blind for a tour and presentation, at which the US Attorney's Office stated that 95% of the cases it litigates are referred to the federal Dept of Justice via its online complaints portal. Also, the office litigates on behalf of individuals, not just class-action plaintiffs. The portal with which one may report complaints is here: [lodge a civil rights complaint with the federal DOJ](#).

Coleman: An MTC-funded consultant has partnered with Marin County on a pilot program promoting Universal Design, and the goal is to create a template that others can use.

Fischer: There is a same-day wheelchair-accessible (WAV) ride service called Onward. The ride cost starts at \$6 and trips can be up to 60 miles long. Rides are only available until 6pm in the evening.

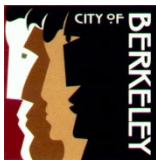
Staff Updates

- 9. Log of Access Complaints
- 10. Email and voicemail sent to the Commission

Adjournment at 6:55pm

Minutes approved by CoD vote on: _____

Thomas Gregory, Secretary to Commission



Commission
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Commission on Disability DRAFT Minutes re July 8, 2026 meeting

**North Berkeley Senior Center, Aspen Room
1901 Hearst Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709**

Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order by Chair Fischer at 5:02pm
2. Land Acknowledgment recognizing Berkeley as the ancestral, unceded home of the Ohlone People.
3. Roll Call by Secretary
 Commissioners present: Helen Walsh, Rena Fischer, Mina Sun, Bonnie Lewkowicz, Jae Mann, Fred Nisen, and Valerie Coleman
 Commissioner on a Leave of Absence: Richard Paz
 Commissioner absent: Kathi Pugh
 Staff present: Thomas Gregory, Presenter: Crystel Hadley
 Public members present: Ann Freeman, Eric Knaresboro, Odile Lavault, and Kelly Hammergren
4. Public Comments
 Lavault, a member of the City's Commission on Aging, introduced herself as the Commission on Aging's designated liaison to the Commission on Disability (CoD).

 Knaresboro, a guide dog user, is looking for suitable space to continue a guide dog play group and seeks advocacy from the CoD regarding this issue.
5. Approval of draft minutes: May 13, 2026 meeting
 "...to consider approving May 13's draft minutes at the next Commission on Disability meeting." Moved by: Lewkowicz. Seconded by: Coleman. Ayes: unanimous. The motion passes.
6. Approval: Order of Agenda
 "...to move item # 10 to the beginning of the Discussion/Action Items portion of the meeting and to otherwise approve the agenda as drafted." Moved by: Fischer. Seconded by: Sun. Ayes: unanimous. The motion passes.

Presentation

7. Conversation with Crystel Hadley, Digital Communications Coordinator for the City of Berkeley. What Works: Effectively Implementing Accessibility Changes in City/Title II Areas. Lessons learned from the (ongoing) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) project.

Hadley reported that her involvement in WCAG-compliance began in April 2024 when the federal government announced that WCAG standards would be enforced beginning in April of 2026 (This date has shifted to April of 2027). The effort toward

compliance intensified after CoD passed its WCAG recommendation.

Hadley began meetings with CoD's ad hoc committee on WCAG. In August of 2025, she established a staff Task Force focused on compliance, with all departments represented. Hadley's team contracted with a vendor to perform an audit of the City's website. The audit and fixes are ongoing, with work by the City's website developer to address issues identified in the audit.

Separately, various trainings and tools (e.g., templates, step-by-step written guidance) have been provided to staff. A major takeaway for Hadley is that leadership's buy-in is critical this effort's success. The City Manager has sent all-staff emails on the importance of WCAG compliance.

Fischer said that the WCAG Task Force could be a useful model for other accessibility issues that require staff-wide awareness for compliance. Hadley said that staff could propose this idea to leadership.

Sun stated that she had seen Hadley's training materials and found them useful and technically sound. Sun also noted that real change happens at the program staff level and that staff must use the trainings and tools for this effort to be successful.

Public comment

Knaresboro stated that WCAG compliance is one of the most important issues that the City should be investing in.

Discussion/Action Items

8. Update on CoD and Public Works discussions on including PROWAG in the City bid and contracting process.

Fischer reported that CoD has asked the City to include language on the need for PROWAG compliance in: contact boilerplate language, pre-bid meetings, the first page of bid packets, post-bid roundtable meetings, and Traffic Control Plans (TCPs). CoD also asked that a one-pager on PROWAG obligations be developed and attached to TCPs.

Fischer also proposed that the City create an online form through which PROWAG issues could be reported – since enforcement during construction frequently relies on public reporting.

9. Developing accessibility guidelines for electric vehicle (EV) charging that impacts the public right-of-way, e.g., when cables cross sidewalks.

"...to take up this EV topic at our next meeting in September." Moved by: Lewkowicz. Seconded by: Fischer. Ayes: unanimous. The motion passes.

10. A request that the City conduct a supplemental accessibility analysis of the Bicycle Plan, with specific attention to accessibility in the public right-of-way.

Walsh said that a "structured accessibility review" and/or a "supplemental accessibility

analysis” is required to adequately implement the recently adopted Bike Plan update.

Coleman said that expanding bike lane networks, especially regarding protected bike lanes, is new territory for most cities. Let’s advocate that the City more fully consider the accessibility ramifications of expanding the City’s bike lane networks.

Fischer said that it would be more effective for CoD to put forward specific design and compliance recommendations as opposed to requesting an accessibility analysis. Coleman agreed with Fischer that any requests by CoD be very targeted and specific.

Public comment

Freeman reported that during a trip to UCB’s Zellerbach Hall, she had to park in a blue spot on the left-hand side of one-way Bancroft. She was forced to enter an active traffic lane as she exited her vehicle. She then needed to cross an active bike lane in order to access the nearest curb cut.

Hammargren reported that it is frustrating that the Bike Plan update failed to address all aspects of accessibility.

Commissioner Reports/Announcements

Staff Updates

- 12. Log of Access Complaints
- 13. Email and voicemail sent to the Commission

Adjournment at 7:26pm

Minutes approved by CoD vote on: _____

Thomas Gregory, Secretary to Commission

This document was developed for Oakland and gives the Berkeley CoD a useful starting point.

Electric Vehicle Charging Cord Guidance for Crossing the Sidewalk (City of Oakland)

I. Background [deleted paragraph on adopting EVs]

II. Purpose This Guidance is designed to enable residents who lack dedicated and sufficient off-street parking to safely and conveniently charge their EV at home by extending a cord across the sidewalk/public right-of-way (PROW) to a parked vehicle, subject to the requirements below.

III. Applicability [deleted info on applicable residences and zones]

*NOTE: Certain locations in Oakland cannot accommodate charging cords in the PROW, due to safety and accessibility issues. These locations include any blocks on streets with a grade/slope greater than 5% and any areas within 5 feet of broken or uneven pavement or other significant sidewalk obstructions. This Guidance is not applicable on these blocks.

[Rena: Guidance on determining grade/slope; Specific guidance for Berkeley Hills]

IV. Requirements

The following requirements apply to residents who seek to extend a cord across the sidewalk/PROW to charge an EV parked on the street and who meet the above applicability requirements. All charging cords must be covered by a highly visible, stable, and secure low-angle cord cover at all times while in use and placed in the PROW.

Use and Parking

- The EV charging cord and cord cover must cross perpendicular to the sidewalk to minimize obstacles to mobility.
- All cords, cord covers, and other equipment must be removed from public space when active EV charging is complete and in all cases within 24 hours of beginning a charge.
- Residents are not guaranteed a parking space and may not use signage or other means to reserve a parking space.
- All local parking regulations and parking permit requirements, both temporary and permanent, remain unchanged and shall be followed.
- Residents may not place a cord cover less than 5 feet from another cord cover on the same sidewalk.
- Residents must securely affix to the cord and/or cover a label providing contact information (e.g., home address and/or telephone number) to allow for prompt identification and response in case of any issues with the equipment.

Technical [deleted electrical specs]

All cord covers:

- Shall be on sidewalks with a running grade of 5% or less (view your street slope here by clicking on your street to find the "Average slope").
- Shall be constructed of sturdy material and should not flex noticeably under a 200-pound point load.
- Shall be visible to low-vision pedestrians and at night, using a bright colored (preferably bright yellow) cable cover and reflective strips.
- Shall be covered with an ADA-compliant cord protector ramp.

This example of a compliant ramp is provided for illustration purposes only, and does not imply blanket approval or product/vendor endorsement, nor is it the only viable solution: [Link to cable protector ramp on Home Depot]

- Shall be slip resistant when wet. If the material used does not possess a slip resistant property, apply a non-slip coating (available at a hardware or home improvement store), preferably bright yellow.
- Shall not have any protrusions, such as bolt heads or nails.
- Shall not feature gaps between the ramp and landing area exceeding 1/2-inch.
- Shall not feature a lip at the bottom of ramp (where it meets sidewalk) greater than 1/4-inch.
- Shall not be temporarily or permanently affixed to the sidewalk with hardware of any kind.
- Shall cover the width of the sidewalk.
- Shall maintain a perpendicular angle to the sidewalk to minimize obstacles to mobility.
- Shall maintain a landing area running grade and cross slope that are parallel to the sidewalk.
- All equipment (cords and cord covers) must be removed from the PROW when not actively charging, and in all cases within 24 hours of beginning a charge.

V. Enforcement, Liability, and Insurance [deleted liability info]

Inquiries and enforcement regarding this guidance will be handled by [Berkeley info]. Concerns or complaints about private EV charging cord and their covers in the PROW can be addressed through [Berkeley info. Who will field these complaints?]

VI. Uses Requiring a Permit [deleted Oakland info]

September 2026 - Log of Unresolved Access-related Complaints

Subject matter key:

1 = built environment (facilities and their adjacent paths of travel)

2 = built environment (pedestrian rights of way)

3 = digital content

4 = effective communications/signage

5 = programs, services, and activities

An asterisk next to the complaint's submission date indicates that the complaint was a formal ADA Grievance.

8/14/26:

2. Construction site on west side of Adeline immediately north of 2910 Adeline is impeding the sidewalk; while a diversion is in place, it does not feature audible signals and therefore violates PROWAG. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. Staff will require the relevant contractor to remediate the issue as soon as possible.

8/9/26:

2. Utility vault in newly poured sidewalk on Russell Street at Sylvia Mendez School creates an unbeveled 1" change in elevation within the pedestrian right-of-way. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. Staff will require the relevant contractor to remediate the issue as soon as practicable.

4/23/26:

2. Construction site "at about 2110 Adeline St." blocking sidewalk in a manner not compliant with PROWAG. Staff determined that no 2110 Adeline address exists within City and subsequently requested further info from complainant. Update: the non-compliant site is immediately north of 2910 Adeline.

2/23/26

2. West side of 9th Street between Carleton and Pardee not PROWAG-compliant due to construction work encroaching on right-of-way and the lack of an appropriate diversion or detour. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. Staff will have the contractor remediate the violation and the remediation, once implemented, will comply with law and City policy. The complainant's level of satisfaction with yet-to-be-implemented remediation is unknown.

11/12/25

2. Lack of access pertains to impermissible changes in elevation existing within the east-west crosswalks at Shattuck and Durant. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. Staff will have the violation remediated, but no ETA is available at this time. The solution, once implemented, will comply with law and City policy. The complainant's level of satisfaction with yet-to-be-implemented remediation is unknown.

9/4/25

2. Lack of access pertains to (a) the sidewalk closure on south side of Bancroft, west of Ellsworth, not being PROWAG-compliant and (b) the installation of a temporary bike lane at that site not being accessible to wheelchair users. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented and verified. On 9/4/25 staff instructed the relevant contractor to render the sidewalk blockage compliant with PROWAG. On that date, PW staff also considered building a temporary ramp so that wheelchair users could access the temporary bike lane; however, that approach was subsequently abandoned due to staff's safety-related concerns. The solution, once implemented and verified, will comply with law and City policy. The complainant's level of satisfaction with the yet-to-be-implemented solution is unknown but likely low.

9/3/25

2. Lack of access pertains to existence of approximately 1" high unbeveled elevation(s) within crosswalk near east side of University at Grant. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. Staff have instructed EBMUD, the entity that created the elevation(s), to shave the elevation(s) to render them PROWAG-compliant (i.e., to 1/4" high or less if unbeveled, or to 1/2" high or less if beveled), but the implementation of this remediation has not yet been verified. The solution, once implemented, will comply with law and City policy. The complainant's level of satisfaction with this yet-to-be-implemented-and-verified solution is unknown but likely low.

8/20/25

1. Lack of access pertains to lack of accessible parking at Strawberry Creek Park. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. A PROWAG-compliant blue spot will be installed on Addison at the northern border of the park, though no ETA is currently available. Once implemented, the solution will comply with law and City policy. The complainant has expressed satisfaction with the planned solution but has expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of an ETA.

6/18/25

2. Lack of access pertains to a blue parking spot at Milvia/Derby not being PROWAG-compliant. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. Staff are considering remedial options (namely, either to eliminate this blue spot or else to render it PROWAG-compliant) but have not yet settled on an approach or an ETA. Once implemented, the solution will comply with law and City policy. The complainant's level of satisfaction with progress thus far is likely low.

6/3/25

2. Lack of access pertains to the public right-of-way on west side of Shattuck between Ward and Derby reportedly not being PROWAG-compliant in its design. The City deemed that this issue was resolved on 6/5/25 when staff determined that the site in question was in fact PROWAG-compliant and that the site's design violated neither law nor City policy. The complainant was unsatisfied with this outcome. Although the City deems this complaint to have been resolved, it remains on this log of unresolved complaints at the request of one of CoD's officers.

3/24/25

2. Lack of access pertains to the alternate pedestrian access route on north side of Kittredge between Shattuck and Harold not being compliant with PROWAG. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. By or before 5/12/25 the City remediated all PROWAG violations at the site except for the absence of proximity-actuated audible signals, but a complete remediation has yet to be implemented. Once fully remediated, the solution will comply with law and City policy. Despite the partial nature of the currently implemented remediation, the complainant has expressed high satisfaction with the outcome.

1/17/25

2. Lack of access pertains to two curb ramps at Euclid and Crystal Way lacking the required detectable warning surfaces. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. Staff will install detectable warning surfaces at this site, but no ETA is currently available. Once implemented, the solution will comply with law and City policy. The complainant is likely unsatisfied that the remediation has yet to be accomplished but, since they have subsequently moved to a different state, they might not have any level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

6/30/24

2. Lack of access due to overgrown hedge on 1600 block of Acton obstructing sidewalk. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented and verified. PW staff have referred the matter to Code Enforcement staff, who in turn have informed the property owner that they must trim their hedge, but staff have yet to confirm that compliance has been achieved. Once implemented, the solution will comply with law and City policy. The complainant's level of satisfaction is unknown.

6/20/24

3. Lack of access due to City website not complying with WCAG. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. The City is collaborating with CoD's ad hoc committee and others to develop a roadmap by which the City will achieve compliance with WCAG 2.1-AA by the federal govt's April 2026 deadline for achieving such compliance. Once implemented, the yet-to-be-implemented solution will comply with law and City policy. The complainant's level of satisfaction re the City's progress is unknown but likely low.

1/28/24

2. Lack of access due to sidewalk near NW corner of MLK and Derby not being PROWAG-compliant due to pronounced change in elevation. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. Once the yet-to-be-implemented solution is implemented it will comply with law and City policy, but there is currently no ETA for remediation. The complainant is not satisfied with the City's current lack of progress.

12/1/23

1. Lack of access due to Pathways STAIR Center not being ADA-compliant. At the time of this complaint, the City's records indicated that 93 violations of the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design existed at the center. The City does not yet deem that a full solution has been both implemented and verified. In Dec 2025, the City's contractor completed a re-design and thorough re-modeling of the site, a project intended to remediate all ADA violations. Staff and the contractor are still working to determine which, if any, of the 93 violations remain un-remediated. The complainant's level of satisfaction is unknown but likely low.

8/28/23

1. Lack of access pertaining to Stegmann Trail at Cesar Chavez Park being too bumpy for use by wheelchair users. The City does not deem that a solution has been

implemented. At the time this complaint was lodged, the City had plans, including funding, for a project that would render the trail ADA-compliant and that was tentatively scheduled to commence in Sep2024. However, in July2025 plans for this project, called the Cesar Chavez Park Perimeter Pathway Project, were paused indefinitely due to issues of underground (and perhaps surface level) contamination at Cesar Chavez Park. There is no ETA on when the this project might resume, but PRW staff expect that it will be at least July2027 and likely later before the project resumes. The complainant's level of satisfaction with the lack of progress is likely very low.

6/8/23

3. Lack of access pertaining to (well-founded and accurate) concern that many documents posted to the website in addition to Commissioners' Manual (which was non-compliant at the time this complaint was lodged but which has since been remediated) could be out of compliance with WCAG. The City does not yet deem that a solution has been implemented. CMO has established an all-dept Digital Accessibility Task Force, members of which collaborate approximately monthly with CoD's ad hoc committee regarding WCAG compliance. The Task Force's goal is to achieve WCAG compliance by April2026. The complainant, while not yet satisfied, is cautiously optimistic about progress made to date.

Access-related complaints NOT involving purported non-compliance with ADA/Title III or with PROWAG:

Issue: the intensity of the flashing lights on City vehicles affects me negatively neurologically and needs to be reduced so that I can safely access the City's public rights-of-way.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 4.

Issue: the shared micro-mobility rental scooters frequently impeding sidewalk access are not removed quickly enough.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 58.

Issue: the amount of time provided to cross a crosswalk should be increased by 50%, especially at LeRoy/Hearst.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 1.

Issue: every intersection with pedestrian signals should also have Accessible Pedestrian Signals.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 2.

Issue: the wifi device that the City has approved for installation near North Branch Library will, due to my electro-sensitivity, render that library branch, as well as the nearby gas station that I typically use, inaccessible to me.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 1.

Issue: the City should offer a program that helps constituents vindicate their ADA/Title III rights vis a vis public accommodations, at least those that are located within Berkeley.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 1.

Issue: the medical office building at 2300 Dana is not compliant with the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design, and so the City should make that building compliant.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 1.

Issue: on-street blue spots on the left-hand side of one-way streets endanger placard holders who exit their vehicle via a passenger-side lift as the placard holder will be in/near an active traffic lane when they exit the vehicle.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 2.

Issue: Protected bike lanes, such as the cycle tracks proposed for Hopkins Street, are dangerous and reportedly inaccessible for many people with disabilities, and so the City should conclude that such designs are not consistent with or compliant with ADA obligations and should, therefore, avoid such designs.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 5.

Issue: UC Theatre on University Avenue too frequently gets the City's permission to reserve parking spaces in front of the venue's entrance.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 1.

Issue: The amount of time the City takes to process applications for building permits should be reduced vis a vis applicants who are pregnant and/or have injuries as the waiting time can be especially difficult for such applicants.

Approximate number of such complaints lodged since 9/10/25: 1.

Berkeleyans for Accessible Rights-of-Way

July 24, 2026

Mayor Adena Ishii
Members of the Berkeley City Council
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

Via email to council@berkeleyca.gov

Re: Item 27 (July 28, 2026, Council Agenda) - Referral to Schedule Hopkins Street for Paving with Enhanced Safety Improvements for all Users (Author: Kesarwani, Co-authors: Humbert, Ishii)

Dear Honorable Mayor Ishii and Members of the Berkeley City Council,

Berkeleyans for Accessible Rights-of-Way (BAROW) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Item 27, “Hopkins Street for Paving with Enhanced Safety Improvements for all Users.” BAROW’s focus is on the accessibility of public rights-of-way under ADA Title II, regardless of the specific type of transportation infrastructure. In the case of the Hopkins proposal, the plan does not appropriately balance separated facility design (cycle tracks and bus islands) with ADA Title II obligations to maintain accessible public rights-of-way for seniors, disabled residents, and paratransit users.

The proposed design raises significant accessibility concerns under ADA Title II and the City’s obligation to maintain accessible pedestrian access during and after alterations to the public right-of-way. The revised proposal would create one-way Class IV separated facilities on each side of the street from The Alameda to the Ohlone Greenway. These facilities rely on flexible posts, planters, on-street parking, or raised islands as barriers. This infrastructure, placed between parking and the sidewalk, inherently introduces predictable accessibility and safety hazards for seniors and disabled residents that cannot be fully mitigated under ADA Title II.

In addition, the proposal would reduce curbside access needed for disabled residents, older adults, caregivers, and paratransit users to use the Hopkins commercial district, the North Branch Public Library, and the King recreational facilities. The proposed Curb Management Plan does not yet demonstrate how adequate ADA parking, loading zones, and paratransit access will be preserved adjacent to businesses, schools, the library, and residences.

The proposal also includes bus boarding islands (floating bus stops), with the separated bikeways routed behind the boarding platform. This design inherently creates well-documented accessibility barriers for blind and low-vision pedestrians, wheelchair users, and riders who rely on paratransit. Requiring vulnerable people to cross a bikeway (that will host all types of micromobility devices) to reach a bus island is not an accessible design. At a minimum, mitigations such as detectable warnings and protected crossings are needed to reduce hazards, but these elements are not described in the current item.

The City has not demonstrated that this proposal is warranted. The safety risks to cyclists traveling on Hopkins that would justify this expensive proposal have not been demonstrated. Friends of Hopkins Street has reviewed the 10-year history of collisions on Hopkins Street and found that none would have been prevented by the proposed infrastructure. The City has not studied its similar recently constructed separated facilities to determine whether they have improved public safety or introduced new accessibility barriers for disabled residents traveling independently. Finally, the City has not considered whether improvements to Berkeley's low-stress bike network could provide equal or better access for cyclists while avoiding the accessibility problems inherent in Class IV separated bike lanes.

Raised intersections, tree-related curb damage, and construction-phase detours also require accessibility analysis. The document does not address slope transitions, tactile guidance, or maintenance of accessible pedestrian routes during construction. Hopkins is a designated Emergency Access and Evacuation Route, yet the item discusses fire-truck access without addressing the evacuation needs of disabled residents who rely on curbside loading and accessible vans.

While Public Works plans outreach to businesses, schools, houses of worship, residents, and other stakeholders, this outreach is framed around refining a predetermined Class IV design rather than evaluating whether that design can meet ADA Title II requirements. The Curb Management Plan is constrained by the fixed Class IV foundation, limiting the City's ability to meet accessibility obligations or consider accessible alternatives.

The City's Commission on Disability recently discussed the need for an accessibility analysis of the 2026 Bicycle Plan Update, and BAROW's concerns reflect the same need for a full accessibility review of alterations to public rights-of-way on Hopkins.

BAROW asks the Council to set this proposal aside until a full accessibility review is conducted. This review should include:

- Clear compliance with ADA Title II requirements for alterations to the public right-of-way
- Consideration of lower-cost alternatives that do not impose safety and accessibility concerns (cost savings could be applied to remedying existing ADA

violations, such as repairing thousands of broken sidewalks and enforcing access requirements around construction sites)

- Assurance that, if the proposal moves forward, it will include:
 - preservation of ADA parking adjacent to destinations, not relocated to nearby blocks;
 - accessible loading zones for paratransit, caregivers, and medical transport;
 - safe pedestrian access at floating bus stops, including detectable warnings and protected crossings;
 - accessible construction-phase detours and temporary ADA parking; and
 - engagement with disability stakeholders early in the design process.

BAROW supports a Hopkins corridor that is safe for everyone. Safety improvements must strengthen accessibility, not reduce it. We urge the City to make accessibility a foundational design requirement rather than a secondary consideration in curb management.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues.

Sincerely,

Michai Freeman
Systems Change Advocate
Center for Independent Living

Helen Walsh
Accessibility-Inclusion Advisor
UCC Disaster Ministries
-and-
Member, Berkeley Disability Commission*

Erik Knaresboro and Michaela Tsztoo
Founders
Streets of Equality

Mike Cole
Executive Director
East Bay Center for The Blind

Eugene Turitz
Friends of Adeline
Carol Crooks
Betsy Morris
Co-conveners
Gray Panthers of Berkeley and the East Bay

Rev. Kelly Colwell
Senior Minister
First Congregational Church of Berkeley
UCC

*For identification purposes only

cc: Commission on Aging
Commission on Disability
Commission on Transportation and Infrastructure
Safe Streets Citizen Oversight Committee

To the Secretary, Thomas Gregory
Commission on Disability

Please share this letter with the Commissioners for their consideration.

I was given a copy of this attached email from Gina Rieger, who like me, was one of the public comment speakers at the July 28, 2026

City Council Meeting re: the Hopkin Bike lanes. Gina read the complete email reply from Fire Chief, David Sprague to the City Council members and the Mayor. It is dated July 25, 2026

Thank you, Shirley Kirsten, M.A.

Berkeley CA

TEL 510-439-8567

Sprague, David A. <DSprague@berkeleyca.gov>
 To: Gina Rieger
 Re: Hopkins Corridor and Fire Safety

Sat, Jul 25, 2026 at 3:02 PM

Dear Ms. Rieger,

Thank you for writing and for taking the time to follow the Hopkins discussion so closely. I understand why the apparent change in the Fire Department's position has raised concerns, and I appreciate the opportunity to clarify it.

To answer your questions directly: I have not changed my professional judgment because of political pressure, and politics has not overridden safety. My comments and the reviews completed by Fire Department staff were made in good conscience and reflect our professional assessment of the information and designs presented to us.

What has changed since 2023 is my experience applying fire-access requirements and my understanding of how those requirements apply under different conditions. In 2023, I was relatively new in my role and relied on the technical and institutional guidance available to me at the time. Since then, I have worked through many additional fire-access issues and developed a more refined understanding of the code.

For example, a 26-foot unobstructed width is required under certain circumstances, including in areas adjacent to fire hydrants and where access is provided to certain taller buildings. It is not, however, a universal requirement for every street segment or transportation project. The Fire Department should neither overstate what the code requires nor understate legitimate operational concerns.

It is also important to distinguish what the Fire Department has and has not approved. Fire staff reviewed and approved the traffic-calming features included in Hopkins Alternatives 1 and 2 that were presented to FITES. Staff also confirmed that travel lanes of 11 feet preferred and 10.5 feet minimum are acceptable.

The newly proposed configuration involving one-way protected bicycle lanes on both sides of Hopkins is a different design, and the Fire Department has not yet reviewed that configuration. Public Works will need to provide a design package before Fire staff can evaluate emergency-vehicle turning movements, apparatus access and maneuverability, potential response impacts, and evacuation performance.

My comments at the April 15 FITES meeting concerned the separate question of whether a protected bicycle lane could itself be relied upon as an emergency-response or evacuation route. I remain cautious about depending on a bicycle lane for emergency apparatus movement, particularly when it may be occupied by cyclists or people using other mobility devices who may not immediately hear or recognize an approaching emergency vehicle. That concern is different from determining whether the regular travel lanes in a particular design provide workable and code-compliant emergency access.

Evacuation also remains an important public-safety consideration. In 2023, the City did not yet have the benefit of the completed 2025 evacuation study or the same ability to conduct a design-specific sensitivity analysis. Once the Council identifies a design for further development and Public Works provides the necessary plans, we can evaluate whether that design would materially increase, decrease, or have little meaningful effect on evacuation times and network performance. Until that analysis is completed, I cannot responsibly state that a particular design will or will not affect evacuation.

I understand that a more refined interpretation today may feel like a reversal from the position expressed in 2023. I view it as an evolution based on additional experience and a more developed understanding of the applicable requirements. In my view, credibility requires being candid when professional understanding becomes more precise, rather than continuing to repeat an earlier interpretation simply for the sake of consistency.

The Fire Department's commitment to life safety has not changed. We will continue to review any proposed Hopkins design carefully and provide an independent professional assessment of its effects on emergency response and evacuation.

In service,

Chief David Sprague, Berkeley Fire Department

Shirley Kirsten M.A.

International Online

Piano Instructor

NYC HS of Performing Arts

Oberlin Conservatory

M.A. New York University

Sent via email on 8/8/26:

Shirley Kirsten<shirley_kirsten@yahoo.com>

Gregory, Thomas

WARNING: This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Correspondence to the Commission on Disability:

To: Thomas Gregory, Secretary, COD

As a member of the Community, I am sending these two items of relevance to the Public Right of Way accessibility issue as concerns

the American with Disabilities Act. They are for the purpose of awareness as they impact persons with disabilities and seniors

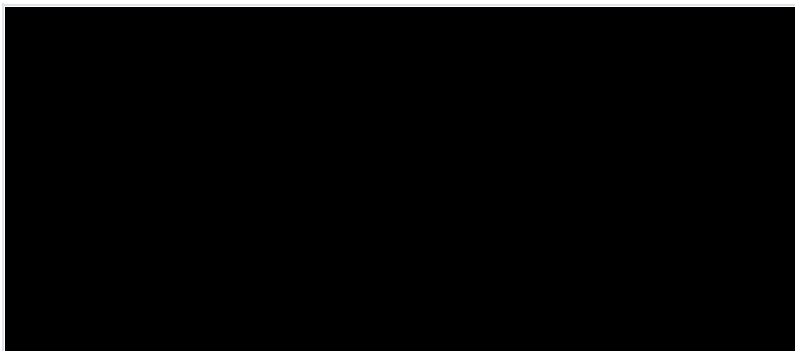
who rely on predictable curbside access and safe crossing environments.

These links to two lawsuits reinforce why PROW accessibility needs to be centered in any re-design.

I request that this correspondence with two links be distributed to the Commissioners as part of a standard

COD correspondence.

[State judge hits the brakes on 72nd Street bike lane plans for Upper West Side | amNewYork](#)



**State judge hits the brakes on 72nd
Street bike lane plans for Upper Wes...**

A state judge has granted a temporary restraining order that froze plans to build two new bike lanes on the Uppe...

UPDATE: UWS Disabled Residents Sue City in Effort to Stop the 72nd Street Bike Lane Proposal



UPDATE: UWS Disabled Residents Sue City in Effort to Stop the 72nd Stree...

Gus Saltonstall

The 72nd Street bike lane proposal.
UPDATE: Friday, July 17 at 10:30 a.m.:
Hartley Bernstein, the lawyer who fil...

Gratefully, Shirley Kirsten, M.A.

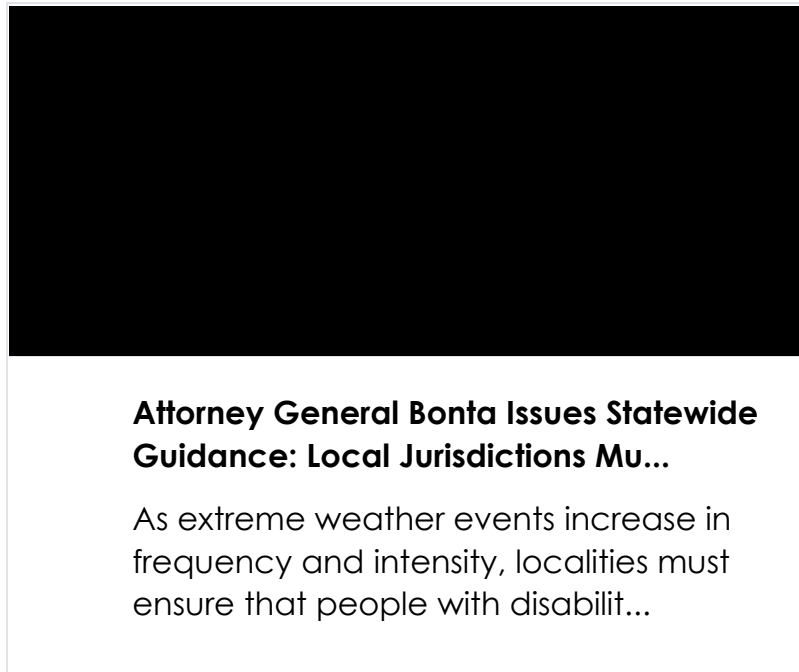
Berkeley CA

TEL: 510-439-8567

Aug. 17, 2026

As a community member, I am requesting that this link to an Aug. 11, 2026 article by California Attorney General, Bonta be forwarded to the Commissioners on Disability.

[Attorney General Bonta Issues Statewide Guidance: Local Jurisdictions Must Integrate the Needs of Californians with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness and Response](#)



Thank you.

Shirley Kirsten, Berkeley CA

Shirley Kirsten M.A.

International Online

Piano Instructor

NYC HS of Performing Arts

Oberlin Conservatory

M.A. New York University

From: KENNETH STEIN <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2026 5:40 PM
To: ADAMailbox <ADA@berkeleyca.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Regarding That Deadly Blindspot

Hi. I would appreciate your forwarding this all along to members of the Berkeley Disability Commission. Thanks.

– Ken Stein
Berkeley

From: KENNETH STEIN <kestein1@icloud.com>
Date: September 1, 2026 at 10:14:50 AM PDT
Subject: Regarding That Deadly Blindspot ...

As Then as Now — Still Not People... because we all don't have enough to worry about already

—

Dedicating this note to honor the memories of Thu Phan...

Woman in wheelchair fatally hit by car remembered for independence

<https://share.google/scqhAHZ5OZyDSQ0oT>

and my dear old friend Sharon Hamner

A Gift of History: The High Cost of No Curb Ramps: Remembering Sharon Hamner

[A Gift of History – The High Cost of No Curb Ramps: Remembering Sharon Hamner](#)

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Executive Summary: It's an astounding fact that of the 230 million vehicles on the road with automatic braking systems, to this day, not a one of them has been trained to brake for wheelchairs. At this point, they are being trained with literally billions of images, not a one of which is a wheelchair... or little people or even people using walkers. It's a story that I (and others, including DREDF) have been following for the past 10 or 15 years.

—

Perhaps any of you know someone in the media or the tech industry who might want to pay some attention to this. And if nothing else, I think it is a good thing for people to have on their radar, as the September 2029 deadline for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) final rule requiring pedestrian-capable AEB (automatic emergency braking) on all new light-duty vehicles approaches. (The current tsunami-dismantling of Federal regulations notwithstanding.) Noting here that those new regulations likewise don't require vehicles to brake for people in wheelchairs.

—

It is not News that all too often people with disabilities are not considered a demographic, and as a consequence are often not at the policy planning table. And as a consequence in this case, they are not at the Tech Policy planning table.

And so am sending this out in honor of / in horror of September being Pedestrian Safety Month. The honor in this case being somewhat gratuitous inasmuch as people in wheelchairs or who use walkers are (still) not pedestrians in the eyes of over 230 million vehicles. As far as automobile automatic braking systems are concerned, people in wheelchairs or people crossing the street using walkers, or even other mobility devices, are not people. This has been the case from Day One of this technology and for the most part hasn't changed a whit.

And speaking of far too long. I will apologize at the outset for all of this. As has been misattributed to various and sundry, "If I had more time, I would've written a shorter letter."

—

The Backstory

Automatic emergency braking (AEB) with pedestrian detection started as luxury vehicle tech in the mid-2000s. Mercedes-Benz introduced autonomous braking in 2006, and Volvo Cars launched dedicated pedestrian detection in 2008. These active safety systems became widely active across mass-market cars during the late 2010s and are now moving toward a mandatory 2029 U.S. standard.

Timeline and Milestones

- **1996:** Mercedes-Benz debuts Brake Assist to help drivers apply full stopping power in emergencies.

- **2006:** The Mercedes-Benz PRE-SAFE Brake introduces autonomous partial braking linked to radar.
- **2008:** Volvo Cars releases City Safety with pedestrian-specific warning and braking features.
- **2013–2016:** Pedestrian detection transitions from optional high-end packages into mainstream redesigned models like the Mercedes-Benz E-Class and popular compact SUVs.
- **2024:** The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) finalizes a rule requiring pedestrian-capable AEB on all new light-duty vehicles by September 2029.

I first started looking into this issue / writing about it in the now defunct Bay Area Wheelchair-Pedestrian

Safety Discussion Group back in 2016 and 2017, following very hard upon the death of Thu Phan in 2016.

And revisited the issue again in 2023, and nothing had changed. At that time, automatic braking systems had not yet been trained to even detect children.

In this case, unfortunately the past is not even prologue, but remains very much the present.

While standard automatic emergency braking (AEB) systems have been systematically upgraded to detect children and cyclists, they are still not mandated or uniformly trained to recognize people in wheelchairs, people using walkers, and apparently even baby strollers.

—

In 2023, I contacted Mobileye (again). I originally been in touch with them in 2016. They were at the time the primary international manufacturer of Pedestrian Detection Auto Brake systems. In the present, Mobileye remains a

primary force in vision-processing software and chip hardware for pedestrian detection and advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS), powering over 230 million vehicles globally with its EyeQ technology, supplying the foundational AI vision-processing chips and software architecture used by the vast portion of global automakers.

Back in early 2016, the bottom line was their system was not taught to recognize wheelchairs – or people using other mobility devices – as pedestrians and would not brake for someone crossing the street in a wheelchair.

In 2016 Mobileye wrote me that:

Pedestrian and Cyclist Detection with Full Auto Brake is designed to assist the driver if there is a risk of a collision with a pedestrian, a cyclist, a vehicle ahead that is at a standstill or one that is moving in the same direction as your vehicle.

The system cannot identify all pedestrians

The Pedestrian and Cyclist Detection with Full Auto Brake system can only identify and detect a pedestrian who is standing upright. This person can be standing still, walking or running.

—

The Fine Print

Mobileye had originally programmed in 10,000 photographic images of the human form into their computer, and if the gadget can see part of the "human form" then the car would brake. Like head and shoulders. So that it is very good with walking pedestrians, bicycles and motorcycles. But wheelchair were not programmed in, so that the car might stop or maybe not, depending on what it could make out of a 'human form'.

This means that the system has to be able to identify a person's head, arms, shoulders, legs, the upper and lower parts of the body and a person's pattern of movement when walking or running.

If parts of the body are not visible to the camera, the system cannot detect the pedestrian.

The following conditions apply:

In order to detect a pedestrian, the system must have a full view of the person's entire body and the person must be at least 32 in.(80 cm) tall.

The system cannot detect a pedestrian carrying a large object.

The camera's capacity to see a pedestrian at dawn or dusk is limited, much as it is for the human eye.

The camera's function is deactivated and will not detect a pedestrian in darkness or in tunnels, even if there is street lighting in the area.

WARNING

Pedestrian and Cyclist Detection with Full Auto Brake is designed to be a supplementary driving aid. It is not, however, intended to replace the driver's attention and judgement. The driver is always responsible for operating the vehicle in a safe manner.

The system cannot detect all pedestrians in all situations, such as in darkness/at night and cannot detect partially hidden pedestrians, people who are less than approx. 32 in. (80 cm) tall, or people wearing clothing that obscures the contours of their bodies.

So the bottom line was that back then, the system was not able to detect wheelchairs.

OK, everybody fasten your seatbelts...

As I learned just last week, that has not changed for their system, or for any of the other pedestrian braking systems currently being used.

While what back in 2016 was 10,000 robot training images has now exploded into literally *billions* of images used to train vehicles on the road today. **Not a one of which includes wheelchairs. Zero.**

The Current Sorry (Solid)State of Technology

As I learned several weeks ago, modern computer vision systems for automotive safety and autonomous driving are trained on hundreds of millions to billions of images and video frames. Major carmakers and autonomy developers collect massive data pools scaling well past 1 billion labeled images and clips to train deep neural networks for pedestrian and obstacle detection.

Training Scale Details

Industry Scale: Leading autonomous driving programs use datasets comprising upwards of 1 billion to 3 billion annotated video frames and images.

For years, the autonomous vehicle (AV) and automatic braking industry has treated wheelchair users as an afterthought, exposing a massive, critical failure in how these "millions / now billions (?!) of images" are collected.

Historically, and even into recent years, standard computer vision datasets have systematically excluded or severely underrepresented mobility aid users.

Some Refs:

Addressing Disability and Ableist Bias in Autonomous Vehicles: Ensuring Safety, Equity and Accessibility in Detection, Collision Algorithms and Data Collection - DREDF

<https://dredf.org/addressing-disability-and-ableist-bias-in-avs/>

A novel image dataset for detecting and classifying mobility aid users - ScienceDirect

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0957417425023152>

—

All of this in spite of the fact of

Demographic Risk Factors for Wheelchair Users

Public health surveillance and specialized research—such as studies led by Georgetown University and public safety researchers—show that wheelchair users face a **36% higher risk** of dying in a vehicle collision compared to the ambulatory pedestrian population. The specific demographic risks include:

- **Gender Vulnerability:** Similar to ambulatory traffic data, men using wheelchairs face a dramatically elevated risk. Over **70% of wheelchair-user fatalities** involve men.
- **Age Aggravation:** Older adults (aged 65 and up) face the highest severity of injuries. Reduced physical resilience combined with slower intersection crossing speeds leaves older wheelchair occupants highly vulnerable to fatal impacts. [1]
- **Socioeconomic and Infrastructure Disparities:** A disproportionate number of wheelchair fatalities occur in low-income neighborhoods. These areas frequently suffer from poor infrastructure, including broken or missing sidewalk ramps, inadequate crosswalk timing, and a lack of complete street layouts.
- **Visibility Constraints:** Because wheelchair occupants sit lower to the ground, they fall underneath the sightlines of modern, high-riding consumer vehicles. GHSA data identifies that SUVs and light pickup trucks strike and kill more than **50% of all non-occupants**, a design factor that severely aggravates the blindspots surrounding wheelchair users.

—
—

For me, this was all brought to the fore several weeks ago when I was in communication with the Berkeley police department public safety officer on a different topic altogether but I happened to send them all of the following information as well. With apologies for any redundancies. At this point, I can no longer separate the ants from the pepper. So in case anyone is interested in going even into still deeper into the weeds, sending all of this along as well.

—
—

I wrote:

I was very surprised to learn five or six years ago that the automatic braking systems on newer cars will only brake for pedestrians, and were not programmed to stop for wheelchairs.

Since writing you, I double checked about that and was astounded to learn that that is still the case. And that only now they are looking into it for future use, but is not available presently.

At first, I got a very complicated answer all of which is pasted in below my signature. However, cutting to the chase, the bottom line is that the current systems are still not trained to identify wheelchairs. Astounding.

Following is the most current information:

“Regarding specific testing benchmarks for non-upright or seated occupants in mobility devices are still emerging in advanced research guidelines rather than universal compliance checklists.”

So I asked, “What exactly does that mean?”

A: That means safety tests haven't fully caught up to real-world diversity yet.

*To put it plainly: **When safety organizations test a car's automatic brakes, they use standard, upright dummy dolls that look like average adults and children walking. They do not universally use dummies in wheelchairs during official compliance testing.***

Because official testing doesn't mandate it, it is not an automatic, industry-wide guarantee. Instead, testing for wheelchairs is still mostly done in private research labs by engineers who are trying to improve the software for the future. [1]

Why this is still an issue

Computer vision systems (the "eyes" of the car) are trained on millions of images [Not a one of which includes wheelchairs!]

A person sitting in a wheelchair has a completely different shape, height, and movement pattern than a walking pedestrian [which those systems are trained to detect] [1]

Here is a quick look at how this breaks down:



Standard Testing (Universal Compliance)	Advanced Research (Emerging Guidelines)
<i>Focuses on standard walking pedestrians.</i>	<i>Focuses on wheelchair users, strollers, and uniquely shaped mobility devices.</i>
<i>Required by law or high-profile safety ratings (like Euro NCAP or IIHS).</i>	<i>Voluntary testing done by manufacturers or research universities.</i>
<i>Uses standard upright dummies.</i>	<i>Uses custom, non-traditional testing props.</i>

Why this is still an issue:

Computer vision systems (the "eyes" of the car) are trained on millions of images. A person sitting in a wheelchair has a completely different shape, height, and movement pattern than a walking pedestrian. [1]

While a modern car's radar and cameras will likely see a wheelchair as a "large generic object" and brake to avoid a collision, the system might not immediately recognize it specifically as a human being. This distinction matters because safety systems prioritize their braking power and response times differently based on whether they think they are approaching a trash can, a metal guardrail, or a person. [1]

Likewise surprising, and those millions of training images not a one includes old people with walkers, and apparently even baby strollers:

Furthermore, global testing bodies (like Euro NCAP and the IIHS) evaluate vehicles using perfectly standard, upright walking articulated mannequins. Because automakers design their technology to score perfectly on these specific tests, edge cases like walkers, crutches, and strollers receive significantly less optimization.

Remarkable

This was the long answer that I got at first, because back when I first asked, Volvo cars were ahead of the rest:

Modern Volvo Cars automatic emergency braking (AEB) systems, alongside other top-tier automotive safety systems, are engineered to recognize general non-pedestrian obstacles, generic shapes, and stationary or moving profiles. However, comprehensive or 100% guaranteed wheelchair-specific pedestrian detection validation remains variable across the auto industry rather than universally certified as a distinct, standalone classification by all manufacturers.[1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Evolution of AEB and Object Recognition

- Early generation systems (such as Volvo's pioneering 2008 City Safety) relied on basic profiles matching standard standing human shapes or vehicles. [1, 2]

- Modern sensor-fusion frameworks combine camera, radar, and sometimes lidar to detect unusual dimensions, low-profile objects, and cross-traffic movements. [1, 2]
- Regulatory frameworks like FMVSS No. 127 mandate robust pedestrian and vehicle detection for light passenger vehicles, but specific testing benchmarks for non-upright or seated occupants in mobility devices are still emerging in advanced research guidelines rather than universal compliance checklists. [1, 2, 3]

Key System Realities

- **Object vs. Pedestrian Classification:** An irregularly shaped object like a person in a wheelchair may trigger the general obstacle-braking algorithm based on mass and radar reflection, even if it is not explicitly classified as an upright walking pedestrian. [1, 2]
- **Varying Performance:** Detection reliability depends heavily on lighting, approach speed, sensor cleanliness, and whether the system's full pedestrian/cyclist package is active. [1, 2]

Google AI Sez, "If you'd like, I can:

- Share details on **upcoming global safety testing protocols** regarding non-traditional road users
- Look into **specific manufacturer safety disclosures** for recent model years

No, they are generally not explicitly trained to recognize standard walkers as a unique, standalone category of pedestrian. [1]

Just like wheelchairs, elderly individuals using rolling walkers, zimmer frames, or cane devices fall into a gray area for computer vision artificial intelligence. [1]

How Systems React to Walkers

- **Shape Distortion:** Pedestrian classification algorithms look for the distinct biometric "cutout" of a human—specifically, two clear swinging legs and an upright, moving torso. A person bent forward over a metallic, four-wheeled walker completely alters that silhouette, making it difficult for a camera-only system to register them specifically as a human. [1]
- **General Object Exception:** While the car might not classify the person as a "pedestrian," modern sensor fusion systems (which mix cameras with radar) will still physically detect a solid, metallic mass moving in the road. The

vehicle's general Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) system will usually trigger to avoid hitting the "unknown obstacle," but it may do so later or less aggressively than if it recognized a walking human. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

The Core Technological Vulnerability

Most automotive camera software uses a form of machine learning called "deep learning classification models." If a dataset contains 10 million images of healthy adults walking but only a few thousand images of senior citizens utilizing mobility aids, the AI will naturally struggle to confidently label the latter.

Furthermore, global testing bodies (like Euro NCAP and the IIHS) evaluate vehicles using perfectly standard, upright walking articulated mannequins. Because automakers design their technology to score perfectly on these specific tests, edge cases like walkers, crutches, and strollers receive significantly less optimization. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

All the best,

Ken Stein

Berkeley

8/21/2026