

MBTA ACCESSIBILITY LAWSUIT UPDATE

Greater Boston Residents Working Together for ADA Compliance by the MBTA
Daniels-Finegold Et Al. v. MBTA
Federal Court: Civil Action No. 02 CV 11504 MEL

Spring 2010
Issue XIX

Introducing Improved Fare Gates

On June 10, 2010 the MBTA unveiled a new and improved Automated Fare Collection (AFC) gate at North Station after two years of research and development. The transit authority is planning to introduce twenty more of the new gates at high traffic stations around the system before eventually implementing the gates system-wide.

Unlike its predecessor, the new AFC gate has two targets for CharlieCards and TAP cards. In addition to the traditional target on the front right section of the entrance, the new gates have a target located on the inside of the gate as well. The new location presents people with limited use of their arms or hands with a much more accessible target.



As a number of media members and MBTA officials looked on, Rob Park (pictured left) from the Boston Center for Independent Living was the first to try out the new gate. The crowd on hand for the introduction ceremony was excited about the new gate and the progress the MBTA has made towards greater system-wide accessibility.



The new AFC gate located at the Valenti Way entrance to North Station

In Case of Emergency MBTA is More Prepared

MBTA General Manager Richard Davey has identified safety as the number one concern for the transit authority and recently the MBTA has taken steps to improve its ability to react to emergency situations on the subway. Thanks to a sizeable Homeland Security Grant, the MBTA has purchased close to 500 new evacuation chairs and twelve motorized carts to assist in emergency evacuations.

The new evacuation chair resembles a manual wheeled mobility device but is much more durable, lightweight, and secure. The chair features four lifting points that enable emergency staff to carry riders up flights of stairs. A tank-like wheel design allows the chair to travel down stairs quickly and safely.

The motorized carts are able to travel along the tracks and transport passengers to exit points along any subway route. The carts were designed in association with the evacuation chairs and can securely fit up to four chairs. The new emergency equipment is a welcome addition to the numerous tools that the MBTA uses to manage emergency situations, but challenges remain. While all station officials are trained to use the new evacuation chairs and motorized carts, there are questions about the training level of lower level employees and members of the local police and fire departments that assist the MBTA in emergency situations.

Minding the Gap

Because the issue of the gap between trains and platforms continues to hamper the accessibility of the subway, the MBTA has introduced a bridgeplate program as a temporary solution to the problem. The bridgeplate is a sturdy platform that spans the gap between the train and the platform and allows riders using wheeled mobility devices and baby strollers to safely and easily board the train. The bridgeplates are available at all Red, Orange, and Blue Line stations. Though the bridgeplates serve as a viable solution to the gap problem, MBTA riders still express concern about the availability of the MBTA employees who

"The MBTA fixed route system is much more accessible than it has ever been."
-Laura Brelsford, MBTA System Wide Accessibility Coordinator

deploy the bridgeplates. The MBTA is also taking steps to implement a long-term solution to the gap problem. The MBTA's Capital Improvement Plan has allocated over ten million dollars to help eliminate excessive gaps along the Orange Line. Eventually the MBTA hopes to eliminate the horizontal gap between the train and the platform by extending the edge of the platform to meet the edge of the train, but for now bridgeplates are the only available solution.

Real Time Updates

In response to continued criticism about delays and service outages, the MBTA has greatly improved its system for keeping customers informed. The MBTA runs a service hotline (1-800-392-6100 or 1-617-222-2828) that provides information regarding delays and outages. The improved MBTA website provides live information about issues ranging from bus and train delays to out of service escalators and elevators.

Riders can also sign up for T-Alerts, a service that informs regular customers about outages or

delays of more than 15 minutes along a given route. Using the MBTA website, riders can sign up to receive T-Alerts on their email, cell phone, pager or Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). In addition, the MBTA offers smartphone applications that provide real-time information about delays or outages.



A bridgeplate deployed on the commuter rail

Barriers to accessing health care?

- Inpatient rooms without accessible bathrooms?
- Not being weighed at doctor's appointments?
- Service dog not allowed in hospital?

Finding problems on the MBTA?

- Gaps between platform and train?
- No staff assistance available at stations?
- Problems boarding buses?

GBLS and BCIL are working together to improve accessibility at health care facilities and the MBTA for individuals with disabilities. To share your experiences, please contact:

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