

Technical Memorandum

To: FILE
From: SDOT ADA Committee
Date: June 18, 2015
Re: SDOT Companion Ramp Requirements

Overview and Purpose

At the present time Washington State Law (RCW 35.38.075), the WSDOT Design Manual, the Seattle Right of Way Improvement Manual (ROWIM), and the Seattle Standard Plans for Municipal Construction require that every curb ramp must have an accompanying companion curb ramp serving the opposite end of the crosswalk unless there is no curb or sidewalk on that side. Recent guidance from WSDOT indicates that existing companion curb ramps are not required to meet the current ADA design standards and must only exist, provided that they are not triggered otherwise by alterations being performed within the scope of a project. It should be noted that there currently are no federal requirements for companion ramps.

Regulations and Standards

1) Revised Code of Washington 35.68.075

- A) (1) The standard for construction on any county road, or city or town street, for which curbs in combination with sidewalks, paths, or other pedestrian access ways are to be constructed, shall not be less than two ramps per lineal block on or near the crosswalks at intersections. 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.
- B) (2) Standards set for curb ramping under subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to any curb existing upon enactment of this section but shall apply to all new curb construction and to all replacement curbs constructed at any point in a block which gives reasonable access to a crosswalk.
- C) (3) Upon September 21, 1977, every ramp thereafter constructed under subsection (1) of this section, which serves one end of a crosswalk, shall be matched by another ramp at the other end of the crosswalk. However, no ramp shall be required at the other end of the crosswalk if there is no curb nor sidewalk at the other end of the crosswalk. Nor shall any matching ramp constructed pursuant to this subsection require a subsequent matching ramp.

2) WSDOT Design Manual

1510.09 Curb Ramps. Every curb ramp must have a curb ramp at the other end of the crosswalk it serves unless there is no curb or sidewalk on that side (RCW 35.68.075).

3) Seattle Right-of-Way Improvements Manual

4.8.2 Curb ramps. Curb ramps are located at intersections and other legal crossings to facilitate wheelchair and pedestrian street crossings. All alteration or new construction projects must follow current ADA requirements. When a new ramp is installed on one side of the street, per State Law (RCW 35.68.075) an ADA compliant companion ramp shall be installed on the opposite side of the street. If project impacts the legal crossing path, curb ramp or the landing then curb ramps must either be retrofitted to comply current ADA requirements, or new ramps must be constructed that meet the current standard. Refer to the PORR for thresholds that require ADA upgrades in the curb return area.

4) **Seattle Standard Plans for Municipal Construction**

Standard Plan No. 422a, Note 3: Curb ramp shall be constructed with a companion ramp on the opposite side of the roadway unless otherwise directed by the engineer.

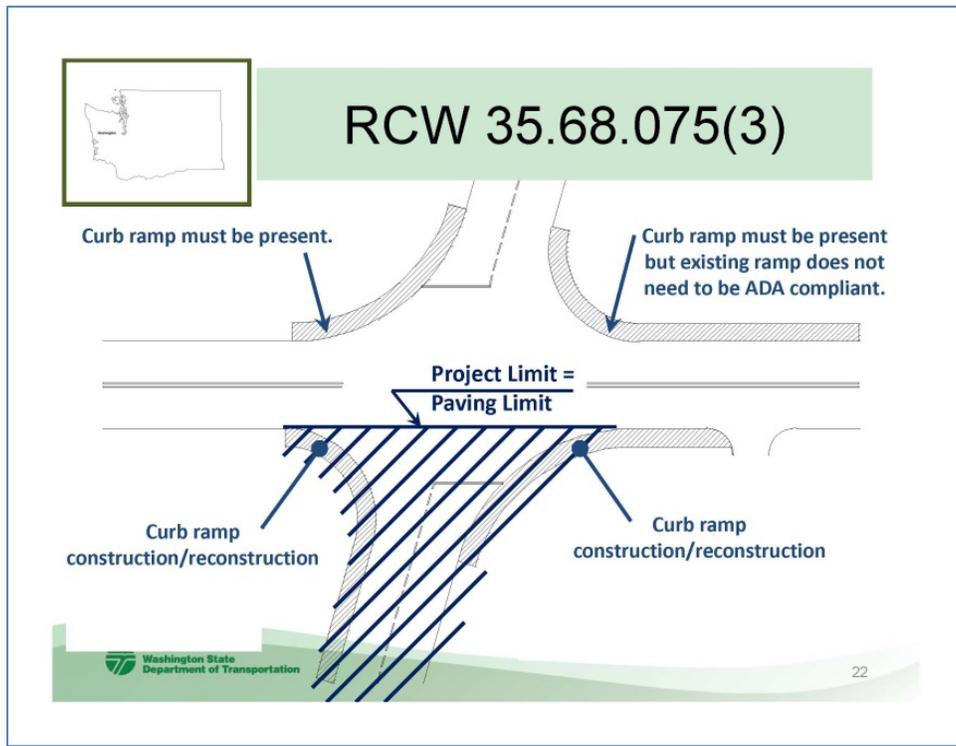
Guidance

**Washington Department of Transportation, Local Technical Assistance Program
ADA – Self Evaluation and Transition Plan for Public Rights-of-Way Training**
Instructor: Akmal Siddiqui, Traffic Services and ADA Specialist, WSDOT
May 20, 2015 in Camas, Washington
Attended by SDOT ADA Coordinator, Mike Shaw

This training session served primarily to educate local agencies meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for transition plans within the public right of way. During the course of the presentation, some items were discussed that pertain specifically to accessibility requirements within the state of Washington.

The instructor explained that existing companion curb ramps, as required by RCW 35.68.075, are not required to comply with the current ADA design standards provided that they are not part of the given scope of work for a project or are not within the project's "construction impact zone." The intent of the law, as explained, is to prevent stranding a wheelchair user in the roadway. If alterations are limited to one corner or curb ramp, and no alterations are planned for the opposing companion ramp and no other alteration(s) trigger the required improvements to the existing companion ramp, the ramp may remain in place even if it does not comply with current ADA design standards. At a minimum there must be a ramp or a cut or opening at the curb to allow for the passage of a wheelchair.

The presentation slides shown below and on the following page illustrate this determination. The slides attached were provided by WSDOT upon request.



RCW 35.68.075(3), Cont'd.

- "Upon September 21, 1977, every ramp thereafter constructed under subsection (1) of this section, which serves one end of a crosswalk, shall be matched by another ramp at the other end of the crosswalk. However, no ramp shall be required at the other end of the crosswalk if there is no curb nor sidewalk at the other end of the crosswalk. Nor shall any matching ramp constructed pursuant to this subsection require a subsequent matching ramp."
- This law intends to prevent stranding a user of a wheelchair out in the road.

RCW 35.68.075(3), Cont'd. How to Implement It

- Curb ramps outside of the project limits do not have to be ADA compliant.
- Suggest cutting away enough of the curbing to allow a wheelchair to pass through and continue on their path of travel along the shoulder.

Proposed Approach for the City of Seattle

The Revised Code of Washington requires that when curb ramps are 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. There is no specified technical criteria provided that establishes the required characteristics of the companion ramp, other than 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" per RCW 35.68.075(1).

This language, coupled with guidance obtained at a training provided by the Washington Department of Transportation, suggests that **existing** companion ramps are not required to meet the current ADA design standards and that they may remain in place if not part of the scope of work for a given project, and are reasonably accessible or do not endanger blind persons. It must be verified that an existing companion ramp will allow for a wheelchair user to exit the roadway, even if it is not a fully ADA compliant ramp. If any alterations occur within the legal crossing or any portion of the companion ramp, as prescribed by the City of Seattle Pavement and Sidewalk Opening and Restoration Rule, it must be verified to comply with current ADA Standards or it must be removed and replaced.

Engineering judgment should be applied when assessing existing companion curb ramps. If an existing companion ramp is not wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair (36" minimum) or if the ramp has characteristics that may be deemed unsafe or impassable for a wheelchair user or other mobility assistive device, the curb ramp should be removed and replaced to comply with current ADA Standards.