



Commission on Disabilities  
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes  
September 1, 2021

This Commission on Disabilities meeting was held by electronic means due to the COVID-19 Emergency.

**Commissioners:**

Roberta Cich - P  
Laurie Berner - P  
Amanda Crosby - P  
Ashlie Castaldo - A  
Tom Furman - A  
Heath Maki - A  
Dianne Naus - P  
Samantha Smingler – A  
Allison Fochs - P

**Also present:** Carl Crawford, Mark Bauer, Laura Laaksonen.

President Cich called the September 1, 2021 Commission on Disabilities to order at 3:05 pm. There was not a quorum at the beginning of the meeting. The agenda has been amended to move presentations before approval of agenda and July meeting minutes. There were no August minutes as we did not have quorum.

**Approval of current agenda:** MS/C – (Fochs, Crosby)

**Approval of May minutes:** MS/C – (Berner/Naus)

**Public Comment/Information:** No public comment.

**Presentations:**

Rod Fournier and Aleda Johnson joined us from the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) to revisit the commission and provide us with recent updates. The DTA is taking a new look at Paratransit services and how the DTA is incorporating the ADA overall including their fixed route services. They have re-vamped their Accessibility Advisory Committee and are looking for new members to join so they can have a diverse commission that represents the system as a whole. This Accessibility Advisory Committee was formerly known as the STRIDE Advisory Committee. Members rolled over to the new committee and they have had two new members join already,

including a representative in Superior, WI. You can contact Aleda directly, sign up on Facebook or sign up on line through the DTA's Better Bus Blueprint.

<https://www.duluthtransit.com/home/better-dta/better-bus-blueprint/>

President Cich noted that the Facebook application was noted to be a bit glitchy. Commissioner Fochs is interested in learning more about the committee and had questions about Duluth's districts. President Cich will follow up with outlining the districts and Aleda encouraged us to email if we have questions and she can help identify in which district you live/represent and if there is a seat available. Current membership is 6 and the committee can have up to 11 members. Meetings are quarterly with special meetings as necessary.

Carl Crawford asked about the DTA's snow emergency policy. Paratransit (STRIDE) mimics fixed routes and will be available as long as the fixed routes are running. Rod noted that they do the best they can to get everyone who needs a ride to a safe place during snow and weather emergencies.

Cindy Voight, Duluth's City Engineer joined us to provide an overview of the street and sidewalk projects completed in 2021 and plans for 2022/2023 improvements. 2022 Project maps were shared with the commission members prior to the meeting for review. The city has \$100,000 dollars set aside for sidewalks and \$7 million budgeted for streets, including accessible curb cuts and ramps, annually. Commissioner Crosby questioned how far \$100,000 will go annually. Cindy was able to answer that it will give about 1800 linear feet or about 8,000 square feet, which is not a lot and that is why it is important for the commission to help the city prioritize areas in need of repair. City engineering focuses on high traffic areas for example schools or public buildings. The \$7 million in street projects also spends quickly.

Commissioner Fochs questioned who we should call if we notice a dangerous or inaccessible project need. Cindy said we could call her directly at 218-730-5071 or you can submit your request online <https://duluthmn.gov/public-works-utilities/departments/divisions/street-maintenance/roads/>

### **Accessible Parking Update:**

The Parking Commission has not yet met since the last Commission on Disabilities meeting. Despite not being able to meet due to quorum issues Officer Bauer has requested installation of all outstanding requests. He will bring to the commission for approval this coming Friday, 9/3. Officer Bauer will have the accessible signs removed if not approved. Commissioner Crosby inquired if this included the property on Skyline Parkway's emergency snow removal route? Officer Bauer confirmed yes, this has been installed and he will be working with the home owner as well as public works to ensure safety. President Cich asked if the individual would need to move the vehicle when it snows. Carl Crawford responded that he will not need to move the vehicle but they won't know how this will work until the winter season. The city will work with homeowners individually in these cases to review procedures and work out any kinks.

### **Parks and Rec Report:**

Commissioner Crosby updated the commission on the plans for the Seawall/Baywalk/DECC Waterfront project. There are significant changes planned for this space and it important that we review and bring any accessibility concerns or ideas forward. There were 2 public meetings in August. Those meetings and more about the project, including visuals can be found here <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the->

[park/seawallbaywalkdecc-waterfront-plan/](#) Commissioner Crosby is looking for feedback prior to the October 13, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

**Old Business:**

Racial Bias Audit- Commissioner Castaldo was not present at today's meeting. We will receive an update from her on this process at a later date.

Skywalk Doors- Carl Crawford has suggested we take this off of the agenda moving forward. At this time there is not access to the entire Skywalk System and makes it hard to complete an accessibility audit without full access.

August Planning Retreat- The commission met to review upcoming commission goals. This conversation has been tabled until a future meeting when more commission members are present.

**New Business:** The commission had a brief discussion on Vacation Rentals in the city of Duluth, namely VRBO and AirB&B. This has come across city Council as well as Adam Fulton in City Planning. Carl Crawford noted that this discussion of accessibility in vacation rentals is in its infancy but there are steps being taken to address the issue. At this time, we are monitoring other cities similar to Duluth and the city is looking to hold an upcoming hearing with the public. The commission will determine if this is something we will add to our project list and goals or if it is best to keep with city council and city planning.

**Current Disability Issues:** None

**Other Business/Announcements:**

Commissioner Crosby announced and Accessible Birding event Friday 9/10/21 at WI Point held by Friends of the Lake Superior Reserve. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wisconsin-point-fall-birding-orientation-with-adaptive-features-registration-168369899903>

Commissioner Berner announced that Arc Northland will be postponing their 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration until March of 2022 due to the increased risks of the Delta Variant.

**Correspondence/Public Comment:**

None

**Adjourn:** MS/C (Berner/Fochs)

Next meeting is October 6, 2021 3:00 PM  
Location to be determined.