

New Regulation Makes More Train Stations Accessible to People with Disabilities; Many Still Left Out

WASHINGTON – National Disability Rights Network Executive Director Curt Decker expressed encouragement over a new rule issued by the Department of Transportation (DOT) requiring train station platforms be made more accessible to people with disabilities.

“We have pressed both the Department of Transportation and Amtrak to address this issue for a long time,” said Decker. “While this new rule shows progress is being made, there is still much left to do to ensure people with disabilities have full and equal access to our nation’s railways.

“A major problem we have with this rule is that it only applies to stations that do not share tracks with freight rail. Since many passenger trains share tracks with freight, a large number of stations will be exempted from the rule and people who use wheelchairs or cannot climb stairs will have to use less convenient means to board trains compared with when platforms are level with the trains.”

The new rule is part of the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations issued by the DOT and calls for new platform construction or significant renovation to include level-entry boarding of passenger trains. Passenger rail stations that share tracks with freight rail and are therefore exempt from the new rule must offer alternative boarding methods such as lifts or platform extensions.

NDRN has testified at hearings, provided comments on the DOT’s proposed rules, and led negotiations with Amtrak along with our partners at the United Spinal Association, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Easter Seals, Paralyzed Veterans of America, ARC, and the American Association of People with Disabilities.

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The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) is the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems and the Client Assistance Programs (CAP) for individuals with disabilities. Collectively, the Network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States. Go to NDRN website at: www.ndrn.org/.