

# AccessibleNYC

An Annual Report on the State of People  
with Disabilities Living in New York City  
2017 Edition

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- FLAT FARE TO JFK

The City of New York  
Mayor Bill de Blasio

Richard R. Buery Jr.  
Deputy Mayor for  
Strategic Policy Initiatives

Victor Calise, Commissioner  
Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities



# AccessibleNYC

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## LETTER FROM MAYOR DE BLASIO

Dear Friends,

My administration came into office committed to the principle that to be a great city New York City must be open to everyone. That is why I am so proud that last year we published the first-ever report on the daily lives of New Yorkers with disabilities and what we can do to make our city more accessible. This is the second annual edition of this report.

Creating a better and fairer New York for people with disabilities is an urgent mission for me. This report is an important part of that process. To address the problems we face, we have to be straightforward about where the challenges are, and then devote ourselves to developing solutions. This report helps us to refine our commitment to people with disabilities: connecting more New Yorkers with disabilities to jobs; making sure people with disabilities have accessible and affordable housing; and much more.

We are far from done in our work here and all across the nation. But I hope this report will be another step to an even more inclusive New York City and I want New Yorkers to know this administration will not rest until everyone has the access they deserve, the opportunity they deserve and the rights they deserve. That is our commitment.

Bill de Blasio



Mayor, City of New York

## LETTER FROM DEPUTY MAYOR RICHARD BUERY

Greetings,

The de Blasio Administration is committed to helping all New Yorkers lead happy, healthy and productive lives. That commitment to helping applies to everyone who calls New York City home, regardless of age, race income, and importantly, regardless of ability.

For over 40 years, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), has worked to ensure that New Yorkers with disabilities can fully participate in and enjoy all that City life has to offer.

Since its founding in 1973, the office has kept pace with the evolution of the disability-rights movement. But the time has come to accelerate change.

In July 2016, the de Blasio Administration issued the inaugural edition of AccessibleNYC , the first-ever annual report on the status of improving accessibility through the initiatives, programs and services of New York City agencies. The report focused on areas that have persistently challenged people with disabilities: transportation, employment, education, housing, and access to facilities and programs throughout the five boroughs.

The 2017 edition of AccessibleNYC builds upon the ambitious and innovative ideas presented last year. Most notably, it includes the launch of NYC: AT WORK – a public-private partnership to bring more well-paid, career-track jobs to New Yorkers with disabilities – and the release of the second edition of the Inclusive Design Guidelines – an update to the 2010 manual to help architects construct disability-friendly City spaces.

I am so proud of the hard work that has cumulated in this year's edition of AccessibleNYC. When the City becomes fairer and more inclusive, we all benefit.

Sincerely,  
Richard R. Buery, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives

# LETTER FROM COMMISSIONER VICTOR CALISE

To All New Yorkers,

Last year I was extremely pleased to issue the first AccessibleNYC report as it was an unprecedented undertaking: never in the history of NYC government have so many City agencies worked together on a comprehensive report to advance the interests of New Yorkers with disabilities.

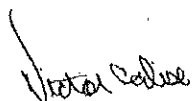
As Commissioner, it is my job to help the nearly 1 million people who self-identify as living with one or more disabilities participate fully in everything our City has to offer. We have made great strides ensuring that people with disabilities can enjoy the opportunities and services available to other New Yorkers including launching of NYC: At Work program, publishing the second edition of the Inclusive Design Guidelines, adopting legislation that will improve accommodations for individuals who are hard of hearing, and creating numerous informational materials.

The staff and I at the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities strive every day to ensure we fulfill the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by improving and creating access throughout the City. AccessibleNYC will help to ensure that this progress continues by reporting on an annual basis on the state of persons with disabilities living in our City.

One challenge we will have in the year to come is addressing the effects of the decreased federal spending on programs that serve people with disabilities.

I would like to again thank the staff at the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, the staff of the various City offices and agencies we work with, and the disability advocates who are coming together in this effort.

Thank you,



Victor Calise, Commissioner, Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities

# **Executive Summary & Introduction**



There are almost 1 million New Yorkers who have disclosed living with a disability, or roughly 11.2% of the city's population.<sup>1</sup>



In addition, by applying the 11.2 % to the 60.7 million people who visited New York City in 2016, we estimate that approximately 6.8 million visitors to our city each year have a disability.

In July 2016, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) issued the inaugural edition of AccessibleNYC an annual report on the lives of people with disabilities in the city. This is the second edition of the report. The 2017 edition of AccessibleNYC is organized into six sections: Transportation, Employment, Access, Education, Housing and Health. Many City agencies have contributed to the report including, the Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City Emergency Management, and the Human Resources Administration.

As a result of the City's work throughout the past year, more New Yorkers have traveled on accessible modes of transportation, hired

<sup>1</sup> The 2014 American Community Survey

people with disabilities, received disability awareness training, used accessible technology, participated in programs that are accessible, and frequented businesses and cultural entities that are accessible.

During the past year, we have made great strides toward our goal of making New York City the most accessible city in the world.

Our City is committed to equity and inclusion for our fellow New Yorkers with disabilities. The research in this report demonstrates that a strong framework of support for persons with disabilities now exists in New York City. These efforts will benefit not only people with disabilities, but all New Yorkers.

This report is comprised of 6 sections:

## **Transportation**

This section analyzes the strategic ways to invest in our infrastructure to make the City more accessible to people with disabilities.

Key topic areas discussed:

- Access-A-Ride (AAR)
- Vision Zero
- Pedestrian ramps
- The Wayfinding pilot project
- Tactile Guideway Demonstration Project
- Call for Innovation Blind and Low Vision Mobility Solution Initiative
- The Connected Vehicles Technology Pilot project
- Subway accessibility
- Taxis
- Commuter ferry service
- Brooklyn-Queens Connector (BQX)

## **Employment**

This section examines how we can expand opportunity for people with disabilities by working with businesses and government agencies while increasing access to skills and jobs.

Key topic areas discussed:

- NYC: AT WORK
- Business Development Council
- Internships to career pathways
- 55-A Positions
- Disability-focused workforce development

## **Housing**

This section provides a review of initiatives taken to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to gain accessible housing, increase accessibility to their current housing, increase availability of resources used to obtain housing, and ensure more housing opportunities are being created.

Key topic areas discussed:

- Housing lottery rules
- Housing Connect
- Disability Housing Coalition
- Homelessness
- Rent freeze
- Disabled homeowners' exemption
- Affordable and accessible housing
- Project Open House

## **Health**

This section provides a review of the health programs, services, policies and initiatives for New Yorkers with disabilities.

Key topic areas discussed:

- Access to healthcare
- Parks and public health
- NYC WELL

## **Access**

This section provides a review of the programs, services, policies and initiatives that increase access for persons with disabilities to their neighborhoods as well as throughout the five boroughs.

Key issues discussed:

- Disability Service Facilitators
- Hearing access
- Text-to-911
- Small Business Services
- One Step Campaign
- Inclusive Design Guidelines
- Inclusive Recreation, New York City
- Construction signage
- Arts & culture
- Restaurant Access Program
- Ticketed event spaces and venues
- Human Resources Administration
- Tourism
- Emergency planning and preparedness

## **Education**

This section provides a review of the process by which collaborative partnerships with other levels of government, academic institutions, and the private sector support people with disabilities, as well as efforts to educate others to better communicate and interact with people with disabilities.

Key topic areas discussed:

- DOE Transition and College Access Centers
- DOE building accessibility
- Creating awareness: starting with city government
- Civic engagement
- Accessible meeting notice guide
- Web accessibility
- Accessible parking campaign
- Disability Pride Parade
- AccessibleNYC

# Transportation

New York City is the world's busiest and most dynamic city. Residents and tourists alike rely on the streets to be safe and on public transportation to get them where they need to go. Of the nearly 1 in 8 New Yorkers who have self-identified as living with disabilities, about 10% are estimated to use wheelchairs.<sup>2</sup>

Through the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of City Planning (DCP), and collaboration from other agencies working with MOPD, the City has made a concerted effort to ensure that all New Yorkers, including the more than 5.5 million people who use public transportation each day, are able to navigate the City.

## Access-A-Ride

Access-A-Ride (AAR) provides transportation for people whose disability prevents their use of accessible mass transit, public bus, or subway service for some or all of their trips. AAR is the largest paratransit service in the world, scheduling an average of 27,367 rides per weekday with a total of 6,395,430 trips during 2016. There has been an increase of nearly 6 million trips since 1994, the year the service was transferred from New York City to the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA).

Total Registrants	147,847
Registrants who use wheelchairs	14.4%
Registrants over 65 years old	70%
Accessible Vehicle Trips	46%
Non-Accessible Vehicle Trips	54%

The average cost per ride is currently \$57.42.

Average Trip Cost	\$57.42
Carriers	\$68.71*
Brokers	\$29.51
Taxi	\$16.74

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/selected-characteristics-disabled-population.pdf>

\*Does not include fuel, liability insurance and vehicles

AAR is looking at various means to improve customer service and decrease costs. These include Automatic Vehicle Location Monitoring (AVLM) enhancements that will provide more accurate estimated arrival times, on-board traffic advisories and rerouting capabilities. AAR will be implementing new scheduling and dispatch technology that will provide shorter ride times and better on-time performance as well as providing real-time dispatch capability to deal with same day service issues.

Across the City, multiple streets and intersections have been identified as busy locations, where customers and vehicle operators consistently missed each other. AAR established designated pickup locations to mitigate this persistent issue and ensure that riders can board their vehicle at one central location. A list of all designated locations throughout the five boroughs is available on the MTA's website..

## **Vision Zero**

Increasing accessibility for all New Yorkers is a key element of the de Blasio administration's Vision Zero plan, which was launched in 2014 with the overarching goal of reducing preventable traffic injuries and fatalities. When the Department of Transportation simplifies a complex intersection, discourages speeding, shortens crossing distances, and encourages safer driving by means of reduced speed limits, the streets become safer and more accessible for all pedestrians, including New Yorkers with disabilities.



Through the Vision Zero campaign, DOT has released Cycle Eyes, a media campaign alerting cyclists of pedestrians with low vision or who are blind and might not see the cyclists on the streets. Cycle Eyes reminds cyclists to watch for pedestrians with guide dogs and long white canes, wait for pedestrians with vision disabilities to clear a sidewalk, and warn pedestrians of their presence by ringing their bells. Additional information is available on the DOT's website.

Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) assist people who are blind in navigating the city streets. MOPD works closely with the DOT and those

who are blind and have low-vision, along with organizations such as Pedestrians for Accessible and Safe Streets (PASS), to identify intersections that present a crossing difficulty for persons with vision disabilities. APS, are installed according to a priority list created by the DOT in conjunction with PASS. In addition, DOT will install APSs at all new traffic signal pole installations, which will nearly double the number of APSs installed annually. A list of APS locations is available on the DOT's website.

Other components of Vision Zero that impact people with disabilities are the increased use of Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI) and Exclusive Pedestrian Intervals (EPI). LPs give pedestrians a walk sign before showing a green light to car traffic, and EPIs give pedestrians time to cross the street while vehicle traffic is stopped in all directions, allowing pedestrians a chance to begin crossing the street before cars make turns across the crosswalk to provide a safer crossing for all. A list of locations for LPs and a list of locations for EPIs are available on the DOT's website.

## **Pedestrian Ramps**

Pedestrian ramps help people with disabilities more easily travel on City streets by allowing wheelchair users, as well as people pushing strollers, carts, and other wheeled objects, to more easily access a building. The City is committed to investing a minimum of \$660 million through FY27 to upgrade pedestrian ramps throughout the City. Additionally, DOT is funded with over \$220 million over the same period to install pedestrian ramps where they do not currently exist.

## **Wayfinding Pilot**

For people with disabilities, using a path or route between an origin and a destination – known as wayfinding – helps to orient oneself in a physical space and navigate from place to place. DOT and MOPD have worked together to create pilot projects using beacons, low-cost pieces of hardware that use the Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE or Blue Smart) technology, to transmit messages or prompts directly to mobile devices as a way to improve wayfinding for people who are blind or have low vision. The pilot is funded by the Federal Transit Administration and is being implemented at Whitehall Ferry Terminal, Madison Square Plaza, and Madison Square Park. Beacons at Madison Square Park, for example, identify entrances to the park, public transportation stops,



visual landmarks, concessions, sitting/rest areas, and crosswalks. The pilot is planned to run for 3 years and its findings will be assessed with the possibility for future work being done in this field of study.

## **Tactile Guideway Demonstration Project**

The NYC DOT Mobility Management Program is working to improve access and mobility for people with vision and other disabilities. DOT installed different types of tactile guideways at its Safety City learning facility in Washington Heights and invited participants with visual disabilities to evaluate the tactile indicators (cane-detectable directional markings embedded on sidewalk concrete). Participants' feedback will help DOT determine which type of directional tactile guideway or indicator is the most efficient in helping people navigate public spaces.

## **Call for Innovation Blind and Low Vision Mobility Solution Initiative**

DOT is working with the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation to invite proposals from a wide variety of domestic and international vendors to develop a wearable technology, smartphone application, or other technology solution to provide wayfinding assistance to New Yorkers with vision loss. The main objective is to develop a solution that will indicate the user's geographic location with increased precision, inform the user when the walk signal is illuminated, and warn the user of any obstacles they may encounter along their route. Solution providers are encouraged to consider creative ways to use personal devices, location-aware technologies, and data sources ranging from NYC Open Data to signal timings. Solutions should aim to make street navigation accessible and safe for pedestrians who are blind and or have low vision. The request for proposals will be released in 2018.

## **Connected Vehicle Technology Pilot**

Connected vehicle technology enables vital transportation information from vehicles, roads and other infrastructure to be communicated through our smartphones. The communication flow is based primarily on a networking technology known as dedicated short-range communications (DSRC), which is similar to Wi-Fi. New York City is one

of three American cities piloting connected vehicle technology. As part of this pilot, DOT is also including a pedestrian application to alert motorists if there are vulnerable road users and also communicate crossing information to pedestrians who are blind or have low vision.

## **Subway Accessibility**

Out of New York's 493 subway stations (including those on Staten Island), there are currently 85 key stations that are fully ADA accessible, including to people with mobility disabilities. Key stations are stations that were chosen by the MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) to be prioritized for ADA upgrades based on ridership level, transfer between lines, transfer between different modes of travel, proximity to city centers, and whether it was a station at the end of the line. The ADA governs the following elements that provide accessibility for wheelchair users in MTA NYCT's transportation facilities: elevators or ramps, handrails on ramps and stairs, accessible station booth windows, accessible MetroCard® Vending Machines, accessible service entry gates at subway stations, platform-edge warning strips, platform gap modifications to reduce or eliminate the gap between trains and platforms, telephones at an accessible height with volume control, text telephones (TTYs), and accessible restrooms at stations with public restrooms. The number of accessible key stations will reach 100 by 2020, through a combination of Federal, State, City and other funding. In addition to these key stations, 31 non-key stations are accessible (six of which are accessible in just one direction). Three new accessible stations on the Q line (96th, 86th, and 72nd Streets) opened on January 1, 2017 due to the completion of Phase I of the Second Avenue Subway. For a list of the accessible stations, visit <http://www.mta.info> or see appendix.

Many of the accessible stations use elevators. You can verify an elevator's status by visiting the MTA website, at <http://advisory.mtanyct.info/EEoutage/>. The best way to stay informed about elevator status is to sign up for E-Alerts; the E-Alerts system is linked to MTA's maintenance desk, and is updated in real time. To subscribe to receive e-mail E-Alerts about elevator and escalator changes visit <http://advisory.mtanyct.info/EEoutage/Signup.aspx>.

In order to explore ways to increase access to existing subway stations, MOPD is working with the DCP to identify certain new residential and commercial development projects that have subway stations within the

project area, and to explore potential incentives for the developer to create accessibility that developers may choose as part of the project.

For example, developers in Midtown East who wish to obtain additional square footage in their buildings have been offered incentives including adding elevators at the Bryant Park station from the mezzanine to the platform, adding elevators at the 59th & Lexington Avenue station or the 5th Avenue and 53rd Street station. As part of the One Vanderbilt project, on the corner of 42nd Street and Vanderbilt Avenue in midtown Manhattan, access improvements are being made to Grand Central Station, including making the 42nd Street Shuttle fully accessible.

Also, transit improvements are included in large planning projects such as the Mayor's Brownsville Plan<sup>3</sup> that includes installation of a new elevator to ensure ADA accessibility to the Livonia Avenue L train station and Junius Street 3 train station.

## **Taxis**

Using public transportation can be a difficult and time-consuming process for people with disabilities, especially for those living in the outer boroughs. The City, through the Taxi Limousine Commission (TLC), has increased the number of accessible vehicles for people with mobility, vision, and hearing disabilities. Currently there are 2,087 taxis with induction loop systems: devices that transmit sound directly to hearing aids equipped with a T-coil or to cochlear implants. There are approximately 1,708 wheelchair accessible yellow taxis (scheduled to reach 7,000, or 50 percent of the fleet by 2020) and 731 wheelchair accessible green taxis (ultimately scheduled to meet the goal of 50 percent wheelchair accessibility as early as 2024).

To further the overall goal of ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to the City's Yellow and Green Boro Taxis and for-hire vehicles (FHV), the City is in the process of expanding the existing dispatch services so wheelchair users in all five boroughs will be able to have an accessible Yellow Taxi or Boro Taxi dispatched on-demand or by advanced reservation. This service is especially important for people with disabilities in the outer boroughs, whether they are wheelchair users or not, because of the difficulty of hailing taxis in many residential areas outside of Manhattan.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/community/brownsville.page>

Increasing access to the TLC's fleet of over 110,000 licensed vehicles is an important step to make New York City a place that is truly accessible to all of our residents and visitors, including those who use wheelchairs. While accessible green and yellow taxis are being added into the City's fleet over time, few for-hire sector vehicles (black cars, car services and luxury limousines) are accessible although they currently transports at least 400,000 passengers each day. The TLC has issued a proposal for accessible service that would put wheelchair accessible for-hire vehicles (FHV's) in circulation and available for the passengers who need them. Specifically the TLC is proposing all FHV bases to dispatch 25% of their trips (phased in over four years) in wheelchair accessible vehicles. The key to real accessible service is vehicle availability. Licensing accessible vehicles alone does not achieve this goal. Generally, vehicles are available for service when they are in circulation. That is, they are steadily getting dispatches from a base and between trips remain "at the ready." That is true for standard vehicles, and it is equally true for accessible vehicles. If, as proposed, each base is required to dispatch a certain percentage of its trips to vehicles that are wheelchair accessible, then these vehicles will be on the road and available to pick up passengers who use wheelchairs who today are unable to get reliable for hire service. Hearings regarding the proposal are slated to being in fall of 2017.

## **Commuter Ferry Service**

On May 1, 2017 accessible commuter ferry service began with a Rockaway route connecting the East Brooklyn Barrier Island with Wall Street Pier 11. The South Brooklyn route was added on June 1, 2017 with ferries running between Bay Ridge and Wall Street with stops at the Army Terminal in Sunset Park, Red Hook, Atlantic Avenue, and DUMBO. The Astoria route will begin in August 2017. The cost of a ride is the same as a subway ride – currently \$2.75.

MOPD along with the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) held community outreach meeting to discuss access features on the ferry vessels and landings. Accessible features include recurring audio and visual announcements, accessible gangways, accessible toilet facilities on ferry vessels, and accessible ticket machines.

In 2018, routes will be added to the Lower East Side and Soundview.

## **Brooklyn-Queens Connector (BQX)**

MOPD hosted a meeting with representatives from community groups including the Brooklyn Center for Independence (BCID), Center For Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY), Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), Lighthouse Guild, and Extreme Kids and Crew to discuss the Brooklyn-Queens Connector streetcar project that has the potential to connect over 400,000 residents to major job hubs from Sunset Park to Astoria. The overall project was discussed with a focus on accessibility of the cars and car segments, stations, integration with pedestrians and Vision Zero, wayfinding, color contrast, Induction Loop System in cars, redundant audio and visual announcements, and training of personnel.

# Employment

The City is committed to improving access to good jobs and increasing the number of people with disabilities who are employed. We do this by ensuring that the administration hires people with disabilities; enforcing existing laws designed to protect the rights of employees with disabilities; providing technical assistance and information on reasonable accommodations to employers and removing barriers to employment.

## **NYC: AT WORK**

NYC: AT WORK is the first public-private partnership to increase employment for New Yorkers with disabilities, one of the city's largest untapped talent pools. This is a multifaceted approach to building a sustainable pipeline of qualified talent for meaningful, living wage, high-growth industry jobs across New York City.

NYC: ATWORK was officially announced in April of 2017 and is funded by grants from the Poses Family Foundation (PFF), Kessler Foundation, Institute for Career Development, and New York State Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR). The program will be grant-funded for 3 years before becoming embedded at the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS).

NYC: ATWORK connects talent to business by providing access to employment for a minimum of 700 people with disabilities who are unemployed or underemployed. Over a 3-year period, NYC: ATWORK will serve New Yorkers with disabilities including students and youth, college graduates, consumers of ACCES-VR and other state-funded vocational rehabilitation agencies. To accomplish its goal, MOPD will continue its work to build and manage two coalitions.

As a business-driven initiative, NYC: ATWORK focuses on the supply side by building a "Talent Coalition" of provider organizations serving New Yorkers with disabilities. It works with high schools, public and private colleges, workforce development agencies, ACCES-VR provider agencies, and community-based organizations. On the demand side, NYC: ATWORK is building the "Business Coalition", expanding business engagement, and collaborating with the Workforce Development Board and SBS Workforce1 Career Centers to increase opportunities to jobs in a variety of sectors.

During the past year, MOPD provided career exploration programs for over 220 people.

## **The Business Development Council**

MOPD has established the City's first-ever Business Development Council (BDC) to address the historically low and stagnant number of people with disabilities in the workforce. Originally a 9-person advisory team, the council has grown into 60-plus members with representation from a variety of high-growth sectors: finance and business services, hospitality and related services, transportation, retail, technology and city government. MOPD expanded our BDC outreach to include career connection sessions for CUNY and the numerous private colleges within the city.

## **Internships to Career Pathways**

Through NYC: ATWORK, MOPD is working with employers on initiatives designed to increase opportunities for workers with disabilities. Examples of these collaborations include the Financial Services Abilities Roundtable, a coalition of Human Resources professionals in the financial services sector. The roundtable addresses the need for improvement at City and private colleges in recruitment of students with disabilities, and targets the lack of coordination between career development and student services staff with the financial services recruitment professionals. In addition it held career exploration events providing professional advice on resume-building, interviewing and social media. This collaborative approach will provide career connections for student internships and summer employment in 2018 and will also serve as the model for other sectors to collaborate.

Among similar recruitment initiatives are the Reaching Blue Heights Initiative, a project of JetBlue focusing on career exploration for college students. CVS has also created a streamlined mock training store and works with several community-based organizations to train and place successful graduates in internships and jobs. CVS built a state-of-the-art training store at the Brooklyn Transitional High School and has sparked interest for others in the retail sector to create similar opportunities. Healthcare providers have begun working with non-profits that provide training in administrative and support services to develop models where people with disabilities are considered for employment after training and vocational preparation.



Finally, UNIQLO and Homer Logistics are working with MOPD and ACCES-VR to create summer internships in administration, e-commerce, social media and logistics.

## **55-a Positions**

New York State Civil Service Law Section 55-a authorizes the City's Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to identify a maximum of 700 positions with duties that can be performed by "physically or mentally disabled persons" who are qualified to perform such duties.<sup>4</sup> These positions are classified as "non-competitive. People who have been certified by ACCES-VR or the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) as disabled and qualified to perform the duties of the position may then be appointed. Appointments are made without the requirement that the appointee take a civil service examination for the position. There are currently 435 employees designated as 55-a working throughout City government.

MOPD and DCAS have worked together over the past year to further encourage City agencies to utilize the 55-a Program to hire qualified persons with disabilities who may have experienced barriers to City employment, and provided guidance to make it easier for agencies to fill these open positions.

## **Disability-Focused Workforce Development**

The Mayor's Office for Workforce Development is working to advance the Mayor's agenda of increasing the supply of well-paying jobs, and helping New Yorkers to acquire the skills to obtain them. MOPD will work with the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development and SBS to help ensure that curriculum and technology will be accessible from the start, providing a level playing field for people with disabilities to receive the training they need for middle-skill jobs.

SBS Workforce1 centers prepare and connect qualified candidates to job opportunities in New York City. MOPD is working with SBS and the City's Workforce1 system to create services for people with disabilities to find,

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<sup>4</sup> NY State Civil Service Law 55-A

sustain, and achieve greater success in employment. Strategies will include providing technical assistance and trainings to ensure a more efficient system for employment of New Yorkers with disabilities. The goal is to create an equitable situation in which people with disabilities are employed at the same rate as those without disabilities within high-growth job sectors.

Sustainability is crucial for this initiative. MOPD and SBS have formed a partnership that will allow for a smooth transition of NYC: ATWORK from MOPD into the existing integrated workforce system of SBS to ensure its continued existence after the grant cycle is completed.

# Housing

Throughout the past year, the City has worked hard to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to gain accessible housing. We have done this by developing additional units, establishing new rules to obtain existing accessible units, and creating connections that will create more opportunities for an expanded supply of accessible housing in the future.

## **Housing Lottery Rules**

Many New Yorkers with disabilities live in low-income households, thus their credit scores are often lower than others seeking the same units. In October 2016, the Mayor announced revised Housing Lottery Rules ending developers' and leasing agents' ability to deny applications based solely on credit scores.

## **Housing Connect**

Often people with disabilities receive various subsidies toward their housing rent. Thus, MOPD worked with the NYC Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to ensure that the subsidies that are specific to individuals with disabilities, including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waivers and Individual Supports and Services (ISS), were added to the Housing Connect application.

MOPD and HPD created a guide explaining the affordable housing application process, which is being distributed at various events throughout the city and is posted on the HPD website. Also, a guide for managers and management companies is being created to explain the interview process and accommodations that may need to be provided during an affordable housing interview.

## **Disability Housing Coalition**

MOPD created a Disability Housing Coalition comprised of City agencies, service providers, and advocates to identify the barriers to finding affordable, accessible housing and collaborate on ways to improve the application and transition process into all types of housing. To further these goals, the following Committees have been formed:

- Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Community - to improve existing housing models and explore new models for adults and children with developmental disabilities
- Wheelchair Accessible Housing - to create a list of accessible residential buildings in NYC
- Real-Estate Community - to educate real-estate professionals on the disability community and motivate them to include accessibility info in listings
- Public Outreach - to share success stories with the public about people with disabilities finding housing.
- Government Agencies - to share information on initiatives from each agency, collaborate, and act as a point of contact for other DHC members who need help

Throughout the month of April – National Fair Housing Month – MOPD worked with the Human Resources Administration (HRA), City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), HPD and NYCHA to conduct a series of housing presentations to organizations that serve the disability community and shared information on subsidies, affordable housing, public housing, supportive housing, housing complaints, discrimination and reasonable accommodations.

In addition, MOPD worked with the HPD Marketing Division and the HPD Disability Service Facilitator to conduct two training sessions for disability service providers who expressed interest in serving as housing ambassador for people with disabilities. The purpose of the ambassador program for people with disabilities is to close existing gaps in service to applicants for affordable housing, to forge relationships between HPD and the disability advocacy community and to raise awareness about the existence and purpose of the Disability Service Facilitator role at HPD. The first training session was held on February 8, 2017 with the following organizations participating: Wheeling Forward, Harlem Independent Living Center, Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled, United Cerebral Palsy Association of NYS (UCPA), United Cerebral Palsy of NYC (UCP), and Parent to Parent (an arm of OPWDD). The second session was held on February 17<sup>th</sup> at NYU Langone Medical Center for the staff of Initiative for Women with Disabilities.

## **Homelessness**

In February 2017 the Mayor and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) introduced a comprehensive vision for addressing homelessness:

“Turning the Tide on Homelessness.” The goal is to open approximately 20 new shelters in 2017 and 20 new shelters in 2018. As part of this plan, DHS aims to develop five new, high-quality shelters per year. In addition, DHS will open shelters in existing buildings. Renovation of the approximately 30 expansion sites will begin in 2018 and take place on a rolling basis over the next 7 years.

This investment will also offer opportunities to add accessible units and beds to better address the needs of shelter clients with disabilities.

In the last year, DHS has embarked on a plan to improve and streamline access for people with disabilities. DHS has:

- Hired an Agency Medical Director
- Hired a Director of Disability Affairs for Homeless Services
- Trained staff on better accommodating shelter residents who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Identified an experienced consultant firm to survey selected existing and new shelters for accessibility and to assist DHS in developing plans to expand its accessible shelter capacity.

Another way to improve access to housing for people with disabilities is to provide more supportive housing. Supportive housing is a proven, cost-effective approach to addressing the needs of homeless people struggling with mental illness, substance misuse, and other barriers to independence. By providing tenants with permanent, rent-stabilized housing with access to onsite case management, alcohol and substance-use programs, and other social services, supportive housing reduces the need for placement in higher-cost homeless shelters, hospitals, mental-health institutions, jails and prisons. In December 2016, HRA awarded contracts to 11 organizations with vast experience addressing these clients’ complex needs to develop 550 scattered-site supportive housing units. These units will house chronically-homeless adult families and single adults who have serious mental-health disabilities and/or substance-use disorders. The selected nonprofits will provide a wide range of supportive services that include case management and health and wellness programs.

## **Rent Freeze**

The Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) provides a rent freeze to tenants with disabilities who have an income of less than \$50,000 and

live in rent-controlled, rent-stabilized, or Mitchell-Lama apartments. Currently, there are 10,697 households enrolled in DRIE.

Along with MOPD, over the past few years, the NYC Department of Finance (DOF) has led an aggressive campaign to enroll tenants in the Rent Freeze Program, which encompasses both DRIE and SCRIE (its counterpart for seniors). They re-branded the programs as the Rent Freeze Program and amplified outreach through partnerships with elected officials, community boards, and community-based organizations.. DOF redesigned Rent Freeze applications, and now offers a large-print version. It also renovated the NYC Rent Freeze Walk-in Center. In the summer of 2017, DOF piloted walk-in centers in Brooklyn and the Bronx. DOF and MOPD will continue this campaign with the goal of enrolling every eligible New Yorker into the Rent Freeze Program. Information on the program can be found at [www.nyc.gov/rentfreeze.gov](http://www.nyc.gov/rentfreeze.gov).

## **Disabled Homeowners' Exemption**

The Disabled Homeowners' Exemption (DHE) provides a property tax exemption to a homeowner with disabilities who owns a 1-, 2-, or 3-family house, a condominium, or a cooperative apartment and meets income, residency and property qualifications. Currently, DHE provides a property tax exemption of 50 percent of the assessed property value for homeowners with disabilities making up to \$29,000 per year. Homeowners making up to \$37,400 receive a smaller exemption on a sliding scale. Mayor de Blasio supported passage of state legislation making homeowners with disabilities and seniors making up to \$50,000 eligible for the 50 percent exemption, with homeowners making up to \$58,400 receiving a smaller exemption on a sliding scale. The city estimates that raising the income threshold would provide eligible senior and disabled homeowners with an average benefit of \$1,750.

The Mayor's Public Engagement Unit will be conducting increased outreach to New Yorkers across the city who are currently eligible and those who will become eligible under the income expansion to assist them in enrolling in the SCHE and DHE programs.

Currently, there are approximately 5,000 households enrolled in this program. Information on the program can be found on DOF's website.

## **Affordable Accessible Housing**

Mayor de Blasio's *Housing New York* Plan to build and preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing over 10 years has financed 62,502 affordable apartments in the first 3 years. The administration has created innovative and cost-effective programs for sustainable affordable housing for very low-income families, including people with disabilities. Helping individuals with disabilities to stay in their homes and neighborhoods where their families and support networks reside helps their health and security. The administration has continued to create more homes for the lowest income New Yorkers:

- More than a quarter of all affordable housing financed under the Mayor's plan is serving New Yorkers making less than \$31,100 for an individual or \$40,800 for a family of three.
- More than 14 percent serves New Yorkers making less than \$19,050 a year, or \$24,500 for a family of three.

## **Project Open House**

In some cases, minor architectural work can transform a living space into an accessible residence for people with disabilities. Project Open House (POH) removes small, readily achievable architectural barriers from the homes of qualified applicants with a permanent disability, thereby assisting them to gain greater independence. Examples of work covered under this program include widening doorways; converting steps into ramps; replacing existing plumbing fixtures with accessible fixtures; installing accessible amenities such as grab bars, door openers, accessible door handles, accessible height shelving; and more. POH is administered by MOPD in partnership with HPD. The changes made under POH do not require a permit from the NYC Department of Buildings or the professional services of a NYS Licensed Architect.

Funding for the program comes from Community Development Block Grants (CBDG) administered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. This past Fiscal Year 102 applications were received, however some of the applicants did not qualify as they exceeded the income limit, lived in NYCHA units, or were requesting durable medical equipment. The available funding provided services to 11 families and improvements done included bathroom modifications; installation of a vertical platform lift, handrails, remote operated doors; and leveling floors.



# Health

Having a disability does not mean a person is not healthy. Being healthy means the same thing for everyone - getting and staying well in order to lead a full and active life. A key element to this is having the information and means to make healthy choices and knowing how to prevent illness.

## **Access to Health Care**

Independent Cares System (ICS), a community-based, nonprofit agency serving the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens supporting senior adults and adults with physical disabilities and chronic conditions to live at home and participate fully in community life, developed a “blueprint” for how the medical community can provide accessible primary care to people with physical disabilities. Employees of the New York City Health + Hospitals Corporation (H+H) participated in the research and writing of the document as many of their facilities have worked with ICS including Morrisania Diagnostic and Treatment Center, Lincoln Medical, and Woodhull Medical and Mental Health Center.

In addition, MOPD is working with H+H on initiatives to improve communication with people with disabilities. Beginning this summer H+H’s Office of Diversity will be hosting a webinar series to begin building general awareness on how employees can more effectively communicate with people with disabilities. MOPD also convened a meeting with members of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) and H+H to discuss personnel training, accommodations available to people who are Hard of Hearing, and the information concerning accommodations on the website.

## **Parks and Public Health**

Physical activity benefits all adults, whether or not they have a disability, reducing the risk of serious chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some cancers. Most adults with disabilities are able to participate in physical activity, yet nearly half of them get no aerobic exercise—a far higher percentage than the quarter of adults without disabilities who get no aerobic physical activity. Adults with disabilities face physical and emotional barriers to engaging in physical activity, including lack of knowledge about and means to get to programs, and a shortage of accessible facilities.

To help people with disabilities access the City's recreation centers and the disability-friendly Ocean Breeze Track & Field Athletic Complex, the Parks Department reduced its annual membership fee to \$25 for people with disabilities who self-disclose their disability. To date, 1,744 people have taken advantage of this incentive and more enroll at the reduced fee each day. In addition, the Parks Department is looking at expanding the types of documents that can be used to obtain the reduced fee.

The Parks Department hosted adaptive sports carnivals around the city, including at Al Oerter Recreation Center in Flushing, Queens; West Bronx Recreation Center; Sunset Park Recreation Center; Chelsea Recreation Center; and East 54th Recreation Center. In addition, the Parks Department works with other organizations to provide guidance and equipment to support adaptive sports events hosted by other entities such as Montefiore Hospital, Mt. Sinai Hospital, the Rusk Rehabilitation Institute at NYU Langone Medical Center, Initiative for Women with Disabilities, the New York Spinal Cord Injury Association, the AXIS Project, Independence Care System, LIU-Brooklyn, Queens College, Brooklyn College, the Wheelchair Sports Federation, and the Department of Education Office of Wellness Program at John Dewey High School and Edward R. Murrow High School.

## **NYC Well**

On October 24, 2016, New York City launched NYC Well as a component of ThriveNYC, the City's mental health reform effort. NYC Well is a free, confidential service that offers crisis counseling, mental health and substance misuse support, information about mental health issues and referral to care. The toll-free help line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by phone, text and online chat to all New Yorkers in need of mental health care, including people with disabilities. NYC Well counselors can also provide bilingual help in Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese. Additionally, NYC Well offers translation services in more than 200 languages.

All New Yorkers, including New Yorkers with disabilities can contact NYC Well by calling:

- (888) NYC-WELL (888-692-9355)
- (888) 692-9355 (Español)
- (888) 692-9355 (中文)

- 711 (Relay Service for Deaf/Hard of Hearing)

NYC Well can also be reached by texting "WELL" to 651-73, or online chat by going to [www.nyc.gov/nycwell](http://www.nyc.gov/nycwell) for more information.

For people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, NYC Well is available by calling 711.

NYC Well provides opportunities for people to receive information and referrals through the communication mode of their choice – voice, email, or text. Additionally, NYC Well offers follow-up services that can provide general support, appointment reminders and assistance overcoming barriers to connection to services. These follow-up services can also be provided by call or text.

# Access

New York City is filled with rich opportunities to sample everything life has to offer: culture, food, theater, skyscrapers, shopping, parks, and neighborhoods. These opportunities must be available to all New Yorkers on an equal basis, including those living with disabilities. This is a basic matter of civil rights and inclusion, on par with preventing discrimination on the basis of race, religion, or national origin. There should be no barriers to anyone's ability to participate, and succeed in this city.

MOPD is committed to expanding on the City's longstanding commitment to bring equal access and opportunity to people with disabilities. To do this requires working in a complex environment, in which the public and private sectors are inextricably linked.

## **Disability Service Facilitators**

Local Law 27 requires City agencies to have full-time Disability Service Facilitator (DSF) positions. Over the past year, DSFs were designated throughout the various agencies creating easy access points for the public to obtain information, services, and assistance concerning access within the agency for people with disabilities. A list of the DSFs and their contact information can be found on MOPD's website. MOPD convenes quarterly meetings for the DSFs to discuss issues, learn about technologies that assist people with disabilities and participate in trainings. Many of the DSFs attended the National ADA Symposium, the premier conference on the Americans with Disabilities Act, in Chicago in May 2017.

## **Hearing Access**

Local Law 51, enacted on March 21, 2017, provides for the installation of induction loop systems, a form of auditory assistance technology, in capital projects with an estimated baseline construction cost of \$950,000 or more, paid in whole or in part from the city treasury and involving the construction or reconstruction of one or more assembly areas. It also requires that each security, information, or reception desk used for the checking-in or screening of persons attending a meeting or event held in a looped assembly area be equipped with an induction loop. Starting in July 2018, the City is required to publish a list of public locations where such systems are available. Currently, a list of venues with hearing loop systems, compiled by the HLAA's New York City Chapter, is available on MOPD's website.

Currently, all town hall events hosted by the Mayor have a portable induction loop system set up to accommodate people with hearing loss who request this system. In addition, CART and ASL interpreters are provided.

MOPD, DCAS, and the City Council are exploring adding an induction loop system to City Council Chambers. This system would be in addition to the infrared system already used in the chambers to accommodate people who are Hard of Hearing.

MOPD is working with New York City Department of Information Technology & Telecommunications (DoITT) and telecommunications company VTCSecure to develop a Citywide Call Service Platform (named ASL Direct) to assist all Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing constituents in New York City. In contrast to TTY (Teletypewriter) and VRS (Video Relay Service), ASL Direct will place city staff who communicate in American Sign Language (ASL) via video calls directly with individuals who are Deaf who are signing. This service is intended to directly communicate with a person who is Deaf. TTY and VRS provide interpreting services, however ASL Direct will provide a direct link to City staff members without the need of an interpreter. Employing staff members who communicate via ASL will enable immediate assistance in addition to reducing misinterpretations and misunderstandings. The first ASL Direct platform will be housed at MOPD beginning fall 2017.

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) launched a pilot program in April 2017 aimed at improving access to law enforcement services for people who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. Currently the pilot program operates in 3 police precincts: the 9th precinct in Manhattan, the 115th precinct in Queens and the 121st precinct in Staten Island. Officers are equipped with tablets to allow them to use video remote sign-language interpretation. Officers also have the option of calling for a live interpreter. The NYPD hopes to expand this program to another 4 precincts by the end of the summer of 2017.

## **Text-to-911**

By the first quarter of 2018, New York City will launch a Text-to-911 service. People who are unable to make a voice call to 9-1-1 including those who are Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing and those with speech disabilities will be able to communicate with NYC's 9-1-1 call takers for the first time

ever via text. MOPD and DoITT will work with people with disabilities to ensure the launch goes smoothly and people with disabilities are made aware of the service. In addition, development is underway on the NextGeneration 911 project that will create a fully digital, state-of-the-art emergency communications system capable of interacting with New Yorkers through text messaging, photos, video, social media, and more. A request for proposals has been issued for vendors to assist in building the underlying technological infrastructure that can support the IP-based NextGeneration 911 system.

## **Small Business Services**

MOPD and SBS created a simple guide in question-and-answer format for businesses to understand the accessibility waiver process set forth in the New York City Building Code as part of the Small Business First initiative. Waivers from the accessibility provisions can be granted in certain circumstances as outlined in the guide which was translated into six languages and can be found on the MOPD website. Also, SBS has updated its Storefront Improvements guide on their website and included information on accessible entrances to emphasize the needs of customers with disabilities.

As part of this effort, MOPD and SBS will host the first Small Business Disability Awareness Day in 2017, to introduce small business-owners to the needs of the 1-in-8 New Yorkers with disabilities. The goal of Disability Awareness Day is to make the case to NYC's small businesses that making products and services accessible to people with disabilities is not just good policy, it is good business. Small Business Disability Awareness Day will address the accessibility of renovations, accommodation of disabilities, accessible formats for printed materials, assistive listening technology, and available tax incentives. This program will be repeated annually.

Finally, MOPD created a plain-language guide on the two federal government tax incentives provided to businesses to cover the costs of making access improvements for customers with disabilities. This guide has been distributed to SBS and is posted on MOPD's website.



## **One Step Campaign**

In 1991, the One Step Campaign was started as a grassroots effort to educate and encourage small businesses, such as stores and restaurants, to provide wheelchair accessibility. Throughout the past year, MOPD has worked with several city agencies to re-focus the campaign on business education by creating educational materials – including materials on federal tax incentives for barrier removal, basic ramp dimensions, and signage. In addition, MOPD has given presentations to businesses on disability awareness.

## **Inclusive Design Guidelines**

MOPD released our newest resource book, published by the International Code Council, the *Inclusive Design Guidelines, New York City, Second Edition* (IDG). The IDG is voluntary technical guidance that will help architects and designers produce multisensory enhanced environments that accommodate a wide range of physical and mental abilities for people of all ages. Automation, scooter accommodation and Active Design are emphasized. At launch, the book was distributed to a group of relevant and interested accessibility stakeholders at the local, national, and international level, and to universal design representatives and entities including local political leaders and organizations; national AIA chapters; sister MOPD offices in major US cities; and internationally to the European Union, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Israel, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Japan, and Australia.

## **Inclusive Recreation, New York City**

MOPD is currently writing the *Inclusive Recreation, New York City* (IR) resource book, an extension of the IDG, discussing adaptable summer and winter sports that use formal (Paralympics) and informal play approaches. Featured sports include wheelchair basketball, rowing, and hockey. The book follows a template for each sport that includes: background and/or history; object in play description and illustration; equipment description and illustration; venue/field/environment description and illustration; and formal and informal rules of play. The proposed completion date of this publication is the spring of 2018.

## **Construction Signage**

To help people with disabilities navigate burdensome construction obstacles that are often found throughout our cityscape, project sites with construction fences or sidewalk sheds permitted on or after July 1, 2013 must meet signage requirements that emphasize the type of work underway and highlight the project's contact information. Any new building, demolition, excavation and alteration project sites with a construction fence must post a project information panel that includes a project rendering, elevation drawing of building or zoning diagram of building exterior, a description of the project and anticipated completion date, owner and contractor information, 311 information and the primary Department of Buildings permit. The panels must be posted on the fence with the bottom edge at a height of 4 feet above the ground, panels shall be 6 feet wide and 4 feet high with the content written in the Calibri font or similar sans serif font style with letters a minimum of 1-inch high, as measured by the uppercase character. The letters shall be white, on a blue background.

These signs provide the necessary information for an individual to contact the city if they believe the work being done is not in compliance with the NYC Building Code.

## **Arts & Culture**

People marvel at the scale of the cultural scene that New York has to offer museums, concert halls, zoos, gardens, theaters, clubs, festivals, and public art projects reach into every corner of the city. New York City invests more in arts and culture than any other city in the country. The City's Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) provides support to nearly 1,000 non-profit cultural organizations for publicly-accessible cultural programming across all five boroughs. DCLA also funds capital projects at nearly 200 cultural institutions, addressing a range of structural and equipment needs, including improvements to increase access. Working with other City agencies and with the New York City Council, DCLA manages a variety of community-focused programs and initiatives, and its Materials for the Arts program annually re-distributes materials to more than 2,000 non-profit organizations, public schools, and agencies throughout the five boroughs. DCLA's Percent for Art program brings permanent art installations to public spaces around the city. There is a lot to celebrate. But for the cultural sector to continue to thrive, thoughtful progress is needed.

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative at DCLA**

As part of Mayor de Blasio's vision for a more equitable city, DCLA launched a major initiative in January 2015 to study, promote, and cultivate diversity among the leadership, staff, and audiences of cultural organizations in New York City. The launch of the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative highlighted DCLA's long-term commitment to advancing these principles and is a priority for the agency in all of its work.

The first major milestone of this DEI initiative was a survey of the workforce of cultural groups funded by DCLA. The results, mirroring every other national study of its kind, were troubling. According to the study, cultural staff in the City are 35% people of color and 62% white non-Hispanic. (In contrast, U.S. Census data show 66% of New York City's population identifies itself as people of color and 33% as white non-Hispanic.) Further, the report provided little or no data regarding people with disabilities in cultural organizations—pointing not only to shortcomings in the methods of data collection, but also to deeper structural issues that need to be addressed.

In exploring ways to address these issues, DCLA recognizes that people and communities are not divided neatly along lines of race, gender, age, ability/disability, immigration, or other characteristics – and that having a combination of backgrounds is a critical part of the complex and nuanced ways we experience identity and barriers to access.

In direct response to the survey findings, an internal DCLA Diversity Committee was formed to determine the agency's approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion, both as a foundation and departure point for the work the agency does in programming, partnerships, and service, and as a catalyst for like-minded work in the field. The agency plans to host inclusion training programs for DCLA staff and the larger cultural field.

Other outcomes included a series of town halls and other meetings to address issues of diversity and inclusion in the arts for specific communities and disciplines. DCLA was also able to raise more than \$4 million in public and private support to spur efforts to cultivate more inclusive workplaces:

- The City and The Rockefeller Foundation invested more than \$1 million to create the CUNY Cultural Corps, which in its initial year is providing career-building internship placements for students from

- underrepresented groups at nearly three dozen cultural institutions and DCLA, expanding access to new pools of talent;
- The City's Theater Subdistrict Council (TSC) invested \$2 million to expand opportunity in the theater workforce. TSC grantees included an apprenticeship program that will train disabled artists in arts administration careers; and
- The City invested \$1 million for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for members of the Cultural Institutions Group.

Internally, DCLA has prioritized attention to inclusion of people with disabilities through changes in staffing and related outreach:

- **Engaging with the Disability Community:** In addition to DCLA's Disability Service Facilitator (DSF) position being already filled and active, DCLA is creating a new position to address issues of inclusion and access in the City's arts community. The new position will require expertise on disability and disability arts, and will support and advise on inclusive agency practices and engagement with the disability community.
- **Prioritizing Inclusion in DCLA's Structure:** To coordinate with DCLA's DSF, a Disability Service Liaison now serves each of DCLA's operational and administrative units. This network of Liaisons works in conjunction with the DSF to support inclusion and access in DCLA's outward-facing activities.

Furthermore, in its external activities:

- DCLA participated with MOPD in the ADA Consortium of Regional Venues, which convenes institutions such as Radio City Music Hall, Madison Square Garden, and The Public Theater to explore and address requirements and best practices for accessibility;
- With the Theatre Development Fund (TDF), DCLA provided financial support for the first "Access for NYC Theatre" symposium, held by TDF this year; and
- MOPD worked with DCLA to allocate money for audio description services to accommodate individuals who are blind attending Broadway and Off-Broadway plays. Funding was provided to TDF to assist with equipment and contracting for audio description at Broadway and Off-Broadway performances. In addition, money was allocated to the Reel Abilities film festival for audio descriptions at its March 2017 film festival.

## **CreateNYC**

In May 2015, Mayor Bill de Blasio signed legislation requiring New York City to produce a comprehensive cultural plan: CreateNYC. As New York City's first-ever comprehensive cultural plan, CreateNYC is a roadmap to maintaining New York City's cultural vibrancy and outlines a set of interconnected strategies for sustaining and supporting arts and culture throughout the City. The plan affirms the agency's commitment to ensuring access to arts and culture for all New Yorkers, and, following months of public engagement, public release is planned for July 2017.

CreateNYC tackles the challenging question: how can we work toward a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable cultural sector that serves all New Yorkers? This is no small task—as such, CreateNYC is meant to be a living document that can address a constantly changing city. CreateNYC also examines crucial, contemporary issues, including equitable cultural participation citywide; affordability of artist workspaces; access to arts, culture, and science education; and the role of public spaces. The plan also expresses DCLA's commitment to supporting disability arts, artistry, and artists with disabilities at all levels of New York City's cultural life. Further, CreateNYC takes into account that barriers to access and inclusion for persons with disabilities are themselves threats to the health of New York City's cultural ecosystem.

CreateNYC signals DCLA's determination to foster full access to this City's extraordinary cultural offerings and opportunities. It is both practical and aspirational, with short-, medium-, and long-term strategies for achieving its goals. DCLA looks forward to pursuing the plan's inclusive agenda for the years ahead.

## **Restaurant Access Program**

The Restaurant Access Program (RAP), created in 2013, provides restaurant owners with the opportunity to advertise that a restaurant is wheelchair-friendly. If a restaurant qualifies, it will be sent a RAP "Wheelchair Friendly" decal that can be posted to promote the restaurant's accessibility. To qualify, a restaurant must have a level entry or ramp, a 32 inch wide door, an accessible 36 inch wide path,

accessible tables, and an accessible restroom.<sup>5</sup> To date, 1,310 restaurant owners have participated in this voluntary program.

## **Ticketed Event Spaces and Venues**

MOPD participates in the ADA Consortium of Area Venue Operators; members include Madison Square Garden, the New York Yankees, the New York Mets, Kings Theater, the US Tennis Association, and the Theater Development Fund. This group meets twice a year to discuss and develop policies with respect to issues that arise in accommodating individuals with disabilities, including ticket sales, admission of service animals, use of assistive listening systems, and Access-A-Ride drop off and pick up areas. One of the major issues faced by the various venue operators is fraud for popular sporting events, concerts, and shows related to the purchase of accessible seating. Typically, people or ticket brokers purchase tickets to shows and events by falsely claiming to be a person in need of accessible seating and then turn around and sell them at a profit. MOPD created guidelines to help venues create ticket access programs in which individuals voluntarily enroll and purchase tickets prior to the general sales period. While this will not eliminate fraud, it will increase the number of accessible seating tickets that go to those who need them. As venues adopt this program, a list with a link to each venue will be provided on MOPD's website.

## **Human Resources Administration**

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) is instituting training and outreach initiatives to help people with disabilities navigate its numerous programs. More than 5,600 HRA employees have completed a day-long training titled *Introduction to Disabilities: An Overview of Disability Awareness, Etiquette and Culture* with the goal of all staff completing this training by 2018.

In collaboration with Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) and the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), HRA reached out to more than 1,500 immigrant clients with disabilities who were identified as potentially eligible to become U.S. citizens. As a result, 500 unique appointments were made and more than 168 citizenship applications completed with the assistance of an attorney at different HRA sites

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/RAP\\_survey\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/RAP_survey_guidelines.pdf)

throughout the city. Twenty-two people have already become citizens as a result of this project. Those who successfully naturalize are referred to HRA where they can now receive assistance with completing their Social Security Income applications.

HRA is now producing selected brochures and notices for people receiving or applying for SNAP and Medicaid in alternative formats, including Braille, Large Print, data and audio. HRA also initiated a robocall program letting people who are blind or have low vision know that their Medicaid renewal or surplus payment is due and informing them that HRA can assist them by reading their re-certification over the phone, arranging an appointment at a Medicaid center or arranging home visits.

Also, HRA is reviewing all of its public-facing notices for Plain Language—writing designed to ensure the reader understands as quickly, easily, and completely as possible—in order to improve readability for everyone, including people with cognitive and learning disabilities.

In 2016, HRA rolled out Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) at each Job and SNAP center in New York City as a faster alternative to in-person sign language interpretation for people who are deaf. VRI will expand to other HRA program areas through 2017 and 2018.

HRA's, Reasonable Accommodations Request (RAR) / Home Visit Needed (HVN) Unit Center centralizes the RAR and HVN process for vulnerable New Yorkers, by having staff conduct home visits and process applications and re-certifications. The RAR Operations staff provide outreach to eligible HRA applicants and clients, and tracks and monitors cases to ensure that vulnerable populations are able to access and maintain CA/SNAP benefits.

People with disabilities are now able to apply for many benefits and manage their cases without having to call HRA or come in person to a Center through ACCESS HRA a free online accessible portal that helps New York City residents with applying and re-certifying for HRA programs. It is also available as a mobile app. Through ACCESS HRA, clients with internet access can apply and re-certify for SNAP benefits; retrieve case information such as application status, EBT balance, next re-certification date, and upcoming appointments; update their contact information, including mailing address, email address, phone number and preferred language; and see what documents HRA has received and if there are outstanding documents that need to be submitted.

Additionally, the ACCESS HRA website now features an online Cash Assistance (CA) application and recertification form.

In 2015, HRA launched a Mobile Document Upload app for clients and applicants to electronically submit documentation for their SNAP cases by taking pictures of the documents and uploading them through the app for agency review. In 2016, Mobile Document Upload became available for Cash Assistance recipients. This new feature allows clients and applicants to provide critical information to HRA without physically returning to or appearing at a Job or SNAP center.

New rules that govern the City's municipal identification card program IDNYC allow applicants with physical, mental, intellectual, or developmental disabilities—regardless of age, or possession of photo identification or proof of residency—to apply for an ID card if accompanied by a caregiver who can demonstrate proof of a relationship to the applicant.

## **Tourism**

NYC & Company, New York City's official destination marketing organization, launched Accessible NYC, a new digital resource to help visitors and New Yorkers explore and enjoy NYC. Available at [www.nycgo.com/accessibility](http://www.nycgo.com/accessibility). Resources include original editorial content and an interactive filter to help visitors find hotels, attractions, and restaurants that provide the accessibility amenities they need.

## **Emergency Planning and Preparedness**

MOPD supports the coordination of many of the City's efforts to provide programs and services during emergencies that are accessible to all New Yorkers. MOPD does this by working closely with New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM), other City agencies, members of the disability community, and service providers. These efforts include supporting the City's emergency shelter program to better meet the needs of people with disabilities; enhancing emergency transportation and evacuation plans for people who may need additional assistance and working collaboratively on new training initiatives aimed at inclusive emergency planning.



MOPD is also working with New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and NYCEM to support the rebuild and development of the NYC Advance Warning System website. The new website, set to launch in the fall of 2017, is designed to disseminate emergency information to agencies and organizations that serve people with disabilities.

MOPD also supports various City outreach initiatives aimed at individual and community preparedness for people with disabilities through participation in various panels, working groups, taskforces and events including the Disability, Access and Functional Needs Symposium held each year.

# Education

It is continually important in our society learn about things that we may be unfamiliar with or innovative ideas and products that support moving toward a more equitable society. MOPD engages people of all ages in the education process whether it is working with the NYC Department of Education (DOE), CUNY, and private colleges and universities, or creating materials that can be used by organizations, government entities or private businesses. As part a critical part of our mission, we are educating those we reach on the needs and rights of people with disabilities.

## **DOE Transition and College Access Centers**

The New York City Department of Education Special Education Office is expanding support for students with disabilities and their families as they move from pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, to college, career, or other post-secondary options. In alignment with the City's OneNYC Plan and the DOE Framework for Great Schools, the Special Education Office will establish a Transition and College Access Center (TCAC) in every borough over the next four years. The first two centers will open in the fall of 2017 in Brooklyn and the Bronx.

TCACs will facilitate the expansion of transition planning and service delivery, professional development of educators, and links to community partners/businesses. To accommodate the needs of students and families, centers will also be open on select evenings and weekends.

Some goals of the TCACs are as follows: provide transition-focused information, resources and links to students, families and staff to facilitate transition planning; administer age-appropriate transition assessments to inform academic, vocational and career instructional planning; provide ongoing professional development for staff who support transition-aged youth and their families; facilitate work readiness, activities of daily living, post-secondary readiness trainings and other professional learning experiences for students to increase attainment of the Career Development and Occupational Studies Commencement Credential as a 4+1 Option or diploma endorsement or Community Service diploma endorsement; facilitate parent meetings and workshops, as per identified needs; and engage community-based organizations and business entities to establish, maintain and increase work-based learning opportunities and employment for students.

As part of the collaboration with DOE, MOPD will assist in providing benefits counseling and financial education, access to job readiness and

career exploration opportunities led by the business community. This strategy will provide access to internships, summer employment and career pathways for students with disabilities while also giving them the necessary tools needed for enhanced quality of life and independence.

## **DOE Building Accessibility**

The DOE is committed to ensuring that its programs, services, and activities are accessible to staff, members of the school community, students and their family members with disabilities. The DOE assesses all of its buildings on a continuing basis to determine which schools are accessible to people with disabilities. In order to use this information as a tool to assist parents of students with disabilities, DOE will soon be providing “Building Accessibility Profiles” outlining the features of the school buildings that are accessible so that the parents and students can make an informed decision on the school as well as ask for any reasonable accommodations that may be needed.

## **Creating Awareness: Starting with City Government**

Currently, there are 383,704 people in the City government workforce.<sup>6</sup> MOPD is working with City agencies to train staff on how to better communicate and work with people with disabilities. This includes agencies and offices such as SBS, CCHR, EM, and the staff and interns at City Hall. In order to expand this training, we are working with Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to create a training video on how to communicate effectively with people with disabilities that will be available to all City employees before the end of 2017. The goal is to lay the groundwork for a City government that is fully prepared to meet the needs of people with disabilities, including fellow government workers and constituents.

## **Civic Engagement**

MOPD has been meeting with City Council Members, Borough Presidents, and Community Boards to discuss issues affecting people with disabilities, including the importance of having people with disabilities involved in the governmental process. MOPD created an

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<sup>6</sup> FY2016 Workforce Profile Report

informational flyer entitled Join Your Local Community Board available on their websites as well as providing information during the open application process.

## **Accessible Meeting Notice Guide**

MOPD created a guide for City agencies to use when advertising meetings or sending out notices and invitations to ensure that they include accessible information about the venue's accessibility, the availability of interpreters, assisted listening systems, and accessible materials. The guide was distributed to more than 50 agencies, offices of City Council Members, each Borough President's office, and community organizations. The Guide is available on MOPD's website [http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/mopd\\_meeting\\_guide.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/mopd_meeting_guide.pdf). MOPD staff also conducted presentations on the guide to Community Boards, community organizations, and numerous City agencies.

## **Web Accessibility**

As per Local Law 26 of 2016, New York City has chosen to adopt the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA standard and create a Digital Accessibility Coordinator position at DoITT to oversee compliance with this standard. The WCAG 2.0 AA standard has been adopted internationally as well as by the federal government and the guidelines were created by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). These guidelines provide standards to utilize to determine if website content is accessible to individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use screen reader technology, those who need captioning on videos, and those who need images and graphics described. MOPD and DoITT have been systematically reviewing the approximately 300 websites maintained by or on behalf of the City or a City agency for compliance with this standard and submitted a report to the City Council on July 1, 2017.

An in-depth Web Accessibility Guide on WCAG 2.0 standards and best practices is being drafted with an expected completion in fall 2017. The guide will contain explanations, examples and links for further support. This guide will be shared with DoITT employees and will be posted on MOPD's website as a downloadable document. The goal is to increase awareness of accessibility standards and to build empathy among

developers who might not be aware of who benefits from accessibility and how.

MOPD also created an Accessible Social Media guide outlining how to create accessible social media posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Topics covered include describing pictures and captioning videos, proper language when referring to people with disabilities, tips on how to describe an image, how to enable the alt-text feature on Twitter, and proper format for including image descriptions on Facebook and Instagram.

It is available on MOPD's website.

An App Accessibility Guide is expected to be completed by the end of the year. This will be a best practices guide on how to make Android and iOS apps accessible. It will be based on accessibility guidelines from Google and Apple.

## **Accessible Parking Campaign**

Since 2010, MOPD has promoted its annual Accessible Parking Campaign<sup>7</sup> using various activities and formats. The goal of the campaign is to provide education, advocacy and increased awareness of accessible parking laws. The 2017 campaign included a Public Service Announcement (PSA) recorded by MOPD Commissioner Calise and NYPD Commissioner O'Neill. The PSA airs on following radio stations: Public Radio Station WNYE 91.5 FM, WCBS FM, ESPN NY, and Mega 97.9 FM. WNYE 91.5 FM is managed and operated by NYC Media, a part of the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, broadcasting throughout the metropolitan area reaching approximately 18 million people. In addition, large posters are installed at 50 Bus shelters throughout the city and digital posters are displayed on LINKNYC units throughout the City. MOPD also distributes information and promotional materials to the public at various city events.

## **Disability Pride Parade**

MOPD and Disability Pride NYC work together to organize the annual parade that takes place every July. The first parade was held in 2015, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA, and former Senator Tom Harkin, one of

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<sup>7</sup> 2010 NY Code Vehicle & Traffic Title 7 Article 32

the authors of the ADA served as a Grand Marshal. Last year's parade attracted more than 5,000 people. The 2017 parade is surpassed last year's and it featured Micah Fowler from the ABC TV show *Speechless* as a Grand Marshal. This year, parade posters were displayed on LINKNYC units throughout the city.

In its brief three-year history, the Disability Pride Parade has gone international. Last year, on the same date as New York City's parade, Palermo, Italy also held a parade and broadcasted a message from Commissioner Calise. This year, the parade expanded to Naples, Italy and Brighton, England, and again included a message from the Commissioner.

## **AccessibleNYC**

As knowledge of AccessibleNYC spreads, it has become an exemplary tool for cities around the world. Government officials from countries including Israel, Korea, Russia, Georgia, Pakistan, Mexico, Italy, and United Arab Emirates have visited New York City and have met with the staff of MOPD to discuss the programs outlined in the report. Many countries including Ireland, Spain, Italy, Dubai, and Israel have invited Commissioner Calise to attend conferences in their homelands to discuss access in New York City and the *AccessibleNYC* report. In October 2016, MOPD's Jonathan Novick served as a fellow in the Eurasia Foundation's Social Expertise Exchange Program, traveling to Moscow to visit different non-profit organizations and schools that focused on disability issues to speak about our office's initiatives and practices. Much of AccessibleNYC's reputation has come from MOPD's work with the Mayor's Office of International Affairs and the Division for Social Policy and Development at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

## **Conclusion**

The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities is committed to working on the programs, services and projects outlined in this report. MOPD will also continue to review new proposals for the City to implement, particularly as technologies to increase accessibility advance. As AccessibleNYC is an annual report on the state of persons with disabilities in the City, in 2018 MOPD will again report on the progress of

the programs outlined here as well as new initiatives. For more information please visit us online at [www.nyc.gov/mopd](http://www.nyc.gov/mopd).



# Appendix

## Accessible Key Subway Stations

“Accessible Key Subway Station” is defined under the US Department of Transportation Americans with Disabilities Act regulations (49 CFR 37.51) as stations with high ridership serving major activity centers and transfer hubs that are accessible to individuals with mobility disabilities and compliant with the ADA Accessibility Standards.

The lists below are provided by the MTA and are current as of July 1, 2017.

Count	Station	Line
1	125 Street	4, 5, 6
2	175 Street	A
3	42 Street-Port Authority	A, C, E
4	Pelham Bay Park	6
5	Great Kills	SIR
6	51 Street	6
7	Grand Central-42 Street	4, 5, 6
8	Simpson Street	2, 5
9	Coney Island-Stillwell Ave	D, F, N, Q
10	34 Street-Herald Square	N, Q, R
11	34 Street-Herald Square	B, D, F, M
12	Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall	4, 5, 6
13	3 Avenue-149 Street	2, 5
14	Borough Hall	2, 3
15	Dongan Hills	SIR
16	Flatbush Avenue	2, 5
17	Church Avenue	2, 5
18	34 Street-Penn Station	1, 2, 3
19	Woodside-61 Street	7
20	Flushing-Main Street	7
21	14 St-Union Square	N, Q, R
	14 St-Union Square	L
22	Inwood-207 Street	A
23	66 Street-Lincoln Center	1
24	14 Street	A, C, E
25	8 Avenue	L

26	Franklin Avenue	C
27	Franklin Avenue	S
28	161 Street-Yankee Stadium	4
29	161 Street-Yankee Stadium	B, D
30	Grand Central-42 Street	7
31	Grand Central-42 Street	S
32	34 Street-Penn Station	A, C, E
33	Flushing Avenue	J, M
34	Prospect Park	B, Q, S
35	72 Street	1, 2, 3
36	Atlantic Av/Barclays Ctr	D, N, R
37	Atlantic Av/Barclays Ctr	B, Q
38	Atlantic Av/Barclays Ctr	2, 3, 4, 5
39	Howard Beach	A
40	Marcy Avenue	J, M, Z
41	Lexington Avenue/53 St	E, M
42	Utica Avenue	3, 4
43	DeKalb Avenue	B, Q, R
44	West 4 Street	A, B, C, D, E, F, M
45	Jamaica-179 Street	F
46	Times Square-42 Street	N, Q, R
47	74 Street-Broadway	7
48	Jackson Hts-Roosevelt Ave	E, F, M, R
49	125 Street	A, B, C, D
50	Euclid Avenue	A, C
51	Fordham Road	4
52	Queens Plaza	E, M, R
53	Times Square-42 Street	1, 2, 3
54	Times Square-42 Street	7
55	231 Street	1
56	Junction Boulevard	7
57	168 Street	A, C
58	Pelham Parkway	2, 5
59	233 Street	2, 5
60	Bowling Green	4, 5
61	Myrtle Avenue	L

62	Wyckoff Avenue	M
63	135 Street	2, 3
64	Church Avenue	F, G
65	St. George	SIR
66	Kew Gardens-Union Tpke	E, F
67	South Ferry	1
68	47-50 Streets-Rock Center	B, D, F, M
69	Chambers Street	1, 2, 3
70	59 Street-Columbus Circle	A, B, C, D
71	59 Street-Columbus Circle	1
72	Jay Street-MetroTech	A, C, F
73	96 Street	1, 2, 3
74	Kings Highway	B, Q
75	Far Rockaway-Mott Avenue	A
76	East 180 Street	2, 5
77	Bay Parkway	D
78	Bleecker Street	6
79	B'way-Lafayette Street	B, D, F, M
80	Forest Hills-71 Avenue	E, F, M, R
81	Utica Avenue	A, C
82	Hunts Point Avenue	6
83	Cortlandt Street	R
84	Kingsbridge Road	B, D
85	23 Street	6

## Key Station: Currently Under Construction

Count	Station	Line
86	World Trade Center*	E
87	Lefferts Boulevard	A

\*Elevator(s) not in service due to long-term construction

## Key Station: Currently in Design Phase

Count	Station	Line
88	Times Square-42 Street	S
89	68 Street	6
90	57 Street	N, Q, R
91	59 Street	N, R
92	86 Street	R
93	Gun Hill Road	5
94	Chambers Street	J, Z
95	Greenpoint Avenue	G
96	Bedford Avenue	L
97	Rockaway Parkway	L
98	Astoria Boulevard	N, Q
99	Brooklyn Museum	2, 3
100	Bedford Park Blvd	B, D

## Accessible Non-Key Station

“Non-Key Subway Station” is a transit station that does not meet the “Key Station” criteria.

Count	Station	Line	Remarks
1	50th Street	C, E	Southbound Only
2	Lexington Ave/63rd St.	F	
3	Roosevelt Island	F	
4	21 Street-Queensbridge	F	
5	Jamaica/Van Wyck	E	
6	Jamaica Center	E, J, Z	
7	Sutphin Blvd.	E, J, Z	
8	Middle Village-Metropolitan Ave	M	
9	Rockaway Park-Beach 116 St	A, S	
10	Park Place	S	
11	Borough Hall	4, 5	Northbound Only
12	Tottenville	SIR	
13	Canal Street Station	6	
14	49th Street	N, Q, R	Northbound Only
15	Rockaway Parkway	L	
16	Gun Hill Road	2, 5	
17	Jay Street-MetroTech	R	
18	Avenue H	Q	Southbound Only
19	Fulton Street	4, 5	
20	Court Square	7	
21	Dyckman St	1	Southbound Only
22	Fulton Street	A, C	
23	Fulton Street	J, Z	
24	Fulton Street	2, 3	

25	34 St-Hudson Yards	7	
26	Aqueduct Racetrack	A	
27	Wilson Av	L	Northbound Only
28	72 St	Q	
29	86 St	Q	
30	96 St	Q	
31	Arthur Kill	SIR	

