



## APPENDIX I

### DOJ INFORMATION ON MAINTENANCE VERSUS ALTERATIONS

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U.S. Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division  
Disability Rights Section



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration

# Department of Justice/Department of Transportation Joint Technical Assistance<sup>1</sup> on the Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act Requirements to Provide Curb Ramps when Streets, Roads, or Highways are Altered through Resurfacing

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that state and local governments ensure that persons with disabilities have access to the pedestrian routes in the public right of way. An important part of this requirement is the obligation whenever streets, roadways, or highways are *altered* to provide curb ramps where street level pedestrian walkways cross curbs.<sup>2</sup> This requirement is intended to ensure the accessibility and usability of the pedestrian walkway for persons with disabilities.

An alteration is a change that affects or could affect the usability of all or part of a building or facility.<sup>3</sup> Alterations of streets, roads, or highways include activities such as reconstruction, rehabilitation, *resurfacing*, widening, and projects of similar scale and effect.<sup>4</sup> Maintenance activities on streets, roads, or highways, such as filling potholes, are not alterations.

Without curb ramps, sidewalk travel in urban areas can be dangerous, difficult, or even impossible for people who use wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices. Curb ramps allow people with mobility disabilities to gain access to the sidewalks and to pass through center islands in streets. Otherwise, these individuals are forced to travel in streets and roadways and are put in danger or are prevented from reaching their destination; some people with disabilities may simply choose not to take this risk and will not venture out of their homes or communities.

Because resurfacing of streets constitutes an alteration under the ADA, it triggers the obligation to provide curb ramps where pedestrian walkways intersect the resurfaced streets. See *Kinney v. Yerusalim*, 9 F 3d 1067 (3rd Cir. 1993). This obligation has been discussed in a variety of technical assistance materials published by the Department of Justice beginning in 1994.<sup>5</sup> Over the past few years, state and local governments have sought further guidance on the scope of the alterations requirement with respect to the provision of curb ramps when streets, roads or highways are being resurfaced. These questions have arisen largely due to the development of a variety of road surface treatments other than traditional road resurfacing, which generally involved the addition of a new layer of asphalt. Public entities have asked the Department of Transportation and the Department of Justice to clarify whether particular road surface treatments fall within the ADA definition of alterations, or whether they should be considered maintenance that would not trigger the obligation to provide curb ramps. This Joint Technical Assistance addresses some of those questions.

## **Where must curb ramps be provided?**

Generally, curb ramps are needed wherever a sidewalk or other pedestrian walkway crosses a curb. Curb ramps must be located to ensure a person with a mobility disability can travel from a sidewalk on one side of the street, over or through any curbs or traffic islands, to the sidewalk on the other side of the street. However, the ADA does not require installation of ramps or curb ramps in the absence of a pedestrian walkway with a prepared surface for pedestrian use. Nor are curb ramps required in the absence of a curb, elevation, or other barrier between the street and the walkway.

## **When is resurfacing considered to be an alteration?**

Resurfacing is an alteration that triggers the requirement to add curb ramps if it involves work on a street or roadway spanning from one intersection to another, and includes overlays of additional material to the road surface, with or

without milling. Examples include, but are not limited to the following treatments or their equivalents: addition of a new layer of asphalt, reconstruction, concrete pavement rehabilitation and reconstruction, open-graded surface course, micro-surfacing and thin lift overlays, cape seals, and in-place asphalt recycling.

### **What kinds of treatments constitute maintenance rather than an alteration?**

Treatments that serve solely to seal and protect the road surface, improve friction, and control splash and spray are considered to be maintenance because they do not significantly affect the public's access to or usability of the road. Some examples of the types of treatments that would normally be considered maintenance are: painting or striping lanes, crack filling and sealing, surface sealing, chip seals, slurry seals, fog seals, scrub sealing, joint crack seals, joint repairs, dowel bar retrofit, spot high-friction treatments, diamond grinding, and pavement patching. In some cases, the combination of several maintenance treatments occurring at or near the same time may qualify as an alteration and would trigger the obligation to provide curb ramps.

### **What if a locality is not resurfacing an entire block, but is resurfacing a crosswalk by itself?**

Crosswalks constitute distinct elements of the right-of-way intended to facilitate pedestrian traffic. Regardless of whether there is curb-to-curb resurfacing of the street or roadway in general, resurfacing of a crosswalk also requires the provision of curb ramps at that crosswalk.

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Justice is the federal agency with responsibility for issuing regulations implementing the requirements of title II of the ADA and for coordinating federal agency compliance activities with respect to those requirements. Title II applies to the programs and activities of state and local governmental entities. The Department of Justice and the Department of Transportation share responsibility for enforcing the requirements of title II of the ADA with respect to the public right of way, including streets, roads, and highways.

<sup>2</sup> See 28 CFR 35.151(i)(1) (Newly constructed or altered streets, roads, and highways must contain curb ramps or other sloped areas at any intersection having curbs or other barriers to entry from a street level pedestrian walkway) and 35.151(i)(2) (Newly constructed or altered street level pedestrian walkways must contain curb ramps or other sloped areas at intersections to streets, roads, or highways).

<sup>3</sup> 28 CFR 35.151(b)(1).

<sup>4</sup> 2010 ADA Accessibility Standards, section 106.5.

<sup>5</sup> See 1994 Title II Technical Assistance Manual Supplement, Title II TA Guidance: The ADA and City Governments: Common Problems; and ADA Best Practices Tool Kit for State and Local Governments: Chapter 6, Curb Ramps and Pedestrian Crossings under Title II of the ADA, available at [ada.gov](http://ada.gov).

# Glossary of Terms for DOJ/DOT Joint Technical Assistance on the ADA Title II Requirements to Provide Curb Ramps When Streets Roads or Highways are Altered Through Resurfacing

This glossary is intended to help readers understand certain road treatments referenced on page 2 of the DOJ/FHWA Joint Technical Assistance on the ADA Title II Requirements to Provide Curb Ramps When Streets Roads or Highways are Altered Through Resurfacing. The definitions explain the meaning of these terms from an engineering perspective and are provided in the order in which they appear in the Technical Assistance document.

## Treatments that are considered alterations of the road surface

**Reconstruction** – Reconstruction refers to removing all or a significant portion of the pavement material and replacing it with new or recycled materials. This may include full-depth reclamation, where the pavement surface is demolished in place and new pavement surface is applied. In addition, reconstruction may also include grinding up a portion of the pavement surface, recycling it and placing it back, and then adding a wearing surface, such as in cold in-place asphalt recycling. Reconstruction often includes widening or geometrical changes to the roadway profile.

**Rehabilitation** - Rehabilitation refers to significant repairs made to a road or highway surface, including activities such as full slab replacement, filling voids under slabs (slabjacking), widening, and adding additional structural capacity.

**Open-graded surface course** – Open-graded surface course, also known as “open-graded friction course,” involves a pavement surface course that consists of a high-void, asphalt concrete mix that permits rapid drainage of rainwater through the course and off the shoulder of the road. The mixture consists of either Polymer-modified or rubber-modified asphalt binder, a large percentage of one-sized coarse aggregate, and a small amount of fibers. This treatment prevents tires from hydroplaning and provides a skid-resistant pavement surface with significant noise reduction.

**Microsurfacing** – Microsurfacing involves spreading a properly proportioned mixture of polymer modified asphalt emulsion, mineral aggregate, mineral filler, water, and other additives, on a paved surface. Microsurfacing differs from slurry seal in that it can be used on high volume roadways to correct wheel path rutting and provide a skid resistant pavement surface.

**Thin lift overlays** – Thin lift overlays are thin applications of mixtures of hot mix asphalt. Thin lift overlays may also require some milling along curbs, manholes, existing curb cuts, or other road structures to assure proper drainage and cross slopes.

**Cape seal** – A cape seal is a thin surface treatment constructed by applying a slurry seal or microsurfacing to a newly constructed chip seal. It is designed to be an integrated system where the primary purpose of the slurry is to fill voids in the chip seal.

**In-place asphalt recycling** - In-place asphalt recycling is a process of heating and removing around 1-2 inches of existing asphalt and remixing the asphalt with the addition of a binder additive and possible aggregate to restore the wearing surface for placement and compaction. All of this is performed in a train of equipment.

## Treatments that are considered maintenance of the road surface

**Crack filling and sealing** – Crack filling and sealing involves placing elastomeric material directly into cracks in pavement.

**Surface sealing** - Surface sealing involves applying liquid sealant to pavement surface in order to stop water penetration and/or reduce oxidation of asphalt products. Sand is sometimes spread over liquid to absorb excess material.

**Chip seals** – Chip Seals involve placing graded stone (chips) on liquid emulsified asphalt sprayed on pavement surface. The surface is rolled to enable seating of chips.

**Slurry seal** – Slurry seals involve spraying a mixture of slow setting emulsified asphalt, well graded fine aggregate, mineral filler, and water on the pavement surface. It is used to fill cracks and seal areas of old pavements, to restore a uniform surface texture, to seal the surface to prevent moisture and air intrusion into the pavement, and to improve skid resistance.

**Fog seals** – Fog seals are a type of surface sealing.

**Scrub sealing** – Scrub sealing is type of surface sealing

**Joint crack seals** – Joint crack seals are usually associated with concrete pavement. This work consists of routing and cleaning existing cracks and joints and resealing to prevent water and non-compressibles from entering into the pavement joints and subgrade materials.

**Joint repairs** – Joint repairs are usually associated with concrete pavement. This work consists of selectively repairing portions of the pavement where the slabs are generally in good condition, but corners or joints are broken. The depth of the patch could be full depth or partial depth.

**Dowel retrofit** – Dowel retrofits are usually associated with concrete pavement. This work involves the installation of dowel bars connecting slabs in existing pavements. Pavement with dowel bar retrofits can have life extensions of as much as 20 years. Its application is almost exclusively on high-speed Interstate highways.

**Spot high-friction treatments** – Spot high-friction treatments involve using epoxy based resin liquids as a binder for an aggregate with high-friction properties. These are used in locations where drivers are frequently braking and the pavement surface has less resistance to slipping.

**Diamond grinding** – Diamond grinding involves using a gang saw to cut grooves in the pavement surface to restore smoothness and eliminate any joint faulting.

**Pavement patching** – Pavement patching involves selectively repairing portions of the pavement where the slabs are generally in good condition, but corners or joints are broken. The depth of the patch could be full depth or partial depth.

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## BRIEFING MEMO

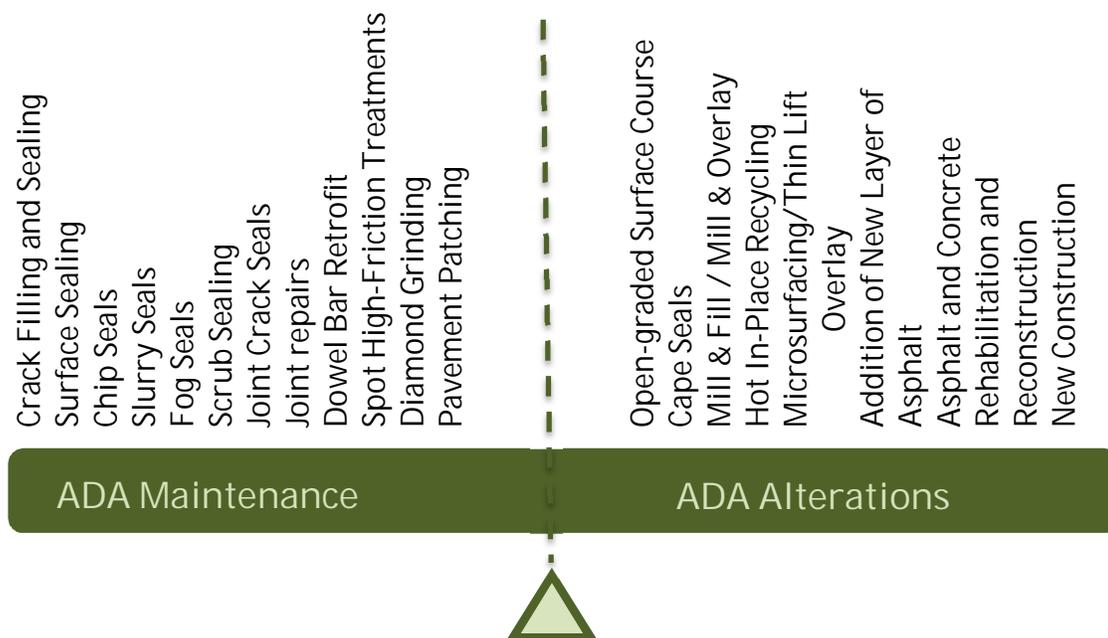
**SUBJECT:** Department of Justice/Department of Transportation Joint Technical Assistance on Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act Requirements to Provide Curb Ramps when Streets, Roads, or Highways are Altered through Resurfacing

**ISSUE:** Throughout the nation, there are different interpretations and inconsistencies in enforcement of when curb ramps are required.

**BACKGROUND:** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is a civil rights statute prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities in all aspects of life, including transportation, based on regulations promulgated by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). DOJ's regulations require accessible planning, design, and construction to integrate people with disabilities into mainstream society. Further, these laws require that public entities responsible for operating and maintaining the public rights-of-way do not discriminate in their programs and activities against persons with disabilities. FHWA's ADA program implements the DOJ regulations through delegated authority to ensure that pedestrians with disabilities have the opportunity to use the transportation system's pedestrian facilities in an accessible and safe manner.

FHWA and DOJ met in March 2012 and March 2013 to clarify guidance on the ADA's requirements for constructing curb ramps on resurfacing projects. Projects deemed to be alterations must include curb ramps within the scope of the project.

**SUMMARY OF GUIDANCE CLARIFICATION:** This clarification provides a single Federal policy that identifies specific asphalt and concrete-pavement repair treatments that are considered to be alterations—requiring installation of curb ramps within the scope of the project—and those that are considered to be maintenance, which do not require curb ramps at the time of the improvement.



This approach clearly identifies the types of structural treatments that both DOJ and FHWA agree require curb ramps (when there is a pedestrian walkway with a prepared surface for pedestrian use and a curb, elevation, or other barrier between the street and the walkway) and furthers the goal of the ADA to provide increased accessibility to the public right-of-way for persons with disabilities. This single Federal policy will provide for increased consistency and improved enforcement.

#### MOVING FORWARD:

Divisions are expected to initiate discussions with their Partnering Agency / State to:

- 1) Disseminate this clarification with regard to when curb ramps are required
  - a. States are expected to inform/assist local agencies
- 2) Establish a plan to implement this single Federal policy as soon as practical
  - a. FHWA Headquarters is not providing a set deadline for all projects to comply with this policy.
  - b. Projects that are ready for Construction Advertisement or are under contract may proceed.
  - c. The Division should evaluate the projects in the state pavement preservation/resurfacing program and agree on projects to comply with this policy.
  - d. The Division should work with its Partnering Agencies / States to evaluate and modify, if necessary, their existing resurfacing ADA policies to comply with this policy.

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