

THE ROUTE CHOSEN SHOULD BENEFIT ALL

In the Tuesday, June 28th Wyoming Tribune Eagle, the front page story described the passing of Councilwoman Annette Williams resolution for the crosswalk at Pershing and Duff by the City Council. For all people who attempt to cross the street at that intersection, and especially for people with disabilities, this is happy news. Attempting to cross the street at this time is a dangerous act.

Unfortunately, Pershing and Duff is not the only location in Cheyenne that places people, especially people with disabilities in danger when they are trying to navigate the community. There are businesses that increase a person's disability by limiting accessibility through the practice of meeting the bare minimum requirements of ADA laws. Examples include limited handicap parking, curbs, unclear markings, uneven surfaces, and icy walkways. There are many unnecessary conditions that hinder the Cheyenne community in being equal and accessible to all.

Southwest Drive is a perfect example of navigation difficulties, for people with and without disabilities. Southwest Drive is the only route to Clear Creek Park, the animal shelter, and other businesses between Lincolnway and College Drive. The closest transit stop is near the Exxon on Lincolnway. In order to get to Southwest Drive from the stop, a person has to cross Lincolnway and then cross the railroad tracks. If you have tried crossing the tracks, you know that trains can make them inaccessible for a lengthy amount of time, often times exceeding 20 or more minutes. Once a person makes it across Lincolnway and the tracks, the navigation difficulties continue as there are no sidewalks and Southwest Drive is very narrow. At this point, the pedestrian (and bike riders) are sharing this narrow passage with heavy truck traffic navigating a well-worn road, full of dips and heaves, at 40 miles per hour. Two semi-trucks passing each other and a pedestrian is not a safe situation. The farther south you go on Southwest Drive, the worse the conditions become, to the point where a person has to walk in ditches to attempt remaining safe. Even after Southwest Drive changes from a business park to private residences, there are still no sidewalks or safe pedestrian/bicycle accommodations. There are many streets that pose the same difficulties.

The new airport terminal is also missing the mark when it comes to planning on keeping people safe. There is a significant amount of ground to navigate if you are a person with a disability from the handicapped parking to the terminal. There is not enough proposed parking spaces for people with handicaps and navigating and getting onto the plane is a risk due to the lack of a sky bridge, ice buildup, distance, and limited to no wheelchair accommodations. Restrooms are located in areas outside of the TSA screening location, so once screened, if a person needs to use the restroom, vending machines or other accommodations, they will need to be screened a second time. The planes themselves are not accommodating to people with disabilities.

For some people, the city transit system poses obstacles also. We have city bus stops that are not accessible or safe for people to get to or utilize. Getting to stops can be hazardous when walkways are not clear of items and snow. If you ask persons with mobility issues, you will hear an alarming amount of concerns about sidewalks not being cleared. Moving around the city using the transit system just

became more difficult for people with the rate increases and changed curb to curb eligibility. Many people with disabilities are on a limited fixed income and will struggle with the increase in rates.

There are so many examples in Cheyenne where the transportation and parking plans are a detriment to people with disabilities. It seems the standard in planning and development is to do the very basic necessary to meet ADA laws-not what is right and needed for the person with the disability. We do not take into consideration the changes that have occurred in everyday living since ADA was created-bigger wheelchairs, assistants needing to assist in bathroom stalls, poor seating at entertainment venues, narrow store isles, and the list goes on.

The goal should be to develop our world into a place that is equal and accessible to everyone. To do this, we must continue increasing our awareness of the needs of all and working to overcome obstacles. We must remember that the path of least resistance is not always the best path for everyone affected. The route chosen should benefit all.

Carol Busbee

Mayor's Council for People with Disabilities

Mission

The MCPD's mission is to be an educational and solution orientated advisory board serving as a network, which is a catalyst and referral organization, promoting self-advocacy, equality and accessibility for all people regardless of their disability.

For more information, view the [Mayor's Council for People with Disabilities Website](http://www.cheyennesmcpd.org) at www.cheyennesmcpd.org