

# MOUNTAIN-PLAINS CONSORTIUM

RESEARCH BRIEF | MPC 24-515 (project 614) | April 2024

Learning from the Travel Experiences of Persons with Disabilities: Investigating Navigation Challenges Posed by Infrastructure



## the ISSUE

Everyday infrastructure, including sidewalks, crosswalks, and transit stops (among others), are not designed for people with disabilities. The practice of transportation planning, design, and policy does not systematically learn from the daily experiences of people with disabilities.

## the RESEARCH

Researchers conducted hour-long, semi-structured, online interviews from February 2021 to March 2022 with 28 people to understand what, when, and how infrastructure elements limit mobility. Of those interviewed, 26 self-identified as having a disability, and two of those interviewed were educators at a local school for children and adults with disabilities.

The researchers also spoke with nine transportation professionals working at municipalities or nonprofits throughout the Denver Region. They conducted 30-minute, semi-structured, online interviews during April and May 2022 with these planners and engineers.



A University Transportation Center sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation serving the Mountain-Plains Region. Consortium members:

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North Dakota State University  
South Dakota State University

University of Colorado Denver  
University of Denver  
University of Utah

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### Lead Investigator(s)

Manish Shirgaokar  
manish.shirgaokar@ucdenver.edu  
University of Colorado Denver

### Co-Investigator(s)

Wesley Marshall  
wesley.marshall@ucdenver.edu  
University of Colorado Denver

### Research Assistant(s)

Molly Wagner

### Project Title

Learning from the Travel Experiences of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs): Investigating Navigation Challenges Posed by Infrastructure

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## the FINDINGS

The ADA is a civil rights law meant to protect people with disabilities from discrimination and ensure they have the same rights and access to opportunities as everyone else. However, our work reveals that people with disabilities do not have equal access. The results suggest that the built environment, particularly transportation infrastructure, consistently fails people with disabilities in the way it is designed and in how programs are conducted. Those interviewed identified several themes regarding how infrastructure affects their transportation experiences and mode choices, including failures related to sidewalks (or lack thereof); intersections; maintenance; transit communication and services; paratransit logistics and scheduling; transit facility designs; street furniture, emerging technology, and temporary route closures; and involvement of people with disabilities in planning, design, and decision making.

## the IMPACT

This work will help practitioners in the transportation sector reassess how they plan, design, and implement infrastructure for individuals of all abilities, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities.

For more information on this project, download the Main report at <https://www.ugpti.org/resources/reports/details.php?id=1155>

For more information or additional copies, visit the Web site at [www.mountain-plains.org](http://www.mountain-plains.org), call (701) 231-7767 or write to Mountain-Plains Consortium, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, North Dakota State University, Dept. 2880, PO Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050.



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