



Amtrak's six-year plan to bring stations into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act could benefit from better planning, coordination

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WASHINGTON – Amtrak cannot expect to complete its six-year, \$1.2 billion plan to bring its stations into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act without first developing the requisite planning to achieve its timeline, an Amtrak Office of Inspector General report released today found.

The report credits Amtrak for developing clearer lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability for its ADA program, as well as realigning the program based on recommendations from a separate 2014 OIG report. According to the most recent report, these actions helped the company bring 36 more stations into compliance from October 2017 through April 2021.

In April 2021, Amtrak reported that there were 312 remaining stations where it had a sole or shared responsibility to bring them into compliance with the ADA. Currently, the company plans to bring these stations into compliance by fiscal year 2027 at a cost of about \$1.2 billion. This represents an output that is more than four times the number of stations it has completed over the past 12 years, and about three times the amount it has spent in the previous six years, the report said.

According to the report, Amtrak's ADA stations team is already stretched, and without a commensurate increase in staffing and contractors, the team will face challenges in bringing the remaining stations into compliance by the target date. Company planning documents do not identify how Amtrak will use the current 46 contractors and eight full-time employees who make up the ADA stations team to achieve the increased output in work and expenditures.

In particular, Amtrak does not have enough staff to oversee contract employees it hired to augment ADA efforts. As such, Amtrak staff has not adequately ensured that invoices reflect the work contractors performed. This led OIG auditors to question \$81 million in costs associated with these contractors' work from fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2020. The report said that without enough staff to provide effective oversight on its contractors, such issues could be exacerbated as contract work increases.

The report also identified that achieving cooperation with third parties at the remaining noncompliant stations remains a significant program risk. For example, at stations that Amtrak leases but does not own, it must receive approval from the station owner before it can make accessibility improvements. As of December 2020, discussions with third parties were at a

stalemate for at least 13 stations, which has increased costs and delayed projects, the report said. In one example cited in the report, work at the station in Elko, Nevada, has stalled for more than 10 years due to such an impasse.

The company can take steps to gain third party compliance such as asking for the Department of Justice to intervene and enforce federal mandates requiring a third party to cooperate with Amtrak in addressing ADA deficiencies, but it does not have guidance in place that institutionalizes the steps Amtrak staff can take when they reach a stalemate. According to the report, such guidance could help reduce the risk of additional delays to Amtrak's timeline for achieving compliance.

The report also found that Amtrak's Information Technology department and its ADA stations team did not coordinate to ensure that passenger information display systems installations were compliant. In Houston, for example, the ADA stations team found that the PIDS installed in 2018 did not use the ADA-compliant font size. Additionally, Amtrak did not reconcile reports on PIDS between the IT department and its ADA program teams, resulting in inconsistent reports.

The OIG made several recommendations that, once implemented, would better position Amtrak to meet its legislative mandate to make its stations accessible. More information is included in the full report which can be downloaded on the OIG's website:

<https://direc.to/hhDR>.

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