

CITY OF OAKLAND



1 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA
Mayor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities
Anwar Baroudi, Chair

94612

Date: May 26th, 2026

To: *Chair Carroll Fife, Life Enrichment Committee*
Mayor Barbara Lee
Jestin D. Johnson, City Administrator

From: Mayor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities (MCPD)

Re: Highlights of Activities of 2025-26 and Goals

This informational report provides the Life Enrichment Committee with a listing of the many projects and activities carried out by the MCPD. Along with the ADA Programs Division, these two groups form the basis of a comprehensive government program for inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWD). Few other city governments nationally can claim this level of commitment to disability civil rights implementation. Oakland is recognized as a model city for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and many of our policies and programs are emulated by other cities. Moreover, the progressive work of this small division and all-volunteer commission effectively reduces the City's exposure to disability discrimination claims and provides a mechanism for amicable and cost-effective resolution of complaints that do arise.

The MCPD

The MCPD was established by City ordinance in 1980 to represent and address issues of people with disabilities. The commission has at least 51 percent representation by people with disabilities and the rest have either professional or personal experience working with people with disabilities. The MCPD serves the following key roles in Oakland government:

- Advising the Mayor and City Council on matters affecting the disability community;
- Acting as the City's designated advisory body for ADA compliance;
- Providing advice and assistance to other City boards and commissions; and
- Participating at the local, state and national levels in the advancement of disability rights.

MCPD MEMBERSHIP

Commissioners are representative of the diversity of Oakland and of the disability

community. There are eleven seats on the MCPD and at least six members must be present to constitute a quorum, as per the enabling ordinance. Historically, there has been a high degree of turnover of Commissioners, but thanks to the tireless efforts of ADA Programs Division staff, along with our commissioners reaching out to their communities, we have been at or near fully seated for the entirety of the past year.

MCPD RECENT ACTIVITIES

In the past year, the MCPD has made significant contributions to the development and operation of City activities that affect persons with disabilities and has facilitated numerous opportunities for Oakland to connect with its citizens with disabilities despite the City's continuing financial challenges. The following highlights both information received by the Commission as well as guidance and outcomes the Commission has provided to the City and the community.

MCPD PRESENTATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS IN 2025-26

- 2 General Plan presentations
- Slow Streets with OakDOT bike/ped team
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plan with Emergency Management Service Division and Oakland Fire Department
- Annual Impact Report with Housing and Community Development
- Chinatown Complete Streets with OakDOT Major Projects Division
- 2 Vision 980 reports with Caltrans
- Housing and Economic Rights Advocates, HERA, introduction
- Objective Design Standards with Planning and Building
- Office of the City Auditor, introduction
- MACRO update
- Arterial Roadway Improvements Project with Port of Oakland
- Annual Report on Website Accessibility with Digital Services Officer
- Access Improvement Program with HCD
- Scraper BART Wellness Center with Scraper Bikes
- Department of Race and Equity, introduction
- CARE Courts update with Katherine Wolf
- Aging Services with Department of Human Services
- Curb Ramp and Sidewalk Update with OakDOT
- Department of Rehabilitation discussion with Chelsea Boon
- 2nd Street Transit Hub project with Ruth Meza
- UC Berkeley Othering and Belonging Institute with Karen Nakamura

MCPD CORRESPONDENCE IN 2025-2026

- Chair Baroudi delivered a letter of support to our Public Works and Transportation Committee urging the committee to pass legislation crucial to OakDOT's proactive preparation for an ADA settlement, including streamlining of sidewalk and curb ramp projects, and lifting the cap on the Sidewalk Assistance Program
- Chair Baroudi and Christine DiBella met with OakDOT Director Rowan, CM Brown, and AC Transit staff for a walkthrough and discussion of 14th st. bus infrastructure pilots

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- Chair Baroudi organized and ran a Neighborhood Walking Tour as part of General Plan outreach, leading staff from many different departments and commissions alongside members of the public in a walk through the city and a long conversation about the needs of people with disabilities.
- Chair Baroudi met with OakDOT Bike/Ped staff to discuss the Pedestrian Plan, including fruitful conversations about pedestrian networks, infrastructure, and enhanced wayfinding like curb stamping and tactile signs on signals.
- Chair Baroudi met with OakDOT Major Projects Division staff to further discuss the Chinatown Complete Streets project, including general discussions of pedestrian scrambles and wide-angle ramps
- Chair Baroudi gave presentations on accessibility to OakDOT's At-Risk Users Working Group and Race and Equity Team, including MCPD insights on various built-environment designs and standards.
- Commissioner Reed has been in contact with and working with the Digital Services Officer of the City of Oakland to further learn about the resource needs Oaklanders are seeking through the city website.
- Commissioner Reed has been in contact with the Center for Accessible Technology to learn more about digital accessibility needs.
- Commissioner Reed, Commissioner Gutierrez, and co-Vice Chair Wilson have been making proactive connections to Community-Based Organizations in the Oakland area as a part of the Service Navigation portion of the MCPD's Strategic Plan.
- Commissioner Habansky and co-Vice Chair Wilson are currently reviewing City of Oakland plans and design documents and are currently drafting multiple advisory comments in support of greater accessibility across public space projects for the City of Oakland.
- Commissioner Habansky and co-Vice Chair Wilson are analyzing local city ordinances like the City of Alameda's Visitability Ordinance in order to promote greater accessibility requirements in future plans like Oakland's Downtown Specific Plan.
- Commissioner Morales-Saleh has been in contact with Planning and Building to get information about the inventory of ADA-accessible housing, affordable housing, and the overlap between them.
- Commissioner Bartu has filed Public Records Requests with OPD regarding working with people with disabilities and is going through available data to assess OPD's stops of people with disabilities.
- co-Vice Chair Wilson spearheaded the production, analysis, and—with support from staff and community—distribution of the 2025 needs survey for people with disabilities, discussed further below.

MCPD-RUN COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY

- Commissioner Bartu and co-Vice Chair Wilson assembled a community needs survey that was distributed and ran for approximately three months in 2025, with 73 responses from local Bay Area residents, including people with disabilities, their friends, family, and support system, as well as other concerned members of the public.
- Expanding the survey to include Oaklanders with and without disabilities confirmed that the access needs of Oaklanders with disabilities is also reflected in the needs of Oaklanders who do not identify as having a disability. In many cases, although the order might change slightly, the top three concerns of both populations were more often than not aligned, proving that greater care and attention in meeting the needs of Oaklanders with disabilities will benefit all Oaklanders no matter their ability.

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- Another deviation from the prior year, Commissioner Bartu proactively used the survey to promote Oakland City Resources like MACRO to spread awareness for different city programs. In the survey, over a third of respondents had learned about services like MACRO through this survey.
- A summary of survey results was presented to the MCPD by co-Vice Chair Wilson. Generally, respondents found housing Somewhat Affordable, transportation needs greater improvement in Frequency and Reliability, the majority of respondents are Not Satisfied with the accessibility of Oakland's transportation, most people do not think they use city services (or do not realize they use city services) and/or find it hard to find the city service they need, and, lastly, the vast majority of respondents have faced a physical barrier in Oakland's infrastructure that has stopped them from walking or rolling down the street.

MCPD STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-26

- Starting in December 2024, OakDOT's Chief of Staff Jasmine Pomar generously donated her time to moderate and support the creation of a new Strategic Plan. The process of doing so was encapsulated in our recorded meetings in December, January, and February of 2024/2025 and encompassed the priorities and feedback of commissioners and audience members alike. This plan was extended into 2026. The detailed goal areas are listed in a later section, and the full plan is attached separately from this report, or can be found at [MCPD's website](#)

MCPD COOPERATION WITH OTHER CITY COMMISSIONS

- As the Mayor's Commission on Aging (MCOA) has a large overlap in constituents and interests, our two commissions have expanded our intentional and strategic cooperation. The Chairs of both commissions occasionally attend the other's meetings and present updates in the form of public comments on each others' activities and upcoming items.
- As the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC)'s mission and interest in pedestrian safety aligns closely with our own, we find a lot of value in working together, sharing feedback and attending each other's meetings. We have a new liaison, Alexander Perry, who keeps track of our meetings, and Chair Baroudi regularly attends theirs.

MCPD CHALLENGES

Staffing

During this reporting period, MCPD has encountered challenges that have hindered its ability to operate at full capacity. Chief among these is the ongoing understaffing of the ADA Programs Division. This strain not only impacts the Division's ability to meet growing citywide accessibility needs, but also places an unsustainable burden on existing staff. Without a clear and committed plan to address these staffing gaps, the City risks falling short of its responsibilities to residents with disabilities who rely on equitable access to public programs and services.

- The ADA Programs Division has been chronically understaffed since 2017. In 2016, a staffing gap analysis conducted by Michael Baker International recommended that the Division be staffed with at least four (4) full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to

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provide an appropriate level of service. Despite this recommendation, the Division has never maintained that staffing level consistently.

- In 2017, the Division briefly reached four FTEs. However, two long-time staff members abruptly departed, and only one of those vacancies was prioritized for replacement. One position was eliminated, and the other remained unfilled. By January 2020, staffing had dropped to a single employee—the Division manager—following the departure of the program analyst. A second analyst was not hired until April 2021.
- During a brief period when ADA Programs Division was down to only one staff, MCPD meetings were canceled due to limited staff resources to support MCPD activities. MCPD requested city staff to provide staffing resources to ADA Programs Division for MCPD meetings to resume. OakDOT temporarily loaned staff support for MCPD to continue meeting and to comply with all sunshine and PEC requirements.
- For a period in 2023 we were back to only our coordinator as the sole FTE serving the Division.
- The ADA Programs Division is critically understaffed, with only two full-time employees responsible for ensuring ADA compliance across all City programs, services, and activities. This limited capacity also includes staffing the Mayor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities. Without additional resources, the Division cannot adequately meet growing citywide demands or fulfill its legal and operational responsibilities.
- At the Commission's recommendation, the ADA Programs Division was moved from OakDOT to the City Administrator's Office to better align the Division with its citywide mandate. However, that transition has not been fully implemented. Funding and hiring authority for key unfilled positions remain tied to OakDOT, which limits the Division's ability to operate independently and effectively. Although close coordination with OakDOT remains necessary, the ADA Programs Division carries responsibilities that extend well beyond transportation and encompass citywide programmatic and physical access compliance. A full transfer of staffing authority and funding is urgently needed to complete the reorganization and ensure the Division can meet the City's obligations under the ADA. One option is to establish a dedicated Internal Service Fund (ISF) model, under which all City departments contribute to supporting ADA Programs in proportion to its citywide compliance function, rather than relying primarily on a single department's budget.
- Staffing needs of the ADA Programs Division remain unchanged; however, recent indications suggest that the frozen position and the eliminated position are unlikely to be restored or filled in the near term.
- While ADA Programs staff have been instrumental in supporting the work of the Commission, the Commission's effectiveness is necessarily constrained by the limited capacity of an understaffed division. This staffing shortfall also increases the City's legal and operational risk. The City recently settled the *Curran* litigation concerning accessibility in the public right-of-way, and the active *Smith* litigation challenges accessibility within the City's rent control program. Together, these matters underscore the need for sufficient ADA staffing to support compliance, risk reduction, and timely response to accessibility issues across City operations.

Emergency Preparedness

On multiple occasions, community members have warned that Oakland's readiness for emergencies with regards to PWD is lacking. For example, it has been noted that OFD does not carry emergency wheelchairs, that there is not 24/7 staff ready to handle

emergencies, that there may be insufficient training of first responders for working with PWD, and more.

Construction Compliance

A common complaint amongst both commissioners and members of the public has been a continued failure of our city's construction sites to meet the required standards of accessibility spelled out by the ADA. These sites are often barriers at best and hazardous at worst. This comes down to a combination of a lack of inspection staff/time, and that we contract out so much of our construction work. One or both of these need to be addressed, meanwhile we are committed to working with OakDOT to review construction plan processes.

Lack of Robust Public Resources for People with Disabilities

As the MCPD dives deeper into learning about potential resources for Oaklanders with disabilities, it becomes apparent that there is a lack of institutional support for programs that support and improve the lives of people with disabilities, like the Access Improvement Program. It is a two pronged issue causing a self-fulfilling cycle: many of these programs lack sufficient funding which makes it hard for staff to promote a service not many can participate in, and many people are not aware or able to find these programs due to limited capacity of the program and lack of dedicated staff, making it seem as though this program is not often utilized. Some programs admitted to not wanting to promote certain programs related to accessibility due to lack of significant funding and sufficient staff to properly run these programs. If we start with greater institutional support, utilization and the improvement of the lives of Oaklanders with disabilities will follow suit.

Proactive Inclusion of PWDs in Planning Processes

The MCPD has developed and improved relationships with city planners over the course of several years. Still, proactive inclusion of Oaklanders with disabilities from the beginning of the planning and policy processes leaves more to be desired. As the MCPD continues efforts to invite presenters to the Commission to receive feedback about the experience of Oaklanders with disabilities, it is also important that city staff be made aware of and encouraged to interact with the MCPD and Oaklanders with disabilities early on in their iteration. Additionally, the MCPD recommends greater promotion of a diversity of ability represented in city visualization graphics, as well as greater accessibility in visualization strategies produced by the City of Oakland.

ADA PROGRAMS DIVISION COLLABORATIONS AND ACTIVITIES IN 2025-26

The ADA Programs Division promotes equity and inclusion for individuals with disabilities by coordinating and overseeing compliance with physical and programmatic access requirements across all City programs, services, and activities. The following accomplishments highlight some of the Division's contributions to advancing accessibility citywide:

- Participated in Golden Eagle emergency exercise 5/12/26
- Sponsored State Council on Developmental Disabilities regional meeting at City Hall 9/24/25
- MTC Accessible Futures conference 6/16-17/2025
- New employee orientation trainings monthly and supervisory academy trainings quarterly

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- Accessibility training with HRM
- Participated in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan steering committee and Emergency Respite Center committee
- Participated in the citywide AI working group
- Helped resolve several complaints under the elevator ordinance passed in July 2024
- Coordinated with MCPD and assisted them in adopting MCPD 2025-26 strategic plan
- Staffing the Mayor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities (MCPD)
- Scheduling meetings between commissioners and city staff/stakeholders in pursuit - of our various Strategic Plan Goal Areas
- Managing the logistics of MCPD regular meetings and corresponding with potential presenters.
- Attending and collaborating with monthly OakDOT's At-Risk Users Working Group and biweekly Data Analytics Working Group
- Provide technical assistance and project review ranging from transportation safety, capital improvements, to emergency preparedness.

MCPD 2025-26 STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS

The following provides an overview of the four major goal areas and the corresponding actions outlined in the MCPD Strategic Work Plan. The full document ([link here](#)) includes detailed action steps and identifies the commissioners responsible for leading each area. This is a living document that will be updated over time to reflect evolving priorities and community needs.

CITY OPERATIONS (Goal Area 1)

This Goal Area includes plans to support the City of Oakland's operations becoming as accessible as possible. These efforts seek to make the City's communications more accessible to the public, to make the City a more accessible workplace for its thousands of staff, and to make the administration of City business more equitable for persons with disabilities living in Oakland.

ACTIONS FROM THIS GOAL INCLUDE:

- Clean Air Refuge Investigation
- Website Accessibility Audit
- City Staff Workplace Accommodations
- Police/PWD Interaction Report

SERVICE NAVIGATION (Goal Area 2)

This Goal Area includes plans to connect more Oaklanders, with and without disabilities, to services that are already available. These services may be provided by the City of Oakland, other governmental agencies, or community organizations. Making the public aware of services available to them and helping people understand what services they qualify for are both important parts of this goal.

ACTIONS FROM THIS GOAL INCLUDE:

- Community Needs Survey
- Service Provider Open Call

- Targeted Service Research
- Resource Guide Development
- Outreach and Publicity

HOUSING (Goal Area 3): Ensure ADA-compliant housing stock

This Goal Area includes plans to make housing in Oakland more accessible and affordable. Its actions take steps to support affordable housing across Oakland as well as investigate how supportive the Oakland housing market is for people who need ADA compliant accommodation across all affordability levels.

ACTIONS FROM THIS GOAL INCLUDE:

- Affordable Housing Application Streamlining
- Oakland Elevator Ordinance Enforcement
- Intersection of Affordable and Accessible Housing
- Investigating Tenants Rights
- Connect Housing Resources to Communities

TRANSPORTATION (Goal Area 4)

This Goal Area includes plans to make the streets and sidewalks of Oakland safer and more accessible for everyone, particularly persons with disabilities. It also includes plans to advocate for consistency and reliability in the transit methods that persons with disabilities use most.

ACTIONS FROM THIS GOAL INCLUDE:

- ADA Transition Funding Advocacy
- OakDOT Design Guidelines
- OakDOT Project Review
- Pedestrian Plan Review
- Transit/Mobility Usership Review

MCPD Chair Recommendations:

1. The Life Enrichment Committee (LEC) is encouraged to support MCPD's efforts in achieving its strategic planning goals for the current year. Key areas where LEC support would be especially valuable include: allocating time for MCPD to engage in dialogue with City Council and the Mayor, facilitating introductions and collaboration with relevant City staff, and assisting with public outreach efforts—particularly in promoting community needs surveys. These actions are essential to ensuring MCPD has the access and visibility needed to carry out its mission effectively.
2. The LEC should prioritize and advocate for the allocation of resources necessary to implement the staffing recommendations outlined in Michael Baker International's 2016 ADA Program gap analysis report, which called for a minimum of four full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to adequately support citywide ADA compliance.

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3. The LEC should take immediate action to advance a citywide shared-funding model for the ADA Programs Division, such as an Internal Service Fund (ISF) or similar cost-allocation structure, under which all departments contribute based on the Division's enterprise-wide compliance function. Such a model would better align the Division's funding with its citywide mandate, provide greater fiscal stability, and reduce ADA legal risk by maintaining the City's capacity to identify, address, and prevent accessibility barriers across operations. Reliance on OakDOT as the primary funding source is neither sustainable nor appropriate for a division with responsibilities that extend far beyond transportation. In addition, continued dependence on the volatile General Fund exposes the Division to recurring budget instability that threatens its effectiveness and the City's compliance with federal, state, and local accessibility mandates.
4. The LEC should additionally advocate for additional resources and staffing for HCD in order to support the expansion and use of programming such as the Access Improvement Program (AIP), which is currently bottlenecked by chronic understaffing.

Our commissioners remain passionate about making a difference in Oakland, and we look forward to your continued support in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Anwar Baroudi
Julia Wilson

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