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Court Orders Chicago to Install Thousands of Accessible Pedestrian Signals - Disability Rights Advocates

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“Press Release 06.02.2025: Court Orders Chicago to Install Thousands of Accessible Pedestrian Signals. Following Years of Litigation, Chicago’s Streets will be Safer for Blind Pedestrians” + Busy intersection in Chicago without APS + Logos for DRA & Proskauer

Following Years of Litigation, Chicago's Streets will be Safer for Blind Pedestrians

June 2, 2025—Chicago, IL—A federal court ordered Chicago to install thousands of accessible pedestrian signals (APS) over the next 10 years, a historic win in the years-long legal battle by blind and low vision pedestrians for safe and equitable streets. APS are devices that convey visual crossing information (i.e., WALK or DON'T WALK) in audible and vibrotactile formats accessible to blind, low vision, and Deafblind pedestrians.

Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) and Proskauer Rose LLP filed a class action lawsuit in September 2019 on behalf of the American Council of the Blind of Metropolitan Chicago and three individual plaintiffs challenging Chicago's discriminatory practices that disregard blind and low vision safety needs during pedestrian planning. The federal Department of Justice joined the suit shortly after it was filed following its own investigation into the City's APS-related policies and practices.

At the time of filing, less than one half of one percent of Chicago's 2,800+ signalized intersections provided APS for blind pedestrians. Now, six years later, that number is only three percent. Under the Court's order, Chicago must equip at least 71% of its signalized intersections with pedestrian signals with APS in the next 10 years. Chicago will then have another 5 years to install APS at all remaining signalized intersections, unless it can show that blind pedestrians already have meaningful access to the pedestrian grid. The Court's order establishes benchmarks for the minimum number of APS that can be installed annually, a process for community members to request APS at specific intersections, and a requirement to prioritize APS installation at the most dangerous intersections.

The City must also establish an effective APS compliance program to ensure it installs APS correctly, repairs maintenance issues promptly, and solicits and analyzes complaints and repair requests. The Court will also appoint an Independent Monitor to oversee Chicago's compliance.

The order also calls for the City to work with the blind community. The City must establish an APS Community Advisory Committee comprised of members from Chicago's blind community and organizations that serve the community, and engage with a Certified Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist to provide expertise on APS installation and maintenance.

[Read the Court's Remedial Order.](#)

"We are thrilled with the Court's Remedial Order, which will completely reshape the pedestrian infrastructure and lead to historic accessibility improvements," said Rachel Weisberg, Supervising Attorney at Disability Rights Advocates.

"This landmark decision is a win for civil rights, public safety, and equal access. It is a victory for all blind and low vision pedestrians in Chicago and will bring long-overdue systemic change," said Eddie Young, Senior Counsel at Proskauer Rose.

"I am so pleased that the various victories we have had throughout this case have led to where we are today with a strong remedial order from the court," said plaintiff Deborah Watson of the American Council of the Blind Metropolitan Chicago.

"This decision should send a strong message to communities around Illinois and across the country that the safety of all pedestrians, including those who are blind or visually impaired, must be taken into account," said Ray Campbell, who is a plaintiff and the president of the Illinois Council of the Blind.

“I am excited that we, as blind people, will now have access to the same information from traffic signals that our sighted counterparts have. This will go a long way toward ensuring that all blind pedestrians can safely cross Chicago streets,” said plaintiff Ann Brash.

“It is such a good feeling to know that we will feel so much more reassured and so much safer when crossing busy street due to accessible pedestrian signals,” said plaintiff Maureen Heneghan.

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Disability Rights Advocates: With offices in New York, California, and Chicago, Disability Rights Advocates is the leading nonprofit disability rights legal center in the nation. Its mission is to advance equal rights and opportunity for people with all types of disabilities nationwide. DRA represents people with all types of disabilities in complex, system-changing, class action cases. DRA is proud to have upheld the promise of the ADA since our inception. Thanks to DRA’s precedent-setting work, people with disabilities across the country have dramatically improved access to education, health care, employment, transportation, disaster preparedness planning, voting, and housing. For more information, visit dralegal.org.

Proskauer Rose LLP: With 725+ lawyers serving clients from 13 offices globally. Proskauer’s roots in New York City go back to 1875, when the Firm was founded. Today, the world’s leading organizations choose Proskauer as a strategic partner to drive their business forward.

Proskauer works with asset managers, major sports leagues, Fortune 500 companies, entertainment industry legends and other industry-redefining companies. Proskauer is entrepreneurial, inclusive, and committed to making a difference for good. For more information, visit proskauer.com.

The American Council of the Blind of Metropolitan Chicago

(ABCMC): The American Council of the Blind of Metropolitan Chicago is a nonprofit organization seeking to promote the independence and dignity of persons with visual impairments. A local chapter of the Illinois state affiliate of the American Council of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind of Metropolitan Chicago is one of Chicago's leading consumer organizations of and for people who are blind or low-vision.