

Defending Visually-Impaired Pedestrians in Chicago with Disability Rights Advocates

Proskauer For Good Blog on **September 26, 2019**

Earlier this week, Proskauer—along with [Disability Rights Advocates](#) (DRA), a nationwide nonprofit disability rights legal center—filed a putative class action against the City of Chicago on behalf of the American Council of the Blind of Metropolitan Chicago (ACBMC) and three individual plaintiffs with vision-related disabilities. The suit challenges the City’s systemic failure to provide accessible crosswalk signals for people who have significant vision impairments—a failure which violates both Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act.

The [complaint](#) alleges that only 11 out of Chicago’s 2,670 intersections have accessible pedestrian signals (APS) which provide information to the visually-impaired. As a result, pedestrians with vision-related disabilities can safely cross fewer than half of one percent of Chicago’s intersections. In addition to placing visually-impaired Chicagoans in ongoing physical danger, the City’s failure to address these inadequacies represents continuing violations of federal law which requires, among other things, that public entities operate “each service, program, or activity” so that they are “readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.” 28 C.F.R. § 35.150.

While the City has in the past announced plans to address this issue, no significant progress has been made. The City’s most recently announced plan sets a goal of installing up to 100 APS over the next two years, with 15–25 being installed in each subsequent year. Even assuming the City meets the parameters of this plan, it will be more than 104 years before pedestrians with vision-related disabilities can navigate Chicago streets with the confidence and safety of their sighted counterparts.

To ensure the safety and dignity of all Chicago pedestrians, the complaint seeks both declaratory and injunctive relief on behalf of all persons with vision-related disabilities who use, or seek to use, pedestrian signals in the City of Chicago.

We are honored to work alongside DRA and ACBMC to improve accessibility for people in Chicago who have vision impairments.

[View Original](#)

Related Professionals

- **Nigel F. Telman**
Partner
- **Edward C. Young**
Senior Counsel