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Date: March 12, 2020
To: House Committee on Transportation
From: Ed Paquin, Executive Director, DRVT
In Re: Transportation Bill Language Proposal regarding the maintenance of public facilities

DRVT appreciates the opportunity to comment on proposed language that would require public facilities be maintained to a standard that allows their use by all Vermonters, regardless of their disability.

- People with disabilities in Vermont often face incredible challenges to their freedom of motion when sidewalks, designated accessible parking spaces, access lifts on buses, train platforms, and other equipment are not maintained to a point that makes them usable by people with sensory and mobility disabilities.
- A well-made ramp is useless when it is covered with snow. A sidewalk is treacherous when it can trap a cane, or the wheel of a walker or wheelchair. A pedestrian crossing signal is not useful, and potentially dangerous, when it is silent or fails to light as designed!
- Excellent progress has been made in increasing the accessible features of our public infrastructure. The proposed language in 24 V.S.A. § 5099 makes it clear that infrastructure needs to be maintained in order to be usable by all of us.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act currently offers recourse, but it is a private right of action, legal action. Vermont's Human Rights Commission offers a venue for mediation and an attitude of problem solving that more often results in a mutually acceptable result than a litigated settlement.

DRVT sees this proposal as an attempt to assist all Vermonters with the ability to be mobile and to enjoy access to all that our state has to offer...on more of an "equal footing"!