

Regional Trail Corporation Mobility Device Policy

In accordance with the US Department of Justice (DOJ), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), revised regulations for Titles II and III, the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design of 15 November 2010, the RTC adopts the following policies concerning individuals with mobility impairments.

To accommodate mobility disabled persons;

- 1. Wheelchairs and similar devices built specifically for mobility disabilities are allowed.**
- 2. Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices OPDMD's, not specifically designed for disabilities may be used, provided;**
 - a. Motors on electric devices are 250 watts or less,**
 - b. devices weigh less than 100 lb. (43kg),**
 - c. devices are no more than 36" wide,**
 - e. devices have fully operating pedals.**
- 3. No internal combustion devices.**

The DOJ requires that the group which owns the trail(s) "make reasonable modifications in its policies, to permit the use of OPDMD's by individuals with mobility disabilities. However, if a group can demonstrate that certain OPDMD's cannot be operated safely on their trails those devices can be prohibited.

Requirements for prohibition must be based on actual risks. Those assessments can include the,

- I. The type, size, weight, dimensions, and speed of the device;
- II. The volume of traffic;
- III. The facility's design characteristics (width and surface);
- IV. Whether legitimate safety requirements can be established to permit the safe operation of OPDMD's; and
- V. Whether the use of the OPDMD's creates a substantial risk of serious harm to the immediate environment or natural or cultural resources.

(This is a paraphrase of the assessments included in the original DOJ documents.)

Rationale for the Policies Above

Preface:

The trail was designed and constructed for bicycling and walking. It has operated for over 15 years as such a facility. The popularity of the trail is verified by heavy volume of local, regional, national, and international visitors. Trail users have come to expect a safe, relaxed, quiet environment without the concerns related to automobile centric spaces.

Trail users range in age from infants to young children, adults and seniors. Walkers use the trail singly and in company with others. Families walk or bicycle together, parents enjoy the out-of-doors pushing baby strollers or pulling trailers, and children and seniors are regularly found in friendly groups. The trail has become a part of the fabric of the local communities.

The culture of the trail environment has been established to be a low key, relaxed travel, comfortable environment.

We believe that allowing persons with mobility disabilities will add to that culture and allow many who would not now be able to enjoy the pleasures of the facility a chance to experience what others have found to be an exceptional asset in western Pennsylvania. We also believe that limiting the sound, potential emissions, size, weight, power and speed of trail use devices is necessary to maintain this established and expected culture. In order to permit many different users to share the same limited and linear space, the rules can be adjusted, but must be structured to allow users to pass each other safely and interact together in that limited space.

We believe that the adjusted regulations above and the justifications for those regulations meet the intent of the ADA regulations by allowing other mobility devices, and at the same time maintaining the existing trail culture and the safety of all visitors.

1. The ADA regulations define wheelchairs, and similar devices, as devices designed specifically for mobility disabled individuals. These devices are allowed on public trails, and are allowed and welcomed on RTC trails.

*Wheelchairs and like vehicles **are designed specifically** for mobility disabled individuals. Other Power Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMD's) **are not designed specifically** for mobility disabled individuals, but may be used by others without disabilities. That difference is recognized by this policy.*

It is also recognized that OPDMD's constitute a large and varied group of vehicles including, but not limited to, golf carts, [Segways](#), [cycle cars](#), [electric bikes](#), [electric ride ons](#), powered [scooters](#), [velomobiles](#), and [trikkes](#).

Policy item #1 recognizes the difference between the two classes of vehicles and allows the use of wheelchairs. In Policy item #2 OPDMD's are allowed, if they meet specific requirements.

2. OPDMD's are allowed, following the general regulations of the trail which apply to all users, and provided:

A. Motors are 250 watts or less. (*The DOJ requirements for prohibition include speed as a parameter for regulating OPDMD's. Because speed is impossible to assess from vehicle specifications, the power of the motor has been used as an equivalent, with higher power translating to higher top speed.*) Average human power on a bicycle is approximately 125 watts. The trail is non-motorized. Allowing mobility disabled individuals the use of devices equal to a strong person is similar to having tandem bikes sharing the trail. There are potential OPDMD vehicles with motors of 250 watts and above. However the power, and thus speed of those higher than 250 watts, is deemed to be a danger to other trail users.

B. Vehicles weigh less than 100 lb. (43kg). Bicycles are in the 20 - 40 lb range. Considering the heaviest vehicle now allowed on the trail to be a tandem tricycle pulling a fully loaded trailer, that combination is nearly 90 lbs. The 100 lb limit should thus be applied to **all vehicles** on the trail.

C. Vehicles are no more than 36" wide. Much of the trail has been built to 10' specifications. However because the shoulders tend to be soft, and surrounding vegetation encroaches from the edges, the effective usable width is around 8'. With two way traffic, that gives a 4' width for vehicles to pass. Any device wider than 3' begins to encroach on the opposite lane and becomes a safety hazard. Bicycles easily fit this width requirement. A search of the trikes and trailers available proved that they also are within that width. In addition, bollards at trail access areas and road crossings have openings around 36 - 40" and thus are significant barriers to wider vehicles.

E. Vehicles have fully operating pedals. RTC trails are, and have been since their inception, used by pedal driven devices, bicycles, and walkers. It is the nature of the facilities and is what is, and has been, expected by users. Pedal-assist vehicles, where the operator is helped by adding power in proportion to the amount of force applied to the pedals, are vehicles very much like the devices now used on the trail. They are bicycles. Vehicles with operating pedals, such as pedal-assist cycles and trikes, allow mobility disabled individuals to enjoy the benefits of the facility while being identical in size, weight, and maneuverability to existing users. The bicycle culture, which has been established over the 15+ years of trail operations, is continued with the introduction of pedal-assisted vehicles. In addition, given that some sections of RTC trails have long sections through relatively remote landscapes without adjacent road access, the use of vehicles that depend solely on a motor are hazards for those using such vehicles. (Hand powered cycles are considered to have “fully operating pedals.”)

3. Internal combustion powered devices, gasoline, diesel or propane, are inherently loud and emit unpleasant, possibly noxious fumes. For the 15 year existence of the trail motorized vehicles, especially internal combustion powered, have not been allowed. The noise and fumes do not fit in with the natural qualities of the trail, and present a potential danger to users as well as the adjacent vegetation and wildlife. Internal combustion vehicles have been and will remain prohibited.

Adopted March 16, 2011 by the Board of Directors of the Regional Corporation.

Secretary:

President:

Elizabeth Manderino

Malcolm N. Sias