

City forms task force to address alleged ADA violations raised in class action lawsuit

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BALTIMORE — Baltimore's elected leaders are responding to a class action lawsuit that accuses the city of failing to install and maintain curb ramps and sidewalks, in violation of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

Mayor Brandon Scott on Monday announced the formation of a multi-agency task force to address the issues, including the Department of Transportation who will be tasked with developing a remediation plan and timetable for its completion.

The lawsuit was filed by IMAGE Center of Maryland, an independent living center in Baltimore County, on behalf of city residents Susan Goodlaxson, Janice Jackson, and Keyonna Mayo.

The city says steps had already been underway to improve accessibility, at least a year prior to the lawsuit being filed.

Part of that included a 2019 self-assessment by the Department of Transportation to determine what accommodations need to be put in place for city residents with limited mobility.

That evaluation found that only a little more than 1 percent of 37,806 surveyed curb ramps were in compliance with federal law.

It also revealed widespread problems with city sidewalks, which were damaged or too narrow.

"Individuals with disabilities should not have to fear entering their communities because of the unsafe condition of the sidewalks," said Jackson.

Last Wednesday, the city's Board of Estimates approved a \$27,000 settlement with a woman who filed a separate unrelated lawsuit in 2017 after falling over an uneven sidewalk, which still hasn't been fixed.

"It's long past time for leaders to commit to building a more accessible Baltimore that values our neighbors with disabilities and creates pathways for them to thrive," said Scott.