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The Accessible Icon Project

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The Icon Graphic Elements



Head Position

1 Head is forward to indicate the forward motion of the person through space. Here the person is the "driver" or decision maker about her mobility.

Arm Angle

2 Arm is pointing backward to suggest the dynamic mobility of a chair user, regardless of whether or not she uses her arms. Depicting the body in motion represents the symbolically active status of navigating the world.

Wheel Cutouts

3 By including white angled knockouts the symbol presents the wheel as being in motion. These knockouts also work for creating stencils used in spray paint application of the icon. Having just one version of the logo keeps things more consistent and allows viewers to more clearly understand intended message.

Limb Rendition

4 The human depiction in this icon is consistent with other body representations found in the ISO 7001 - DOT Pictograms. Using a different portrayal of the human body would clash with these established and widely used icons and could lead to confusion.

Leg Position

5 The leg has been moved forward to allow for more space between it and the wheel which allows for better readability and cleaner application of icon as a stencil.

Is this ADA Compliant?

The short answer is **yes**. Federal and state officials have determined that slight variations on the historical International Symbol of Accessibility are generally permissible as long as the symbol clearly displays a wheelchair and signifies accessibility.

Forward thinking companies such as The TJX Companies, have utilized another progressive symbol by the graphic designer Brendan Murphy. We are grateful that companies like Talbots have embraced the Accessible Icon as well.

Different states have different regulations concerning the size, color, and placement of the symbol. For instance, in Massachusetts, accessible parking spots must be identified by a vertical parking sign, but symbols on the ground are not required. We recommend that you review state and local regulations before painting the Accessible Icon on parking spots or placing the sticker on signs.

Although some states require that the background be painted in "Handicapped" Blue – which we will call Accessible Blue from this point forward! – and the figure be painted in white striping paint. Other states such as Massachusetts do not mandate a color scheme. For this reason, some of the logos we've painted have figures that are rendered in striping paint red on a safety yellow background – which we think might be superior for people with limited vision – while others have been rendered the figure in striping paint white over the Accessible Blue background. Again, we recommend that you review state and local regulations before painting the Accessible Icon.

The Accessible Icon, created by Sara Hendren & Brian Glenney, is in the **public domain** (<http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>) and free of known copyright restrictions.

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About

The Accessible Icon Project provides supplies and services to transform the original **International Symbol of Access** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Symbol_of_Access) into an active, engaged image. In close collaboration, the Icon moves forward with **Triangle** (<http://www.triangle-inc.org/>), a Greater Boston non-profit devoted to empowering people with disabilities to enjoy rich, fulfilling lives, in creating infinite possibilities for all people with ability!



We think visual representation matters. People with disabilities have a long history of being spoken for, of being rendered passive in decisions about their lives. The old icon, while a **milestone in ADA history** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Symbol_of_Access), displays that passivity: its arms and legs are drawn like mechanical parts, its posture is unnaturally erect, and its entire look is one that make the chair, not the person, important and visible. As people with disabilities of all kinds—not just chair users—create greater rights and opportunities for social, political, and cultural participation, we think cities should evolve their images of accessibility too.

Comparing the old symbol with the new

Describing the new image with words such as: active, abled, engaged, ready-for-action, determined, and motivated helps provoke discussion on how we view disabilities and people with disabilities in our culture. The symbol does not "represent" people with disabilities, but symbolizes the idea that all people with disabilities can be active and engaged in their lived environment. Our active accessibility symbol helps re-imagine how society and individuals view people with disabilities.



Moving Forward

The Accessible Icon works in three ways:

1. **CHANGE:** You can use our products or resources to change your signs.
2. **ADVOCATE:** We have resources for involving your community in disability advocacy.
3. **SHARE:** We'd love to hear from you. The icon is a starting place---a seed for conversations about accessibility, inclusion, and disability rights.