



Changes Needed in Accessible Parking

Picture this scenario: You are a wheelchair user navigating a parking lot, seeking an elusive accessible space. As you approach, another vehicle swoops in, claiming the last and only accessible space in the 25-space lot. The driver casually walks from their vehicle, assuring they will only be a minute. You are forced to park at the far end of the lot, hoping nobody parks beside you and blocks you from reentering your car. Sadly, this is a common experience for wheelchair users nationwide.

Our members consistently report a shortage of accessible parking spaces, attributing it to various causes, such as non-disabled drivers parking temporarily in accessible spaces, placard fraud, construction, and blockage of access aisles. Among these causes, however, one pronounced but easily remedied issue is the outdated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for the minimum number of accessible parking spaces.

The ADA standards, last updated in 2010, fail to adequately address the needs of wheelchair users and the broader disability community. The existing standards stipulate that only 1 in every 25 parking spaces must be accessible for the first 100 spaces. The requirements become further lax for larger lots, with only 1 additional accessible space required for every 50 spaces from 101 to 200 and for every 100 spaces from 201 to 500. Past 500, only 2% of parking spaces are required to be accessible. Van accessible spaces are particularly scarce, with only 1 required for the first 200 spaces, 2 for the first 600, and 3 for the first 900.

Data collected from 19 states, including AL, HI, IL, IN, IA, MA, MI, MN, NH, NM, NC, ND, OH, PA, RI, SD, WV, WI, and WY, reveal a significant disparity between ADA standards and actual need. On average, there are 9.76 disabled placards and plates for every 100 registered vehicles, far exceeding the ADA minimum accessible parking space standards of 4% of a 100-space lot or 2% of a 500-space lot. The median figure is 8.55 plates and placards to 100 vehicles, also far above the ADA minimum standards.

United Spinal Association firmly advocates for revision of the ADA accessible parking minimum standards. The current standards do not meet the genuine needs of wheelchair users, the broader disability community, and the aging population. We advocate for the following revisions:

- Raising the minimum standard of accessible spaces to 10% of a parking lot across all lot sizes, matching the national average of 9.76 disabled placards and plates for every 100 registered vehicles.
- Raising the minimum standard of van-accessible spaces to 2% of a parking lot across all lot sizes.

We urge the Department of Transportation and the Access Board to implement these policy revisions, ensuring that the ADA's accessible parking minimum standards are sufficient to accommodate the number of individuals in need.