



**MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE ON DISABILITY (MOD)  
MUNICIPAL AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT  
(ADA) IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM**

**FY17 ANNUAL REPORT**





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Municipal ADA Improvement Grant program  
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## Executive Summary

The Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) is pleased to present the following annual report regarding the first year of the Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvement Grant Program. Designed with the goals of creating new or updated Self Evaluation and Transition Plans and increasing access to programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities in the Commonwealth, the grant program has had a successful year.

Launched in late FY17, the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program received immediate inquiries and subsequent applications for grant funding for both Planning and Project Grants from towns and cities throughout the state. There were eighteen Planning Grant applications and thirty-eight Project Grant applications, for a total of fifty-six grant applications, submitted for review. Following a competitive selection process based on scoring considerations, tangible impact within the community, and the funding available for FY17, twenty-five grants were awarded for a total of \$927,729; \$118,009 for the Planning Grants and \$809,720 for the Project Grants. The applications selected reflected cities and towns of all sizes, demographics, socio-economic conditions, and locations within the Commonwealth.

Of the nine Planning Grants awarded, two towns created their first ever Transition Plans, three towns created specific sidewalk and curb cut plans to be added to their current plans, five towns updated existing Self Evaluation and Transition Plans; two dating back to the early 1990's.

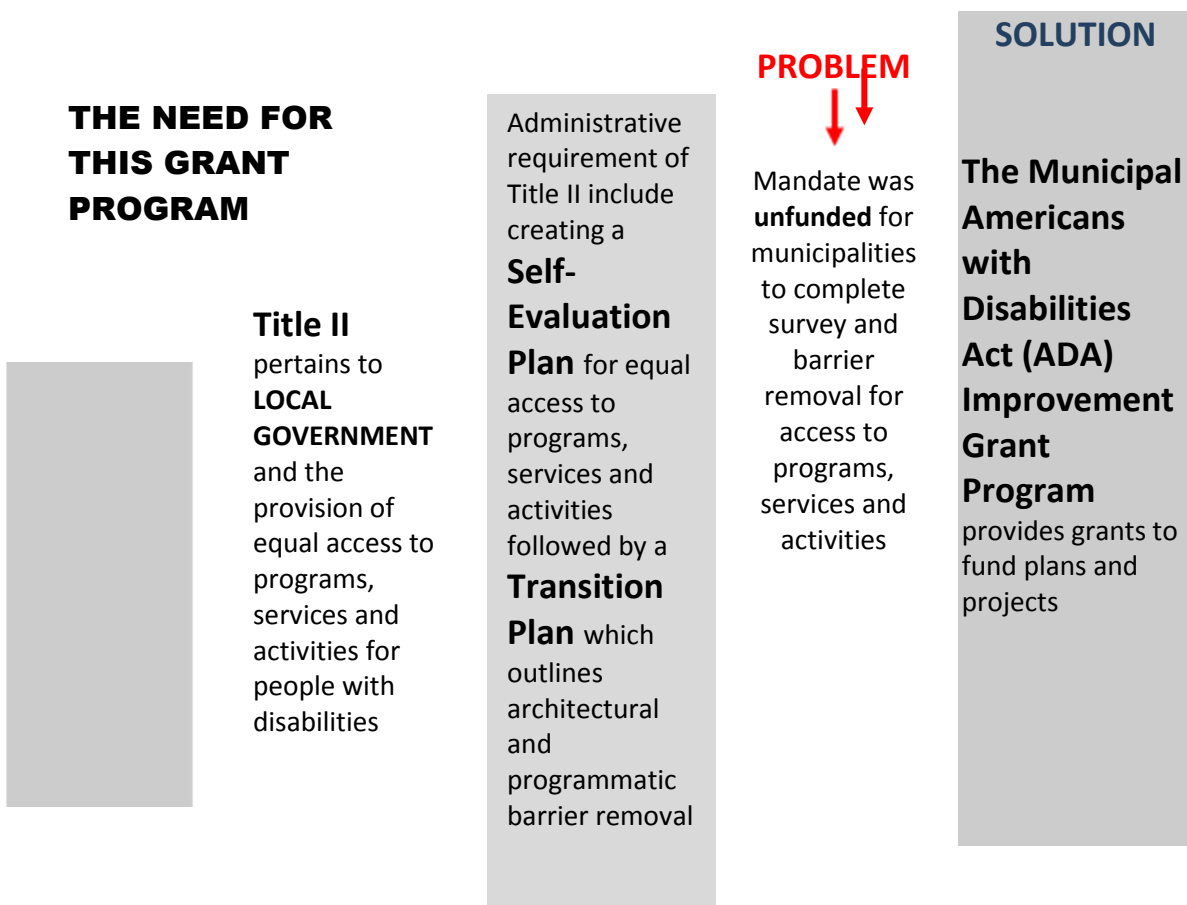
The sixteen Project Grants awarded to thirteen communities addressed a range of disabilities including hearing, vision, mobility, and cognition, through accessible updates to existing infrastructure, purchase and installment of assistive technology, and planning for better wayfinding. The projects combined offer both immediate and lasting impacts to current and future residents for increased access to facilities, services, programs and activities in these communities.

Internal control for the program was accomplished through timely receipt of invoices from grantees. Receipts of the Self Evaluation and Transition Plans via email were required for all Planning Grants. To ensure work was completed as described for the scope of the project, on-site visits were conducted by staff for all Project Grants.

The following report provides an overview of the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program, the grant application and selection process, a snapshot of scope of work completed in *By the Numbers*, information regarding the Planning Grants, award amounts and impacts of the Project Grants, overview of internal control, and concludes with look back at the FY17 program's success and continued goals for the years ahead.

## Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvement Grant Program Overview

The Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program is an innovative competitive grant program that provides Planning and Project Grants for the purpose of improving access to public programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities in the Commonwealth. Cities, towns, special purpose districts, and county governments are eligible for allocations up to \$250,000. The program is overseen by the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) whose mission is to: ***“bring about full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life...in a manner that fosters dignity and self- determination.”***



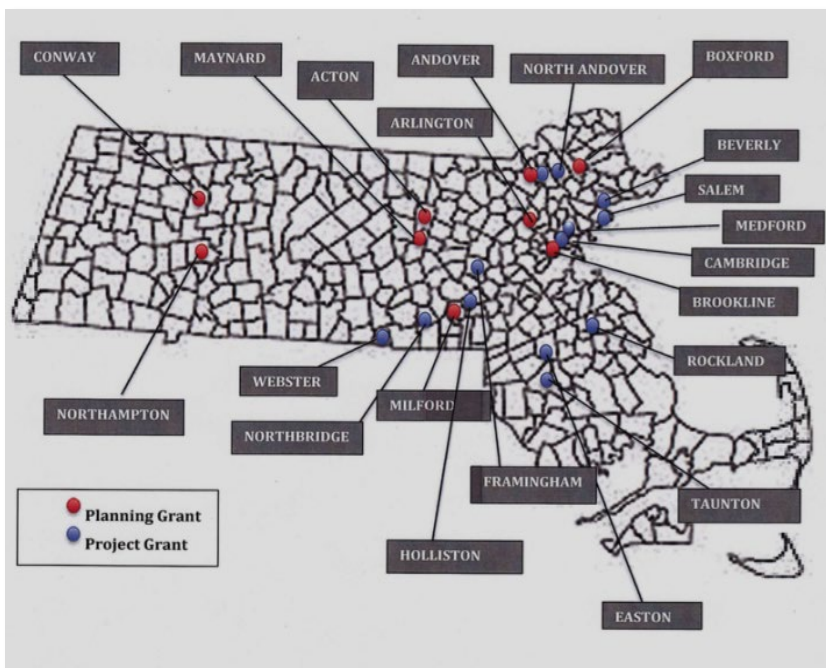
## Application and Selection Process

The application process for FY17 Municipal Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Improvement Grant Program opened in March 2017. Information for the program and the application is located on the Massachusetts Office on Disability's website. The program offers two types of grants, Planning Grants and Project Grants. **Planning Grants** are for communities to create or update outdated Self-Evaluation and/or Transition Plans. To be eligible to apply for a Planning Grant, a municipality must have completed the first three administrative requirements under Title II of the ADA (a-c). **Project Grants** are for barrier removal or purchase of assistive technology. To be eligible to apply for a Project Grant, a municipality must have completed all five administrative requirements under Title II of the ADA (a-e). Information regarding the scope of project, cost estimate, additional resources, project schedule, staff, maintenance, history of prior planning efforts for accessibility, census data of people with disabilities within the community, names of grant team members, and information regarding if anyone with a disability was involved in the grant application, are also required for Planning and Project Grants.

- Title II**  
**Administrative Requirements**
- a. Designation of Responsible Employee**
  - b. Notice of ADA Requirements**
  - c. Published Grievance Procedure**
  - d. Self-Evaluation Plan**
  - e. Transition Plan**

Selection for approved grants is completed by a grant selection committee utilizing a weighted scoring process. Every municipality in the Commonwealth is eligible to apply for a grant. At a minimum, applicants must be a member of the Community Compact Cabinet (CCC) and for those communities that select "Public Accessibility Best Practice" option, additional points were given

in the selection process. Additionally, communities with a duly established Commission on Disability (COD) (adopted MGL Chapter 40 Section 8J) are given an increased score. Extra points are also given to communities who utilized additional resources. The amount of additional resources, especially matching funds, also contribute to a higher score as well as indication of a positive tangible impact that the project would have on persons with disabilities within the community. Following the scoring and selection process, approved grant award notifications and denial letters were mailed out to grant applicant municipalities.



Communities that received approved grant awards were sent contracts to be signed and returned to the MOD. Receipt of the signed contract triggered the allowance for the scope of work to commence as described in the contract.

All but one community receiving awards reported having a Commission on Disability (COD). CODs play a vital role in responding to the needs and concerns of people with disabilities with a community, as well as serving as advocates for policies and procedures. One of the roles of the Massachusetts Office on Disability is being the technical advisor providing support and guidance to CODs throughout Massachusetts. These commissions also work to promote inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life.

Additional resources were reported by most communities that included actual matching funds from communities (\$1,054,418), in kind work from municipal employees who are electricians, plumbers, administrative assistants, and planners. Reports were also combining funds from other grant funding programs including the Community Preservation Act, Green Communities, Community Development Block Grant, Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Grant program (PARC), and the Loring Foundation. The ramp pictured on the front of this report was designed by Greg Swan, Engineer for the Town of Easton.



## BY the NUMBERS

In **FY17**, the Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvement Grant Program successfully **increased or updated** the number of Self Evaluation and Transition Plans by **9**, as well as **improved** access for multitudes of Massachusetts residents to public facilities, programs, activities, and services.

**141**

### Listening Devices

133 Top Cat listening devices were funded for the **Andover Public School System**

**8** Listening Technology Systems were funded for the **City of Beverly** to be used throughout the city's public buildings for people who are hard of hearing.

**500**

### New signs

With raised Braille for Wayfinding  
Restrooms  
Entrances  
Exits  
(**Cambridge, Holliston, Medford, Rockland, and Framingham**)

**7**

### ADA Compliant Ramps

To assist those with mobility related disabilities to access public programs, activities, and services at Municipal Buildings in **Holliston, Northbridge, Easton, and Medford**

**27**

### Restrooms

were updated to meet ADA compliance in Senior Centers, City Halls, and Public Libraries with new grab bars, toilets, latches, and flushometers. (**Cambridge, Framingham, Rockland, and Holliston**)

**12**

### Automatic doors

Were purchased and installed to provide accessible entrance and exits to City and Town Halls, Senior Centers, schools, and an ice rink

(**Rockland (2), North Andover (2), Medford (2), Cambridge, Easton (2), Northbridge, and Framingham (2)**)

**3**

**ADA Compliant water fountains were updated/installed in Cambridge, Rockland, and Framingham**

**200**

Accessible door handles were installed throughout Town and City Halls, Community and Senior Centers (**Cambridge, Rockland, Medford, Framingham, and Holliston**)

**1**

**ADA compliant pathway was built making a park and pickle courts accessible for all in Salem**

**2 LIFTS**

A limited use elevator was funded to provide **accessibility** to a former two story commercial building that is now a town owned Community Center in **Holliston** and a wheelchair lift was installed at **Medford's** Vocational High School.

**4**

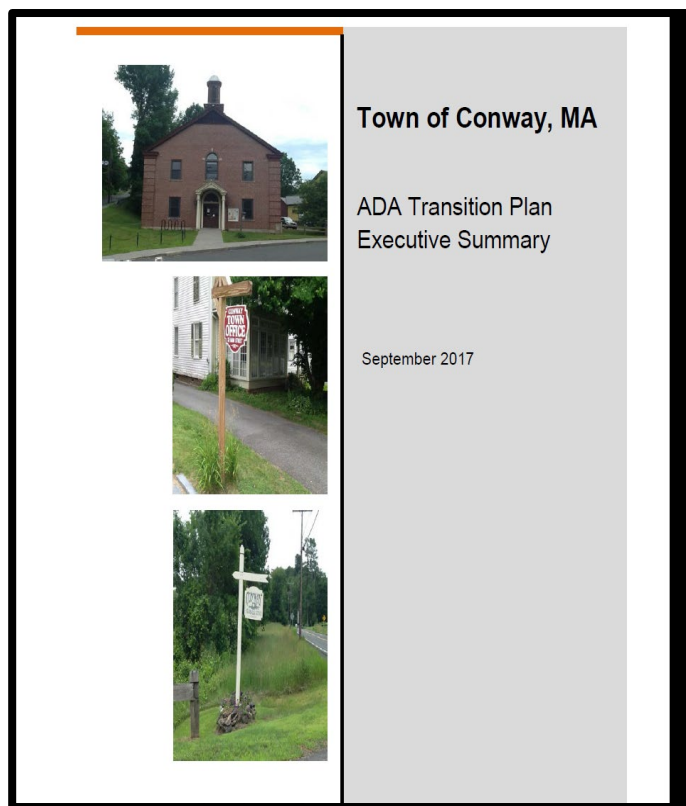
### Places for accessible recreation

were created at Webster Beach in **Webster**, Hopewell Park Playground in **Taunton**, the pathway and pickle ball court in **Salem** and the Loring Ice Arena in **Framingham**



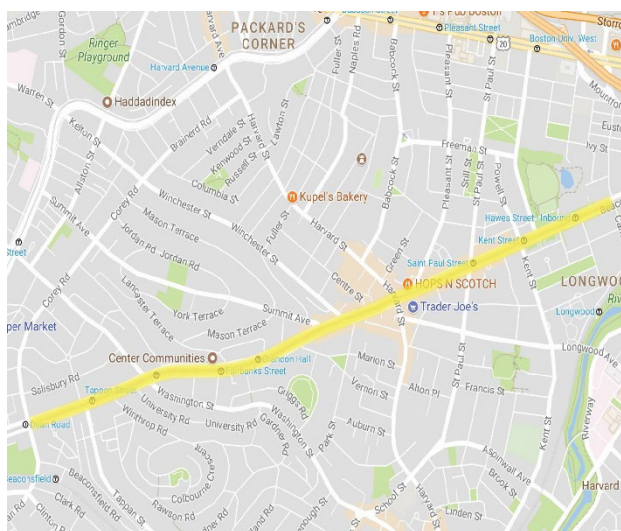
## Planning Grants

Enacted in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) went into effect in 1992. By January 26, 1993, all cities and towns, regardless of size, were mandated to create a Self-Evaluation Plan to identify accessibility to their programs, services, and activities within their communities. For a municipality with 50 or more employees, a Transition Plan needed to be created within eighteen months of the effective date of the ADA. The Transition Plan would serve as an action plan to guide planning and budgeting priorities for making accessible updates, including barrier removal, purchase of assistive technology and additional necessities outlined in the Self Evaluation Plan. The two plans combined serve to actively assist communities in strategically and fiscally planning for long term impact goals for accessibility to programs, services, and activities. The plans are proactive documents which aim to decrease reactionary work due to unforeseen issues related to accessibility arising within the community.

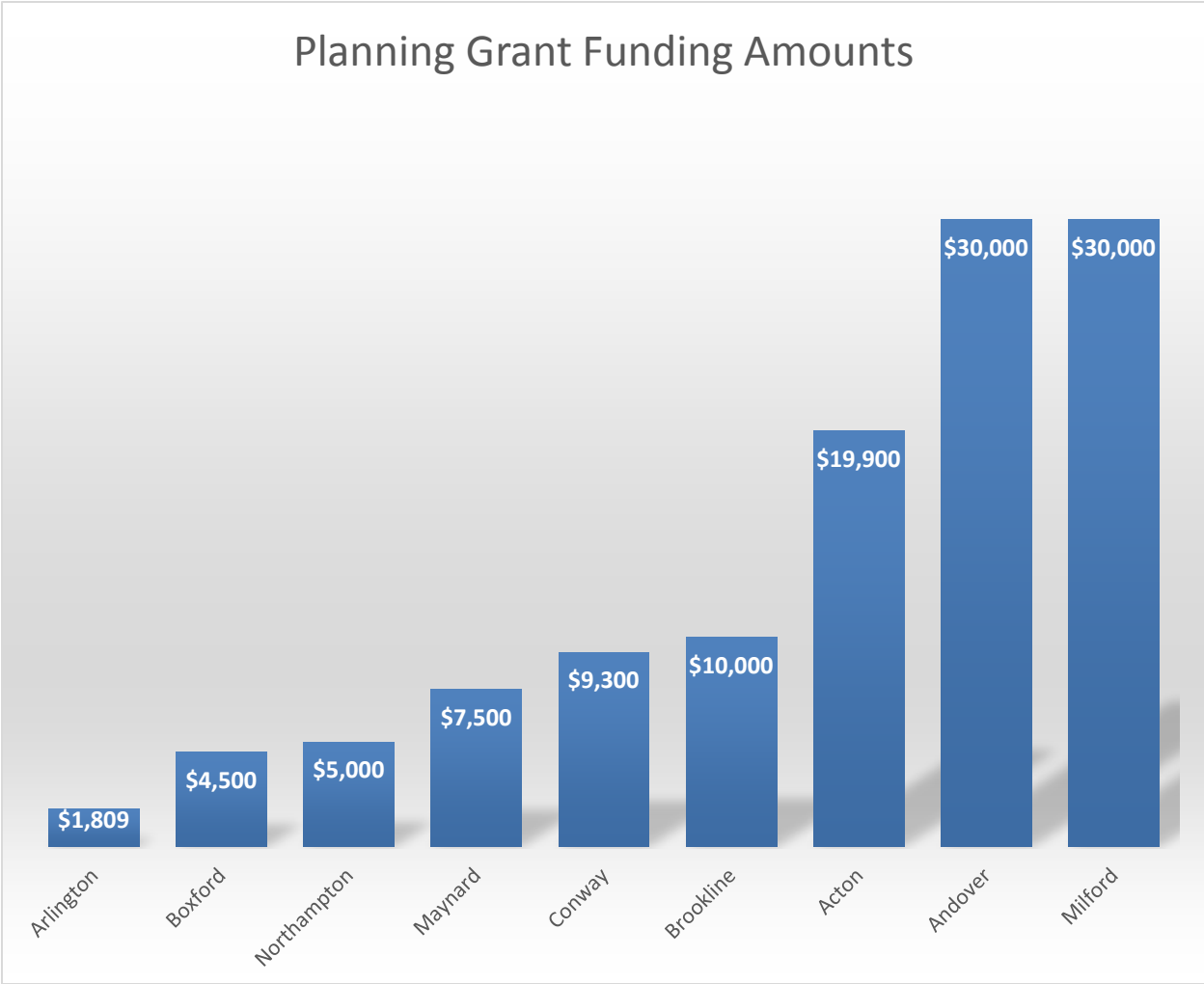


*Town of Conway's Transition Plan 2017*

To date, of the 351 municipalities in the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) has 120 Self Evaluation Plans and 135 Transition Plans on file. The Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program allows for these plans to be created, including the updating of outdated plans. The Planning Grants portion of the grant program assists with meeting this goal by awarding funds to communities who create new plans or update outdated ones. This year, the program funded nine Planning Grants ranging in awards from \$4,500 - \$30,000. The Town of Boxford and Conway created their first ever Transition Plans, the Towns of Acton, Arlington, and Brookline created specific detailed sidewalk and curb cut plans to be added to their current plans. The communities of Andover, Maynard, Northampton and Milford updated outdated plans.



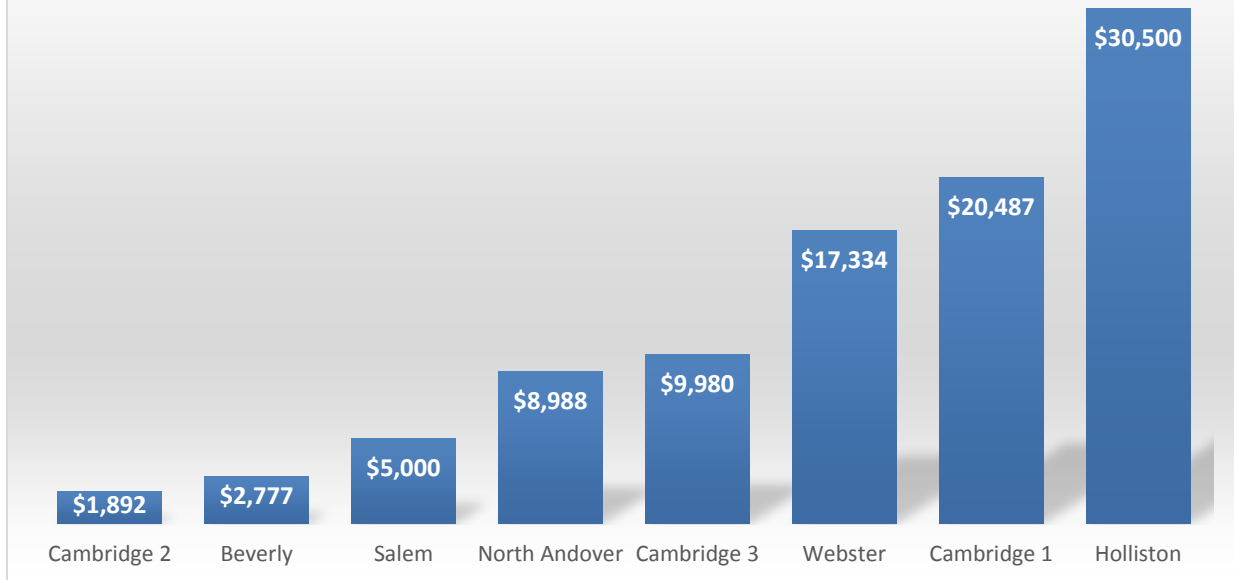
*Town of Brookline street survey accessible assessment*



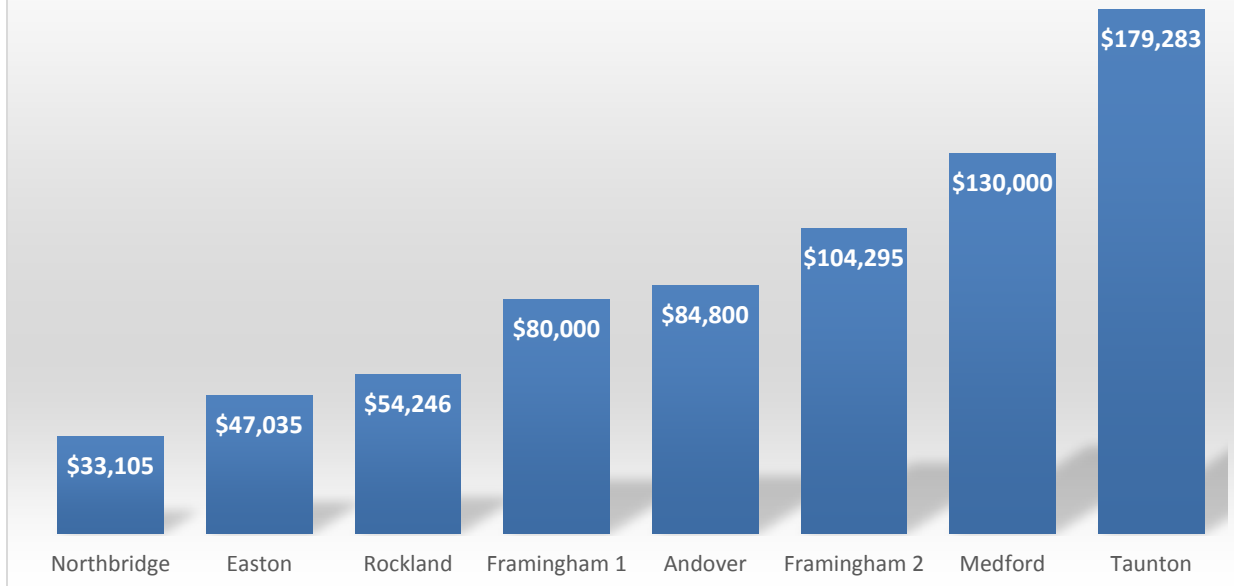
## Project Grants

One of the goals of the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program is to increase equal access for residents of the Commonwealth for services, programs, and activities within their communities. In FY17, the program awarded sixteen Project Grants to a variety of communities ranging in location, population, and demographics. The impacts of these projects have benefitted multitudes of residents in these communities through increasing access to programs, services and activities of local government including: City and Town Halls, Senior Centers, Veterans Services, Family Services, playgrounds, restrooms, an ice rink, libraries, parks, and sidewalks.

## Project Grant Funding Amounts - Part 1



## Project Grant Funding Amounts - Part 2



The following provides the name of the City or Town, award amount, and description of work funded for the FY17 Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program.

## Town of Andover

***“I finally can hear what is going on in the classroom”***

Statement from a letter sent to Janet Nicosia, Manager of Energy and Utilities, who submitted the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant application for the Top Cat Listening systems

Elementary and middle school students who are hard of hearing or who have auditory processing issues benefitted from the purchase and installment of Top Cat listening systems. The town received a grant award of \$84,800. The systems block out background noise and allow for clearer transmission of sound from teacher to students. The town intends to install these systems within all school classrooms. The systems are easily installed in the ceilings of the classrooms and come with accompanying components which now provide a value-added feature to the school building and assistance for future students to benefit from as well.



**Principal Pam Lathrop demonstrating the Top Cat Listening Systems**



**Grant Coordinator Catherine Barrett and IT Director Russ Fink standing in the selectmen's meeting place in City Hall with the eight Assistive Listening Technology portable devices**

## City of Beverly

Better hearing for all was the impact from the eight assistive Listening Technology devices the city purchased with the \$2,777 from the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program. At a request from a senior resident who is hard of hearing and regularly attends Selectmen meetings in the cavernous historic City Hall built in 1783 which boasts twelve-foot-high ceilings, the city purchased the devices. The devices amplify sounds coming into the ear as well as separate sounds such as speech and background noise. The city owns three devices making a total of eleven devices now available to residents. The system is portable which allows for devices to be used in multiple buildings including the City Hall, the Senior Center, and Library. With improved hearing, residents can fully participate in both critical and social meetings within the city.



## City of Cambridge

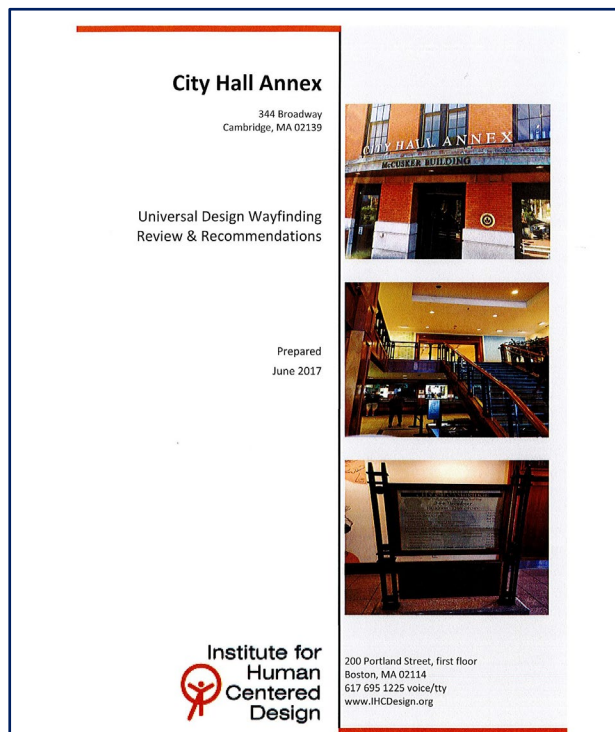
The City of Cambridge was awarded three grants for projects related to improving accessibility in buildings located in the Central Square National Register District (NRD). The updates will assist people with mobility, vision, and cognitive disabilities.

The city received \$20,486 for accessible updates to the Senior Center which included updating restrooms to be in ADA compliance. They also purchased and installed an automatic door with a push button for the Center's roof top patio, which is currently under construction. Cambridge's Senior Center is described as a "one-stop" multi services center for seniors living in Cambridge, and is a hub of activity offering a variety of classes and services including serving meals and coordinating transportation services.



*Seniors signing in for the day's activities at Senior Center*

The second grant of \$1,891 went to making accessible updates to multiple restrooms at the Lombardi Building. New automatic toilets and urinals, sinks, grab bars, latches for bathroom stall doors, several new partitions, and an accessible water fountain were purchased and installed by the City of Cambridge.



The third award of \$9,980 was awarded to the city for a wayfinding survey for its City Hall Annex building. The historically significant building has timely architecture that presents constraints for ease of knowing where you are going within the building for a variety of services. The building is slated for an upcoming renovation to parts of the interior and exterior, which will incorporate the findings from the survey and make recommended accessible updates. The City Hall Annex houses the Community Development Department, Animal Control, Cambridge Arts Council, Conservation Commission, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation.

*City Hall Annex Wayfinding Survey*

## Town of Easton

Seniors and Veterans directly benefitted from the newly constructed extensive ramp leading from the parking lot and sidewalk to the entrance of Frothingham Hall. The prior ramp was non-compliant and in disrepair, making the route inaccessible to, and from, the building. Frothingham Hall, built in 1902 by Guy Newell the designer of The Boston Museum of Art, is a simple yet beloved historic treasure for the town. Over the years, the building has gone through several reiterations of uses and now houses the Council on Aging and several other agencies, including Veterans Services. The town received \$47,034 to create the extensive switch back ramp. It was designed by Greg Swan, Engineer for the Town of Easton. Mr. Swan chose a composite material ensuring long life for the ramp for the many seniors today, and in the future, visiting the Senior Center.



*"Before Picture" showing cracks on bumpy unleveled sidewalk*



*"After Picture" showing new flat sidewalk leading to ramp of Frothingham Hall and parking lot*



## City of Framingham



*Rendering of accessible approach and entrance to Loring Ice Arena*

The city received two Project Grants totaling \$184,295 towards the \$6,000,000 renovation project. The majority of the award went to the purchase and installation work related to the elevator. The Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program funding was utilized in conjunction with city funds, from the Loring Foundation and numerous fundraising occasions. The Loring Ice Arena is owned and operated by the City of Framingham and by updating the building with accessible components; the building continues to be a valuable asset both financially, and recreationally, for the city.

Ice hockey players, fans, and residents of the city will benefit from the multiple accessible updates to the Loring Ice Arena. The arena which is one of the oldest “ice barns” in the area will now have a compliant accessible entrance with curb cuts, automatic doors, an elevator, handicap bathrooms throughout. This also includes the two locker rooms, accessible seating and viewing areas, accessible ramps flush to the ice, an accessible community room, and two interior ramps for easier movement within the building.



*Accessible seating and viewing area at the Loring Ice Arena*



## Town of Holliston

In 2015, after a feasibility study revealed an astronomical price to renovate the current town owned building that housed the Parks Recreation and Family Services, the town thought

creatively of other options to house these services. For a fraction of the price to renovate, the town chose to purchase and renovate a two-story brick commercial building. The Town of Holliston received an award of \$30,500 towards transforming the commercial space into public use space. The grant assisted in purchasing and installing an LU/LA elevator, creating two accessible restrooms, accessible handles for all the doors, and the installment of two exterior ramps, one with handrails and an automatic door with a push button and one extra wide emergency accessible exit door. The Parks Recreation and Family Services offers recreational classes, and family and Veteran support services.



*LU/LA lift at exterior of Parks Recreation and Family Services building*



*Accessible approach to building with ramp and handrails leading to an automatic door*

## City of Medford



*Principal Chad Fallon standing aside new wheelchair lift in the Collision Department.*

High school students and residents with mobility related disabilities in the city will directly benefit from the multiple accessible updates made to the Medford Vocational Technical High School. The school has 275 students with 35% having reported a disability. The City of Medford received \$130,000 for the purchase and installment of a wheelchair lift which was installed in the Collision Department for access to a lower floor, accessible signage and door handles for all offices and classrooms, and an accessible water fountain. Additionally, the school purchased and installed an automatic door and improved an entrance way. The building, built in 1970, is utilized by not only students that attend the technical school, but also by students from adjoining Medford High School's Therapeutic Learning Program, and residents who attend a variety of community

programs held during the evenings and on weekends. The school not only has made a number of accessible updates in recent years, but plans to continue making updates so that the programs, services, and activities are accessible to all who visit. Currently, the school is renovating its in-house student operated restaurant, Bistro 489, where students who are studying culinary arts and business are able to practice utilizing their knowledge and skills. The restaurant is hoping to attract seniors in the area with the accessible updates. The entrance to the restaurant is fully accessible with a ramp leading from the parking lot to a patio with automatic doors, and will include an accessible restroom. The updates the school has made, and continues to undertake, demonstrate its commitment to being a place for all to enjoy its programs, services and activities. These updates continue to add value to this municipally owned building.



*Accessible approach to Bistro 489 with ramp, handrails leading to automatic door*



## Town of North Andover

After creatively joining the historically significant Town Hall and former Fire Station in 2015, the town recognized that further updates still needed to be made, including making the back entrance to the building more accessible. The town received an award of \$8,988 for the purchase and installment of two sets of automatic doors with push buttons. The back entrance of the building leads to both the parking lot where the accessible parking spaces are located, and to the adjoining Senior Center building. The Town Hall itself houses various vital services including the Veterans Service Office.



*Accessible path from parking lot to back entrance of Town Hall where the new automatic doors were installed*



*Standing in the vestibule, Laurie Burzlaff, executive assistant to the Town Manager, opens the doors leading to the outside by pushing on the push plate*

## Town of Northbridge

Seniors and residents in the town directly benefit from the newly constructed curb cut and walkway for the Senior Center. The center is a vital community resource for seniors and residents with disabilities, as well as the general population. The building serves as a polling location for residents who live in the precinct and is additionally utilized for community meetings. The former walkway leading into the building was cracked and noncompliant. The new concrete curb cut and detectable warning strip now create a solid surface leading to the pickup and drop off area of the Senior Bus service, the parking lot, and nearby sidewalk. The funds also went to the purchase and installment of an automatic door opener with push button controls, making a complete accessible route for patrons. The Town of Northbridge received \$33,105 in grant funding for this project.



*Jon Frieswick, Member of the local COD, making his way into the Senior Center. He and his father, Bruce, were instrumental in pursuing this project and improving accessibility for all residents in Northbridge.*



*Completed accessible approach and entrance to Senior Center*



## Town of Rockland

**"I just went line by line and checked off what we need to do."**  
**Marcy Birmingham, Project Coordinator**

Working directly off of their 2007 Transition Plan, the Town of Rockland is making progress towards removing barriers to its Town Administration Building and historic Memorial Library building. With an award of \$54,246, the town renovated all of the bathrooms to be in compliance adding automatic toilets and urinals, new hand rails, paper dispensers, hooks, partitions, and latching mechanisms in the Town Administration Building. Funding also went to accessible door handles, an automatic door opener with push button controls for the entrance, an accessible water fountain, and signage throughout the building. Work at the library included accessible updates to two bathrooms. Utilizing its Transition Plan as it is intended, the Town of Rockland is financially and systematically planning for the multi-year commitment to making accessible updates.



***Accessible water fountain with hanging partition for cups in Town Administration Building***

## City of Salem



***Jenna Ide, Director of Capital Improvements and Municipal Operations, standing on new walkway from sidewalk***

**"Small improvements make a big difference."**  
**Jenna Ide, Grants Coordinator for the City of Salem**

Formerly an unstable dirt path, residents visiting Collins Cove Park are now able to access the newly constructed pickle ball courts, accessible picnic area, and multi-use court from the street and sidewalk to a new asphalt walkway. The City of Salem was awarded \$5,000 to create the new walkway and transform two tennis courts into pickleball courts through resurfacing them. This project is part of the city's initiative entitled, "Salem for All Ages," in which residents of all ages and abilities are encouraged to be physically active.

## City of Taunton

**"The Hopewell Park playground is designed to encourage children with all abilities to play together, bridging the gap that can occur in traditional playgrounds."**

**Quote from Taunton's Project Grant Application**

Hopewell Park, located in a Title VI/Environmental Justice area of the City of Taunton, was awarded \$179,282 for the renovation of the Hopewell Park. The updates included installment of "poured in place" rubber surfacing, and multiple ADA compliant play components, including two swings that both adults and children can swing in and enjoy. They also installed an accessible water fountain and an accessible bench. The playground is located in a large neighborhood park that includes the public swimming pool, ball field, and spray park. During the summer months, the park and playground are utilized by the Summer Festival Camp for children. In 2017, the City of Taunton updated its Self-Evaluation and Transition Plans making future accessible updates more manageable to plan for strategically and financially. The updated plans also highlight the city's commitment for current and future interest in making its programs, services, and activities accessible for all the residents of the city.



*Marilyn Greene of the parks Department with Kevin Scanlon, ADA Coordinator for the City of Taunton*

## Town of Webster

Residents of the town and outside visitors who come to enjoy the beauty and recreational amenities of Webster Lake will directly benefit from the purchase of a beach mat, beach wheelchair, and two accessible swings located at an adjoining playground. The town received an award of \$17,334 for these accessible components. Beach access to the lake is open to the public and the town's recreation department who oversee the maintenance and programming for the area strive to provide recreational opportunities for all, including enjoying the Webster Lake area. The lake area is a tourist destination and, by increasing accessible features, it can be further enjoyed by all.



*Visitor to Webster Lake travelling on beach mat to water's edge*

## Internal Control

Internal control for the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program was accomplished through contracts, statements of work, and timely receipt of invoices from all grantees. For all Planning Grants, receipt of plans via email were required and for all Projects Grants; on-site visits were conducted to ensure work was completed as described for the scope of the project and in accordance with accessible design standards.

## A look back and ahead

The Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program had two primary goals; to increase the number of new and/or updated Self Evaluation and Transition Plans and to increase access to programs, services, and activities for residents within the Commonwealth. Utilizing awarded funds from the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program, these two goals were achieved with the creation of new and/or updated Self Evaluation and Transition Plans and the numerous accessible updates made as noted in *By the Numbers* and impacts as described in the short summaries for the selected communities.

Looking ahead, FY18 already proves continued interest in the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program from municipalities within the Commonwealth. The program received a total of ninety-seven grant applications. FY18 recipients continue to be municipalities that range in size, demographics, and location within the Commonwealth, address a variety of disabilities, and align with the mission of the Massachusetts Office on Disability of:

*“bringing about full and equal participation of people  
with disabilities in all aspects of life...  
in a manner that fosters dignity and self-determination”.*