



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

MASSTRAILS GRANTS PROGRAM

Trail Accessibility Guidelines Checklist

All MassTrails grant projects involving Construction or Alteration of a trail with a designed use for Hiker/Pedestrians MUST follow the Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG).

This form provides guidance on determining if a trail project complies with FSTAG and is included in Section V of the MassTrails Grant Application. However, it can also be accessed and utilized independently. If the project falls under this category, please read FSTAG carefully before proceeding. FSTAG guidelines can be found here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FSTAG-2013-Update.pdf>.

Please follow the instructions carefully. For definitions of Shared-Use Path, Hiker/Pedestrian, Off-Road Motorized, and “Other” trails, see the MassTrails Grant Guidelines Document.

PART 1: Determination of Applicability

5.1 *Designed Use (Check ONLY one):

- Shared Use Path
- Hiker/Pedestrian
- Off-Road Motorized
- Other

5.2 *Project Activity (Check all that apply):

- Project Development
- Design / Engineering / Permitting
- Maintenance
- Construction
- Alteration (defined as a change in the original purpose, intent, or function of a trail)

PROCEED TO NEXT SECTION of this form if:

- The project’s Designed Use is Hiker/Pedestrian AND project activities include Construction or Alteration.

DO NOT PROCEED to the next section of this form if:

- The project's Designed Use is a Shared-Use Path. **All Shared-Use Path projects MUST be built as accessible.** DO NOT submit a MassTrails application if the trail will not be accessible.
- The project's Designed Use is Hiker/Pedestrian AND project activities include Project Development, Design/Engineering/Permitting, or Maintenance.
- The project's Designed Use is Off-Road Motorized.
- If your project falls in the "Other" category, contact the MassTrails Administrator to determine if the next section of this form needs to be completed.

PART 2: Trail Accessibility Guidelines Compliance

5.3 Length of New/Altered Trail (linear feet):

5.4 Does the trail connect directly to a trailhead or trail that complies with accessibility guidelines without any exceptions? Yes / No

Tread Stability: *See Section 7.4.1 of FSTAG.*

5.5 Is the trail tread firm and stable? *See FSTAG Definitions, Section 7.3.* Yes / No

5.6 If not, what is the length (linear feet) of trail tread that is NOT firm and stable:

Trail Width: *See Section 7.4.2 of FSTAG.*

5.7 Is the full trail width at least 36 inches? Yes/ No

5.8 If not, what length (feet) of trail is NOT 36 inches wide?

5.9 If/where the trail is not 36 inches wide, what is the width (inches) of the trail?

Tread Obstacles: *See Section 7.4.6 of FSTAG.*

5.10 Are there tread obstacles on the trail greater than 2 inches in height? Yes / No

Tread Slope: *See Section 7.4.3 of FSTAG.*

The majority of the trail should be at a 5% slope or less. Trail segments with a slope between 5-8.33% must be no longer than 200 feet without a resting interval provided. Trail segments with a slope of 8.33-10% must be no longer than 30 feet without providing resting intervals. Segments with a slope of 10-12% must be no longer than 10% without providing resting intervals. Resting intervals must be a minimum of 60 inches long by 36 inches wide with a slope of no more than 5%.

5.11 Does the trail slope exceed 5% for any segment of the trail? Yes / No

If NO, proceed to Question 5.16. IF YES, answer questions 5.12 through 5.15.

5.12 Does trail slope exceed 12% for any segment of the trail? Yes / No

a. If yes, provide length (feet) of each segment:

5.13 Are there segments of trail longer than 10 ft that are between 10 and 12% slope? Yes / No

a. If yes, provide length (feet) of each segment:

5.14 Are there segments of trail longer than 30 ft that are between 8.33 and 10% slope? Yes / No

a. If yes, provide length (feet) of each segment:

5.15 Are there segments of trail longer than 200 ft that are between 5 and 8.33% slope? Yes / No

a. If yes, provide length (feet) of each segment:

Passing Spaces: *See Section 7.4.5 of FSTAG.*

If tread width is less than 60 inches, passing spaces of 60 inches by 60 inches, with a slope of 5% or less and cross slope of 5% or less, shall be provided at no more than 1,000-foot intervals.

5.16 Is the trail tread width less than 60 inches? Yes / No

a. If no, are passing spaces utilized to comply with FSTAG guidelines? Yes / No

Tread Openings: *See Section 7.4.7 of FSTAG.*

Openings in surfaces (boardwalk, bridges, etc.) shall be small enough to prevent passage of a 1/2-inch diameter sphere. Elongated openings should be placed perpendicular to the dominant direction of travel.

5.17 Are there openings in the trail tread, resting, or passing areas of the trail? Yes / No

a. If yes, are openings smaller than 1/2 inch? Yes / No

b. If yes, are openings placed perpendicular to the direction of travel? Yes / No

PART 3: Accessibility Guidelines Exceptions

Conditions for Exception: *See Section 7.1 of FSTAG.*

Where one or more of the following conditions exists on a trail, an “exception” for that specific requirement can be used **where that condition exists**. All appropriate design options should be considered before applying the exception.

5.18 Check all that occur at least once within the project:

Condition for Exception 1: Where compliance with the technical provision is not practicable due to terrain.

Condition for Exception 2: Where compliance with the technical provision would fundamentally alter the function or purpose of the facility, trail, or the setting.

Condition for Exception 3: Where compliance with the technical provision cannot be accomplished with the prevailing construction practices.

Condition for Exception 4: Where compliance is precluded because the cultural, historic, or significant natural features are eligible for protection under Federal, State, or local law.

General Exceptions: *See Section 7.2 of FSTAG.*

After assessing projects to determine conditions for exception, one of two general exceptions may be applied. These exceptions are determined based on established limiting factors.

5.19 Limiting Factors for Determination of Impracticability (check all that apply):

Limiting Factor 1: The combination of trail running slope and cross slope exceeds 40% for over a distance of 20 feet.

Limiting Factor 2: The surface is not firm and stable for a distance of 45 feet or more.

Limiting Factor 3: The minimum trail width is 12 inches or less for a distance of at least 20 feet.

Limiting Factor 4: A trail obstacle of at least 30 inches in height extends across the full width of the trail.

Limiting Factor 5: One or more conditions for an exception exist that result in significant deviations from the technical provisions for over 15% of the length of the trail.

5.20 If NO Limiting Factors exist, but one or more Conditions for Exception apply to the project, check General Exception 1. If one or more Limiting Factors apply, choose General Exception 2. If no Conditions for Exception or Limiting Factors apply, no General Exception may be used. The trail project must fully adhere to the technical guidelines of FSTAG.

General Exception 1: Where a condition for exception prohibits full compliance with a specific requirement on a trail segment, that segment shall comply with the requirement to the maximum extent possible.

General Exception 2: If it is determined that it is impracticable to provide a trail fully complying with the technical requirements of FSTAG, the trail shall not be required to comply with technical guidelines.

***A note on the extent of impracticability**: Where General Exception 2 permits exemption of an entire trail from following accessibility guidelines, it is important to construct portions of the trail to meet the trail accessibility guidelines where feasible. Consider doing so especially if a prominent feature (such as a scenic view, waterfall, or other feature that would be of interest to visitors) is located between the trail terminus and the first extreme environmental barrier and there are few or no significant conditions requiring exceptions on that portion of the trail.

5.21 Use the space below to describe any additional conditions that make it impracticable to comply with the guidelines.

5.22 Use the space below to describe alternatives considered. Explain why alternatives were not chosen.