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Letter to the Editor: Page News & Courier

9 messages

Johanna Elik <johannaelik@gmail.com>

Sun, Aug 20, 2017 at 12:28 AM

To: Randy Arrington <editor@pagenewspaper.com>

Challenges for Disabled individuals in Luray using mobility chairs:

Disabled individuals in Luray who depend on a mobility wheelchair, a scooter or walker to travel to and from stores, library, Post Office and other locations, experience many challenges, and safety issues. I am one of four women who rely on a mobility scooter for my transportation around town. Recently I was chastised rather loudly and rudely by a woman who believed that all of the sidewalks are accessible, and that I had no business driving my scooter on the shopping center parking lot to get to the Shoppers Value grocery store. I wasn't able to explain to this person that my scooter cannot drive up any curb. She didn't give me a chance. I realize that, for those who are unaware, the difficulties may not be obvious if you are in a vehicle.

I am writing this letter to support myself and others, as well as provide education to expand awareness and identify the safety issues and concerns that we face. I will list some of the problem areas in town. Not all of the sidewalks have ramps. At the Luray shopping center, the ramp in front of Sun Trust on Main Street, allows for access leaving the sidewalk. On the other side where the vehicles make the turn into the parking lot, there is a curb, a continuation of the sidewalk, then another curb. To get to the stores, one has to travel the parking lot. No mobility chair can ride up a curb. The chair would tip over, throwing the person out into the street, in front of traffic.

On Main Street, where utility poles, fire hydrants are located; the sidewalks are too narrow for anyone in a mobility chair to navigate, requiring them to drive into the street, outside of cars parked on Main Street, uncomfortably close to passing vehicles. A mobility chair or scooter is in comparison to any vehicle, small, unprotected, and vulnerable for the passenger. Many sidewalks are cracked, with depressed areas that could cause tipping. Or, no sidewalks at all. The crosswalks are brick. Attractive, yes, but for an disabled individual with spinal issues, jarring and painful. The intersection at Main Street and Reservoir Avenue, is problematic for all of us in mobility chairs. The vehicles making a right or left turn with the green light onto Reservoir, are not waiting for us to get across the intersection, instead turning right in front of us when we are part-way or half-way across....way too close for comfort. Some stores and buildings are accessible, with automatic doors and isles that are wide enough for maneuvering. Many are not, with narrow isles, boxes and other barriers, steps and heavy doors.

I do realize that even though improvements in the many areas

identified are needed, not all can be corrected quickly and some may not be feasible for correction. We are asking for steps to be put into place for help with the areas having a priority, curbs needing ramps, sidewalks that are too narrow, and dangerous intersections.

We have no choice in our mode of transportation. In our desire to maintain some independence and accessibility, we have to depend on our mobility chairs. To access most areas in town is risky for us. Please watch out for us, in the streets, on the sidewalks, at the intersections, crosswalks, residential areas with no sidewalks. Until a person is in the position of viewing their environment from a mobility chair, understanding and perspective is not always possible. I hope in writing this letter to educate, increase awareness, and see in the near future, implementation of improvements for our safety and ease of transport as we travel around town..

I do appreciate those individuals who are helpful, courteous and aware. I have had many experiences with individuals who were kind and considerate. I thank all of you. And to those who may not see the challenges, use kindness in your responses.

Johanna Elik

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Incoming Message:

Date: 8/23/2017

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