



**CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNICATION:**

**ITEM \_\_\_\_\_**

**98-209**

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

**AGENDA:**  
MAY 18, 1998

**SYNOPSIS —**

**SUBJECT:**  
1998 SKYWALK  
SYSTEM  
DIRECTORIES AND  
OVERHEAD SIGNS

At their April 27, 1998 meeting, Council requested that staff research the inclusion of features for the visually impaired into the 1998 Skywalk System Directories and Overhead Signs project. Staff has researched the subject of Brailled letters for the Skywalk directories and overhead signs, and has determined that it does not appear to be a high priority with blind users of the system, would not be practical nor cost-effective to accomplish, and is not required under the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).

**TYPE:**  
*RESOLUTION*  
ORDINANCE  
RECEIVE/FILE

**SUBMITTED BY:**  
HAROLD SMITH  
CITY ENGINEER

**FISCAL IMPACT –**

The lowest responsible, responsive bid for construction of this phase one project is for \$86,496. Funds are available in Capital Improvements Program Index Code 389445 —Downtown Skywalk System. If features for the visually impaired are included in the phase two work, the phase two costs will increase, but the amount is unknown.

**RECOMMENDATION –**

**The 1998 Skywalk System Directories and Overhead Signs project is phase one of a two phase Skywalk signing program. It is recommended that the Council proceed with the 1998 Skywalk System Directories and Overhead Signs project as it has been bid, with no special features for the visually impaired, and direct staff to continue to work with Designgroup, Inc., the Skywalk Commission, and the Access Advisory Board in developing the phase two project to evaluate special features for the visually impaired.**

**BACKGROUND –**

At their April 27, 1998 meeting, Council requested that staff research the inclusion of features for the visually impaired into the 1998 Skywalk System Directories and Overhead Signs project. The plans, specifications, form of contract documents, and Engineer' s estimate of construction cost were filed with the City Clerk for the construction of this project, and bids for the construction were received on May 12, 1998. On the Council agenda for May 18, 1998, is a resolution approving the plans, specifications, form of contract documents, and Engineer' s estimate; submission of bids; and designation of lowest responsible, responsive bidder.

Staff has researched the subject of Brailled letters for the Skywalk directories and overhead signs, and has determined that it does not appear to be a high priority with blind users of the system, would not be practical nor cost-effective to accomplish, and is not required under ADAAG. This research included discussions with Designgroup, Inc. (the City' s graphics design consultant on this project), the National Federation of the Blind (Iowa Chapter), ASI Sign Systems (the low bidder on this project and also on previous Skywalk signing), the City' s ADA Coordinator, and the City Architect.

The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines state that “ Signs that provide direction to or information about functional spaces of a building ... need not comply with requirements for raised and Brailled letters, but they must comply with requirements for character proportion, finish, and contrast. If suspended or projected overhead, they must also comply with character height requirements. Building directories and other signs providing temporary information (such as current occupant' s name) do not have to comply with any ADAAG requirements.” Designgroup, Inc. has assured us that the directories and overhead signs comply with the requirements for character proportion, finish, contrast, and character height.

The 1998 Skywalk System Directories and Overhead Signs project is phase one of a two phase Skywalk signing program. This phase will provide new overhead signs and directories in recently constructed Skywalk segments, and will provide updated inserts for all of the existing directories and certain overhead signs for buildings with name changes. A second signing project will be developed for installation in fiscal year 1998-99, which will address vertical access signs to clearly

direct pedestrians to and from the street and Skywalk levels; parking garage/Skywalk interface signs; temporary event signs; Skywalk bridge identification signs; and the existing Skywalk graphic panels.

Based on the above information, it is recommended that the Council proceed with the 1998 Skywalk System Directories and Overhead Signs project as it has been bid, with no special features for the visually impaired. City staff should continue to work with Designgroup, Inc., the Skywalk Commission and the Access Advisory Board in developing the phase two project to evaluate special features for the visually impaired. This evaluation would include a Braille printed document about the Skywalk system, a speaker system which could give audible information, and other features.