

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
St. John's Lutheran Church

FINAL DECISION
Dated: October 16, 2024

Application No. 24-12

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board ("Board") on October 16, 2024. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

Board Chair Karen Gridley and Board member Jim Weaver were present in person, while Board members Marvin Forbragd, David Fenley, and Elise Wehrman were present via teleconference.

Susanne Smith appeared via teleconference on behalf of St. John's Lutheran Church. Peter Farran appeared via teleconference on behalf of 101 Mobility.

The issue in this application is whether the application for a waiver of the State Building Code for the purpose of installing a stairway chairlift should be granted.

St. John's Lutheran Church requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church in Northfield, Minnesota. The church is a one-story building with a choir loft. The church seeks to install a curved rail chairlift with a 180-degree parked feature in a stairway leading to the loft.

The Board reviewed the application pursuant to the factors identified in Minn. Stat. § 471.471, subd. 3.

With regard to the first factor, the need for limited accessibility when a higher degree of accessibility is not required by state or federal law or rule, the Board noted that the church's application states that it has members who have difficulty walking the stairs to the choir loft.

With regard to the second factor, the architectural feasibility of providing a greater degree of accessibility than would be provided by the proposed device or equipment and the cost of providing a greater degree of accessibility, the Board noted that there is no room for a platform lift or elevator. Based on the plans provided, the installation of a vertical lift would interfere with the sanctuary seating in front of the loft.

With regard to the third factor, the total cost of the proposed device or equipment over its projected usable life, including installation, maintenance, and replacement costs, the Board determined that the total estimated installation cost for the chairlifts of \$32,300 and \$200 yearly maintenance cost is justified.

With regard to the fourth factor, the reliability of the proposed device or equipment, the Board noted that the proposed chairlifts are manufactured by Bruno, which is a reputable company.

With regard to the fifth factor, the applicant's ability to comply with all recognized access and safety standards for installation and maintenance, the Board discussed that the chairlift model includes dual call and send remotes, a folding seat, armrests, and footrests.

With regard to the sixth factor, whether the proposed device or equipment can be operated and used without reducing or compromising minimum safety standards, the Board noted that the proposed stairway is 52 inches wide, and the proposed folded chair protrudes 16.688 inches. The Board determined that 35.31 inches of clear passing space on the stairway is a compliant clearance as allowed by IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1012.8 and 1009.4 where the occupant load is more than 50. The church has a smoke detector system, an alarm system, and a fire sprinkler system. The City of Northfield's Building Official provided a letter of support.


After considering these factors, Board member Forbragd made a motion to approve the application for a waiver from the building code to install the Bruno curved rail stairway chairlift with the 180-degree parked feature in the stairway leading to the choir loft at St. John's Lutheran Church in Northfield, Minnesota. Board member Fenley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board's approval is subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The stairway chairlifts shall comply with all applicable building and elevator code requirements. **Only licensed elevator contractors may install stairway chairlifts. Proper permits, inspections, and certificates for use shall be obtained by the licensed elevator contractor installing the lift.** Licensed elevator contractors may be found by searching the list of licensed stairway chairlift installers on the Board's website at:

<https://www.dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/access-review-board>

- 2) The stairway chairlift shall be maintained in the folded position when not in use.


KAREN GRIDLEY, Chair
Access Review Board