



210 North Fifth Street
Reading, PA 19601
610-376-0010 Office
610-376-0021 Fax
610-288-2310 TTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Amanda Funk – Grants & Media Manager
afunk@abilitiesinmotion.org
610-376-0010 ext. 175

Penn Street Bridge Renovations Improve Community Accessibility

The City of Reading hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony today celebrating the long-anticipated completion of repairs to the Penn Street bridge with several PennDOT, federal and state legislators, county officials, and city and West Reading officials in attendance.

The completion of this infrastructure project is the latest step in a journey toward greater community accessibility, which is especially significant for people with disabilities who use wheelchairs, walkers, canes, and other aids to get around town.

The Consumer Action Group (CAG) at Abilities in Motion, a Center for Independent Living, has made advocating for accessible streets, sidewalks, and trails around the City of Reading a priority. As we consider the beauty and magnitude of this renovated structure, we also see an inclusive design with a smooth and polished surface, complete with safe sidewalks and curb cuts, a boon to people with disabilities, those who are aging, and even those pushing infants in strollers or pulling rolling backpacks.

Increased accessibility in our communities through well-designed infrastructure benefits everyone in this way, equalizing community access to businesses and public facilities. This bridge between Reading and West Reading is truly an inclusive gateway that considers the needs and safety of all those who use it.

“Pedestrians are safer as they cross the bridge. Even our bicyclists are able to use this bridge. It’s built for the future,” said State Senator Judy Schwank at the ceremony this afternoon. Of the impact of the bridge on accessibility within and between our communities, Schwank remarked, “It’s proof positive of the value of investment in transportation.”

Anyone who is interested in getting involved in community advocacy for people with disabilities is invited to participate in the Abilities in Motion Consumer Action Group (CAG), which meets the second Thursday of each month at 1 p.m. at the Berks County Community Foundation. Call Abilities in Motion for more information at 610-376-0010.

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Abilities in Motion is Berks County’s Center for Independent Living. We offer support services, education, and advocacy for over 3,700 individuals with disability in 40 counties in the state. AIM’s

purpose is reflected in the Rehabilitation Act, which states that “disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, pursue meaningful careers, and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society.”