

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
Echols Repair

FINAL DECISION
Dated: January 8, 2025

Application No. 24-14

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on December 19, 2024. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

Board Chair Karen Gridley was present in person, while Board members Marvin Forbragd, David Fenley, and Elise Wehrman were present via teleconference. Board member Jim Weaver was not present.

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.

Echols Repair is a commercial agricultural equipment repair shop with a two-story office area at one end of the building in St. James, Minnesota. Echols Repair requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift to allow potential employees, customers, sales representatives, or family members to access the second level.

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 Echols Repair’s application indicated that the primary purpose for the chairlift is to provide access to unidentified employees and the public general who might wish to access the second level. The Board discussed that Echols Repair’s request did not identify any individual who needed the chairlift. The Board noted that the building was constructed in 2023 and was required by State Code to have a fully accessible route to the second floor at the time of construction.

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 the building should have been constructed with a fully compliant accessible route to the second floor and it is in violation of the 2020 Minnesota Accessibility Code. Platform lifts and stairway chairlifts are not compliant options for new construction of this type of space. The Board discussed the options available to

Echols Repair, including a Limit Use Limited Access lift (LULA) and an elevator, and determined that the architectural feasibility and costs would need to be further explored by a licensed architect.

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 estimated total cost of \$13,000 for the chairlift is justified.


With regard to the fourth factor, the reliability of the proposed device or equipment, the Board noted that the proposed chairlift is manufactured by Stannah, 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 device allowed the user to fold the chair out of the way when not in use for safety and to maintain the device in good condition. The chairlift model includes dual call and send remotes.

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 48 inches wide and the folded chair protrudes 13.5 inches. The Board determined that 34.5 inches of clear passing space on the proposed stairway is not a compliant clearance as required by IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1011.2 and 1014.8 where the occupant load is more than 50. The building has a smoke detector system and a fire alarm system but does not have a fire sprinkler system.

After considering these factors, Board member Forbragd made a motion to deny the application for a waiver from the building code to install a stairway chairlift Echols Repair in St. James, Minnesota because the building was not in compliance accessibility requirements for new construction, stairway chairlifts cannot be for use by the general public, and because the proposed stairway does not have a compliant clearance as allowed by IBC Chapter 10. Board member Fenley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The application for a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift leading to the second level of Echols Repair in St. James, Minnesota is denied.


KAREN GRIDLEY, Chair
Access Review Board