

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ACCESS REVIEW BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of
Grace Baptist Church

FINAL DECISION
Dated: July 2, 2025

Application No. 25-13

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on July 1, 2025. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

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

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.

Grace Baptist Church requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift at its church in Barnum, Minnesota. The church is a two-story building with a split-level entrance and a small, raised level in the entryway where the restrooms are located, and the fellowship hall is down an adjacent flight of stairs to the basement. The sanctuary is up a separate flight of stairs. The church currently has a straight rail chairlift installed in the stairway leading to the basement. The church seeks to remove the straight rail chairlift from the basement stairway and reinstall it in the stairway leading to the sanctuary. The church then seeks to install a new curved-rail chairlift in the stairway leading from the basement to the entry level and continuing up the steps to the raised restroom area.

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 several members who have difficulty walking stairs.

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 church’s application indicates that it is not architecturally feasible to provide a platform lift due to the height of the existing ceiling. The floor plans also indicated that there is no place to install a vertical lift without obstructing circulation paths on the entry level.

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 cost for the installation of the chairlift of \$20,850 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 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 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, folding seat, arms and footrest.

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 leading to the basement is 72 inches wide, the stairway leading to the restrooms is 96 inches wide, and the stairway to the sanctuary is 83 inches wide. The church's application did not provide the width of the chairlifts when folded. Nevertheless, the Board determined that any chairlift model that is currently available in the industry would allow a clear passing space on each proposed stairway that 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 does not have a smoke detector system, an alarm system, or a fire sprinkler system.


After considering these factors, Board member Forbragd made a motion to approve the application for a waiver from the building code to install a chairlift in the requested stairways at Grace Baptist Church in Barnum, Minnesota. Board member Wehrman 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