

Street art inspires redesign of accessibility icon

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HARI SREENIVASAN: One of the most recognizable symbols in the world is getting a major redesign to help change peoples' perceptions.

For 45 years, this has been the international symbol of access for the disabled. But here in New York City, the Department of Transportation is in the middle of installing an updated version of the symbol that advocates say better represents those with disabilities.

VICTOR CALISE: I saw it and it looked pretty cool. I was like, 'what a great representation of people with disabilities.'

HARI SREENIVASAN: Victor Calise is the New York City Commissioner for the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. Calise, who was paralyzed in a mountain biking accident, says this seemingly small change actually makes a big difference.

VICTOR CALISE: The old symbol is very sterile, very erect. And it really doesn't portray movement. And the new symbol shows what people with disabilities in New York City are. They're always moving and they're always moving forward.

HARI SREENIVASAN: The updated symbol was the creation of designers in Massachusetts and started as a street art campaign that illegally put the updated image over existing signs. Now its creators have co-founded an advocacy organization that is pushing to have the symbol accepted around the world.

The city has been using the new icon on car placards since last December, and hopes to have all DOT parking spots updated by the end of the year.

New York State is now also using the new symbol and the word 'handicapped' is being removed from state signage. Commissioner Calise says the new symbol isn't costing New York City any extra money. The new icons are simply replacing worn out ones. But that either way it's worth the effort.

VICTOR CALISE: I believe the symbol will help make us more accessible. It just portrays something that's exciting and new and fresh and having that forward moving motion.

HARI SREENIVASAN: The Social Security Administration has also started using the new logo.