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St. Charles Avenue streetcars must offer wheelchair access, consent decree says

Greg LaRose, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

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Rain finally arrives after drought

A woman waits in the rain for a streetcar on St. Charles Avenue on Monday, Nov. 7, 2016. (Photo by Chris Granger, Nola.com | The Times-Picayune)

The city of New Orleans and the Regional Transit Authority will have to provide access to St. Charles Avenue streetcar passengers who use wheelchairs, according to a consent decree approved in federal court Monday (May 1). Terms call for six accessible stops along the line that spans from South Carrollton Avenue to Canal Street.

Plaintiffs Mitchell Miraglia, Francis Falls and Thad Tatum sued the city and RTA in federal court last year, saying lack of access to the

streetcar was a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Their attorneys with the law firm Bizer & DeReus said in a statement there is not enough room on the St. Charles Avenue neutral ground for "safe, ADA-compliant landing pads for wheelchair users to board and alight."

In addition to access points at each end of the line, the consent decree calls for streetcar stops to be widened at Napoleon, Louisiana and Jackson avenues and at a fourth spot near the Riverbend area that's to be determined. The city and RTA have nine months to secure bids for the construction.

Once the stops are ready, the RTA will run one streetcar equipped with a wheelchair lift on the route. If there's enough demand, a second

accessible streetcar will be added to the route. The historic green Perley Thomas streetcars will not be modified, according to Bizer & DeReus.

U.S. District Judge Lance Africk signed off on the consent decree Monday.

Read the consent decree below.