New access facilities built

By Sam Cable

MIT's five-year program to construct access facilities to cost $100,000 this year is "reasonably successful," according to Campus Architect Harry Portnoy.

The program began two years ago, in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

"We have accomplished it as quickly as possible," Portnoy added. Jim Cronburg of the MIT Planning Office said he was "very happy it happened very well," he said, "but I took a year to get handicapped parking spaces in the main lot." He says he is "still fighting" to make sure that they are not used by other drivers.

Projects planned for this year include new ramps in Building 52 and 53 which, Portnoy says, will be completed by the end of this calendar year: a new ramp between Buildings 10 and 13; and a new ramp in Building 1, as well as several curb cuts.

Among the completed projects are the wheelchair lift in Building 1, and the new ramp on the west side of the Student Center.

A former member of the panel of handicapped persons brought together two years ago to consider the 1973 Rehabilitation Act said that the lift had been given top priority. Prior to its completion last November, there was no entrance to Building 1 for the handicapped from Massachusetts Avenue.

According to Cronburg, major projects in the future include a renovation of Amherst Alley, which the Planning Office is currently considering, the addition of more handicapped parking spaces; and the gradual connection of all the buildings on campus. Cronburg added that in all projects, suggestions are taken from people on campus. "We are certainly open for comments and suggestions about handicapped facilities," he commented.

Goun said he has found the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs to have a very positive, reassuring attitude toward the handicapped. He has also found them always ready to listen to advice and suggestions.

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A wheelchair lift in Building 1 is part of MIT's handicapped accessibility project. (Photo by Steve Cohen)