

Accessible Transportation Around the World

The Newsletter of

Access Exchange International

June 2011



GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS IN INDIA

How do you begin to reach out to one billion people with a message of respect for persons with disabilities? Svayam, promoting accessible transportation in India, has one answer that tries to equal the size of the problem: megaposters to educate both bus drivers and passengers at Delhi Transit Corporation bus stops! Svayam worked with the local transit agency and also ran a contest to choose the most creative limericks in Hindi to promote courtesy toward passengers with disabilities. They also incorporated materials developed by Tom Rickert and artist Dan Hubig for the World Bank's *Transit Access Training Toolkit*. Earlier, Svayam had organized a focus group of Delhi transit staff and persons with disabilities to assist in the preparation of the *Toolkit*.

Now Svayam is helping AEI with an offer to assist in preparation of our planned *Guide to Implementing Door-to-Door Paratransit Services in Developing Countries* (Page 5). And AEI is actively involved in the September 17-21, 2012,

TRANSED conference on accessible transportation and mobility in New Delhi, hosted by Svayam in association with the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, the Transport Ministry of Delhi, and the national Ministry of Tourism. We remind our readers of the new June 30, 2011, deadline to send in your abstract for a presentation at this conference. Information is available at www.transted2012.in.

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Spanish and Brazilian experience enriches two forums on accessibility in Colombia Cartagena and Medellín events exemplify “mobility without borders”



Participants in the Seminar on Universal Access held in Cartagena, Colombia – Photo courtesy of AECID

Accessibility to transport and public space was on the agenda for participants from thirteen Latin American countries at a seminar organized in April with the assistance of the Spanish International Aid Agency (AECID), Spain’s Real Patronato sobre Discapacidad, and the ACS Foundation in Spain. The seminar was held in Cartagena, one of the oldest colonial cities in the Americas. Participants signed an Iberoamerican Declaration Promoting Universal Access (Spanish text available by Googling “Manifiesto Iberoamericano Accesibilidad Universal.”) It is hoped that the conference series can continue with additional events in Peru and Guatemala.

This event followed up an international forum titled “A City for Everyone” held four months previously in Medellín, Colombia (photo below), with some one hundred participants attending different aspects of the event. The chief agency coordinating the event was

“Sociedad Accesible” (Accessible Society), an NGO which brought in authorities from Curitiba, Brazil, and elsewhere to share their experience with accessible transportation. Organizers hope to create a special office on disability rights, using a similar agency in Curitiba as a model.

Meanwhile, Medellín is moving ahead with its own integrated system of public transportation, including access at different levels to its elevated rail (Metro), accessible aerial gondola cable system (Metrocable), and accessible Bus Rapid Transit (Metroplús) network, according to a report provided to AEI by Alexa Diago of Medellín’s public transport agency. The BRT trunk line will include a full range of access features (photo below from Metroplús) serving persons with mobility and sensory disabilities, although some concerns have been expressed about the degree of access to feeder lines leading to the trunk line.



More news from Central and South America

• **México:** In addition to a rapidly growing network of accessible Bus Rapid Transit lines, Mexico City's subway will add a new 24-km line with 23 accessible stations, reports Libre Acceso. . . . Libre Acceso was active in the creation of new Mexico City Federal District technical regulations which promote the universal design of public transit . . . We congratulate our colleague Francisco Cisneros for his new position heading up the National Council for Persons with Disabilities in Mexico.

• **Guatemala:** "Shootings on buses in Guatemala City are a (frequent) occurrence, as gangs demand payments from those driving through their areas and kill those who refuse to pay," reports the BBC. At least 120 bus drivers were murdered in 2010 according to human rights groups. Clearly, a stable secure environment is necessary before even beginning to speak of safe, reliable, and accessible public transport away from Guatemala's more secure Bus Rapid Transit corridor.

• **Panamá:** Panamá has begun construction of its first subway (and the first subway in all of Central America) – from a *Mass Transit* article citing a Xinhua news service report sent us by Christopher Hart.

• **Perú:** Sidewalks to Lima's newly opened Metropolitano BRT system are being made more accessible with funds from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

• **Brazil:** Preparations for the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 are stimulating plans for access improvements to public transportation, reports Angela Costa Werneck. Our January Newsletter covered two other Brazilian cities: Curitiba and Uberlândia. The latter city states that 100% of its public transport is accessible and may be able to lay claim to having the most inclusive public transportation in Latin America.

AEI & FUHRIL promote accessible public transportation in Honduras

Tegucigalpa, Honduras: The Honduran Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (FUHRIL) is serving as a center in that country for disseminating materials on making public transport more accessible, using Spanish-language materials provided by Access Exchange International. Spanish-language readers may contact Yolanda Dominguez, Executive Director of FUHRIL, by e-mail to <yodoeco@yahoo.com.mx>



• **Ecuador:** A Bus Rapid Transit conference in Guayaquil in late April provided new insights into Latin America's burgeoning BRT systems. Guayaquil's Metrovía bus system features several innovations. The gap between bus and platform is eliminated by a boarding bridge that assists *all* passengers (photo at top by Gerhard Menckhoff), a "best practice" similar to systems in Curitiba, Brazil; Quito, Ecuador; and Cape Town, South Africa. In addition, Metrovía has accessible vans (photo below) that provide weekday service between home and BRT bus terminal for persons with reduced mobility.



• **Argentina:** Two-thirds of Buenos Aires' nearly 10,000 buses are now accessible low-floor models, according to a government report forwarded by María Nelida Galloni. The plan is to reach 100% within the next three years. This is in sharp contrast with the rest of the country, where less than 5% of buses are accessible. Sra. Galloni also reports that Buenos Aires' new Metrobús BRT system, served by 21 stations, is scheduled to open shortly with a spectrum of access features. Most stations of Line A of the Buenos Aires subway now have elevators, complying with a law passed in the late 90's, reports Gerhard Menckhoff.

News from Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America appears on pages 7 & 8

Washington, DC, and San Francisco meetings promote access for all



AEI's annual international roundtable (photo above) on accessible transportation attracted practitioners from many countries at this January event co-sponsored by the International Centre for Accessible Transportation of Montreal, Canada, and held at facilities donated by the American Public Transportation Assn. in downtown Washington, DC.



The Roundtable followed the annual meeting of the USA's Transportation Research Board (TRB) and the sessions of TRB's Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility. Russell Thatcher, Co-Chair of the committee, is shown standing, with Lalita Sen, also Co-Chair, seated at his left. Ann Frye of the UK and Tom Rickert of AEI serve as co-chairs of the committee's international section, currently focused on the promotion of the TRANSED 2012 international conference on accessible transportation and mobility in New Delhi. Abha Negi and Geetam Tiwari, key conference leaders from New Delhi, were present to lead the discussions.



Japanese researchers Tetsuo Akiyama (left) and Daisuke Sawada were hosted by AEI in San Francisco, inspecting access features of the Muni Metro (above) and meeting with accessibility staff of the Muni, the San Francisco Paratransit Broker, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and agencies in Marin County north of San Francisco in order to learn from each other about improvements in training bus drivers and transit staff to better serve passengers with disabilities.



The photo above shows a meeting of our Japanese guests with staff of Golden Gate Transit, Marin Transit, and Whistlestop Wheels, the Marin County door-to-door transit system. Japanese colleagues are increasingly active in sharing their knowledge and skills about accessible transportation with other nations

AEI expresses our appreciation to our many colleagues in the USA and around the world who contribute their time and resources to further our common goal of promoting mobility for all in developing countries.

- All photos this page by Tom Rickert of AEI

News from Access Exchange International



20th Anniversary



20th Anniversary

Marc Soto elected President of AEI

Marc Soto of Veolia Transdev, San Francisco's Paratransit Broker, was elected President of AEI's Board of Directors at our February meeting. Cheryl Damico, past Chair of the city's Paratransit Coordinating Council, was elected Vice President. Members and friends of the Board celebrating AEI's 20th Anniversary include, rear from left, Susan Rickert, meeting hostess and volunteer staff member; Marc Soto, President; Kate Toran; Richard Weiner; Tom Rickert, Executive Director; Ike Nnaji; and Peter Straus. Front row from left: Lucy Crain, Treasurer; Cheryl Damico, Vice President; and Bruce Oka, Secretary. Outgoing President Richard Weiner was commended for six years of outstanding leadership as well as for his work in pioneering accessible transportation in South Africa during the 1990's.
- Photo by Dorothy Skylor

AEI's Paratransit Guide moves ahead

Resources are coming together for our *Guide to implementing door-to-door paratransit services in developing countries*. We thank Richard Schultze for his volunteer work to develop guide sections which reflect practices found in any effective paratransit system, while Tom Rickert will gather materials from practitioners in less-wealthy countries which emphasize their specific concerns. The guide will focus on different modes of door-to-door service using minibuses, vans, and other small vehicles, including research planned in India on the use of auto rickshaws to provide low-cost paratransit services.

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Thanks to our USA volunteers

Tanya Slesnick, CPA, with the firm of Slesnick & Slesnick, continues to carry out pro bono annual audits of our finances. Our donors can be assured that every contributed dollar is well-accounted for. . . We appreciate **Rachel Ede** of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates for updating our website as well as **Nicolas Finck's** help in editing our Newsletters. . . . And ongoing thanks to **Maureen Blumenthal** for volunteer work in our office for the past six years. . . . Special thanks to **Susan Rickert** for volunteer staff work with AEI.

Donors around the world can support the work of Access Exchange International through PayPal

Donors now have a choice of supporting our work through checks sent to our postal address, or using the PayPal button on the "Donate to AEI" page of our website at www.globalride-sf.org.

Special donations

During the past year special donations were received from Jonathan Longley, Richard W. Longley, Meredith Roberts, and Dione Longley in honor of Lois Longley Thibault; from Carol Bloom in honor of Richard Weiner; from Louise L. Chu in honor of Mo Blumenthal, and from Deacon Janice H. Miller in honor of her sister, Nancy Lyon.

Donations In Memoriam

- From Sharon Walters Greyhosky, in memory of John Edmunds
- From Tom & Susan Rickert, in memory of George Moore, Jack and Ellie Huffman, and Barbara Monie

See Page 6 for a list of our donors over the past twelve months. We would not be here without you!

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We thank these donors who have supported our work during the past year

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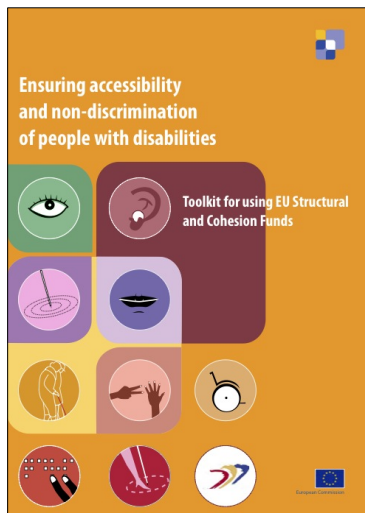
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News and Notes from Around the World

EUROPE

An impressive number of initiatives have borne fruit in recent months. You may download the European Commission's *Ensuring accessibility and non-discrimination of people with disabilities*, at www.ec.europa.eu/social. This technical publication (cover below) really gets into the nitty-gritty of making access happen as projects are developed that must comply with European accessibility requirements. . . . The European Union formally



ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in January, becoming the first international organization to become a formal party to the Convention with its emphasis on accessibility for all. One hundred nations, representing most of the world's population, have ratified this document to date. . . .

Important information on *Cognitive Impairment, Mental Health and Transport* is available to download at <http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/Pub/pdf/09Impairment.pdf>.

Several other key publications are also available at the site. . . . Go to www.aeneas-project.eu for a wealth of information on mobility for older persons, complete with reports from cities in Poland, Germany, Austria, Denmark, and Spain. A conference summing up the results was held in Brussels in April under the sponsorship of the European Commission. . . . Go to <http://www.aptie.eu/site/> for reports on the European Union's Mediate Project, titled *Accessible Public Transport in Europe*. Or go to www.access-to-all.eu/ for reports on "Mobility Schemes Ensuring Accessibility of Public Transport for All Users". . . . The first European Accessible Cities Award was given to Ávila, Spain, for improved access to public buildings in this medieval city. - We especially thank Ann Frye for her inputs into this story.

• **United Kingdom:** Readers may Google "Road Sharing: Does it matter what road users think of each other?" for a provocative study of a "moral model" for use when explaining and evaluating road user behavior. There are implications for how drivers respond to pedestrians with disabilities.

• **Portugal:** More than 200 seniors participated in a public consultation in Lisbon as input into a report in Portuguese titled "The Streets also belong to us," cover shown at right. Participants shared their personal experience in the use of sidewalks, cross-walks, and access to bus stops and subway stations. More than half had difficulty entering or leaving a bus, notes Pedro Homem de Gouveia. More for Portuguese-speakers is found at www.acessibilidade-portugal.blogspot.com.



NORTH AMERICA

Contact Andrea Shettle at gdlr@usidc.org for information on an emerging Global Disability Rights Library that would include information on the theory and practice of accessible transportation along with a host of other materials. Four prototype sites are being established by the U.S. International Council on Disabilities in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zambia, and Peru. The project is supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development. . . . And go to www.projectaction.org for their latest information on travel training to help orient persons with disabilities to navigating public space and public transportation. . . . Ever caught your wheeled luggage on some projection when leaving an air terminal? Space for wheelchair users is a factor in determining the width of sidewalks, but the proper width benefits everyone. Todd Litman in Canada has developed sidewalk dimensions that even include a recommended width for dog walkers! Contact litman@vtpi.org. . . . Contact mohammed.yousuf@dot.gov for results of a U.S. Federal Highway Administration workshop held this past February on cutting edge research to improve accessible transportation. The dynamic field of technology and disability is going to affect us all, and this workshop delved into issues of mobile computing, computer vision, artificial intelligence and robotics. . . . Our international readers may wish to Google "Accessible Pedestrian Signals Workshop Edition 2010" for the latest on this topic from the USA's Transportation Research Board.

(Asia & Africa on page 8)

News and Notes

(continued from page 7)

ASIA

• **China:** Nearly half of China's population now lives in cities and the percentage of older persons has sharply increased. The number of persons aged 60 or older grew to more than 13% in the past decade, reports the BBC. With an accelerated aging trend, the need for more inclusive transportation will sharply increase. Meanwhile, Vice Premier Li Keqiang has called for better services for China's 83 million persons with disabilities – a number that will rapidly grow in tandem with the growth of an aging population. More than 14 million persons with disabilities received government assistance in 2010, states the China Disabled Persons' Federation. (Disability News Asia/Xinhuanet)

... Joseph Kwan reports that Diamond Cab initiated operation with five new ramp-equipped vehicles in Hong Kong in March (photo left). The new service will supplement the large paratransit system operated by



Hong Kong Rehabus and will meet a need of middle-income residents.

• **India:** Some 2,100 accessible railway cars have already been produced for India's enormous rail system, notes the Minister of State for Railways. More and more railroad stations are now being retrofitted with access features. However, concerns have been noted about difficulty in getting to the stations of the otherwise highly accessible Delhi Metro. And concerns have been expressed in Mumbai about the current budget commitment for access improvements, as well as with differences between platform and rail car heights. – News reported by Aqeel Qureshi in Disability News Asia from The Hindu and the Hindustan Times.

• **Malaysia:** Planning is proceeding by the Land Public Transport Commission (LPTC) to include a spectrum of access features in its latest plans for accessible trains and railroad stations.

• **Philippines:** Richard Arceno reports formation of a working group with the Department of Transportation & Communication "regarding the mainstreaming of disability in the transport agenda."

• **Taiwan:** Reports from Disability News Asia have highlighted major progress in Taipei City, the site of the 4th International Conference on Accessible Tourism held in April and hosted by the Asia Pacific

Disability Forum and Eden Social Welfare Foundation. **Some 600 accessible low-floor buses** are entering service in Taipei and one quarter of the entire bus fleet is scheduled to be accessible by the end of 2011. "More importantly to many wheelchair users, 26 city bus routes will exclusively operate low-floor buses, . . . providing a degree of predictability that has never existed before." Taipei also has **152 wheelchair-accessible vans** providing door-to-door service for more than 30,000 passengers. However, access to public transport is less available in other parts of Taiwan (see "Argentina" on page 3, another locale where accessible transport is concentrated in one large city). And large gaps between rail cars and rail station platforms remain a problem, as they do in Mumbai, India.

Libya



Beginning a long road to accessibility

The sad effects of violence in Libya ripple out beyond the daily news reports. For example, a successful conference on accessibility, held some months ago in Benghazi, Libya, provided hope for improved mobility for persons with disabilities. The photo above from Benghazi shows personnel of conference organizers in Libya from the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES). We hope the interest shown at

this pioneering event in northern Africa will yet bear fruit.

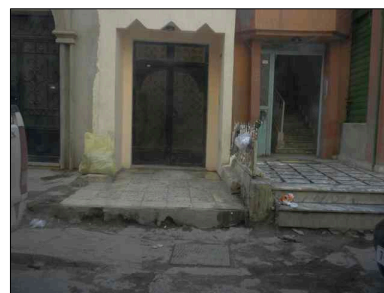


Photo at left shows inaccessible sidewalk in Benghazi.

Latin America news appears on pages 2 & 3