



Motorized "auto-rickshaws" are a major transit mode beyond Asia. From left: Scenes from Nigeria, Tanzania, Peru, and Guatemala - Photos by Ike Nnaji, Christa Williams, Tom Rickert, and Peter Straus

Accessible Transportation Around the World

The Newsletter of

Access Exchange International

January 2014



Access to buses and rail is required, but it is not enough.

Millions of disabled persons need door-to-door paratransit service.

Smaller vehicles are part of the solution.

ALSO ON THE INSIDE: Page 4: BRT in India; Page 5: All of South America has begun the journey; Page 6: Transport access on the agenda at the U.N.; Pages 7 & 8: News and Notes from around the world

Auto-rickshaws and other three-wheelers don't belong everywhere. Think northern climates with heavy snow, or three-wheelers with a top speed of 50 km/hr on freeways with traffic at more than twice that speed. And how do you stow a wheelchair on an auto-rickshaw? Aparna Kota, a new AEI Board member who grew up in India, sent us the photo at bottom left, travelling with her disabled grand-father.* One solution is the compartment behind the passenger in some models, as shown below. (continued next page)





Nothing fancy, but it does the job. The photo at left, taken by Janett Jiménez on the outskirts of Mexico City, shows a friend and her daughter at the inauguration of a motor-bike "taxi" driven by her husband, while the photo at right shows a pedal driven version. This type of transportation "pops up" around the world. With a low floor, it helps many disabled people with inexpensive service.



PARATRANSIT FOR ALL . . . (from page 1)

Stakeholders are looking into resolving other problems. One concern centers on the need for disabled persons to call for a door-to-door vehicle from where they live rather than travelling to a nearby street to hail a cab or smaller vehicle. Several innovative startups in India are experimenting with call centers. We have been in touch with Navdeep Asija, founder of EcoCab, a pedicab operation in Chandigarh in northern India. More information is available at chandigarh.ecocabs.org. EcoCabs also provides seat belts in their pedicabs and directly appeals to older persons in need of safe and secure transportation, as evident from their graphic below. AEI has also initiated contacts with practitioners in India and Peru with a view toward researching the use of seat belts as one of

several safety features which might further enhance the use of these small vehicles. So, while we agree that auto- and cycle-rickshaws don't belong everywhere, we feel they have an important role to play.

AEI's roles in promoting paratransit

Access Exchange International has embarked on a long-term effort to promote expanded door-to-door paratransit services in less-wealthy countries. While we have been part of the gains in accessible Bus Rapid Transit and rail services reported over the past twenty years in this newsletter, similar gains are not seen when it comes to promoting universal access to paratransit. Bus Rapid Transit corridors and railroad lines often enjoy strong institutional support from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and agencies such as the ITDP and EMBARQ. The provision of access to mini-buses, taxis, and auto- and cycle-rickshaws or similar vehicles lack such support. They are "orphans." Quite literally, millions of persons with disabilities are trapped where they live, without hope for education, employment, or anything but emergency health care (if that!).

To address this situation, AEI has published a 90-page guide, *Paratransit for mobility-impaired persons in developing regions: Starting up and scaling up*, as well as a Spanish version, both available at our website at www.globalride-sf.org. And, at the invitation of EMBARQ, we have posted a detailed discussion of auto- and cycle-rickshaw accessibility issues on their City Fix blog. We invite you to go to <http://bit.ly/16Xwr47>.



PARATRANSIT FOR ALL . . . (from page 2)

More in-depth resources are now available

Our colleague Richard Schultze has completed supplemental materials that provide more in-depth materials on key topics in our paratransit guide. These materials cover

- (1) planning and performance monitoring,
- (2) scheduling and dispatching, and
- (3) financial management.

Go to the AEI website at www.globalride-sf.org/paratransit/supplement/ to download these additional resources.

Summing up

The purpose of this feature article is to provide perspective to practitioners who too often are fixated on larger vehicles such as vans and mini-buses. Smaller vehicles in the private sector, when properly designed and driven, have their place alongside the many thousands of vans and mini-buses that are operated by public, private, and social service agencies around the world. Each mode is suitable in different circumstances. During the past several months we have received

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The great majority of our staff time is volunteered. We also thank Tanya Slesnick, CPA, for pro bono assistance as our auditor; Maureen Blumenthal for office assistance; Jane Rice for work on our website; and Susan Rickert for staff assistance.



Paratransit using three-wheeled vehicles with seat belts was launched in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam in July, with assistance from South Korea – Report by Tuoi Tre News, photo by DRD

announcements or corresponded with new van and mini-bus systems in Abu Dhabi, UAE; Saipan; Bangkok, Thailand; Rosario, Argentina; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Lima, Peru. Many modes with one goal! (Photo Muni. de San Borja, *El Comercio*, Peru, 15 Nov.)



* The photos below and on page 1 show Aparna Kota and her family on a trip to the sea with her grandfather, Professor KSR Sarma, founder of Tripura Sundari Charitable organization in Machilipatnam, India. It was his wheelchair and he refused to take a costly taxi so he could donate more of his money for the foundation. Thus his chair was tied to the rickshaw! Prof. Sarma has since died and we dedicate this newsletter to his memory and all those everywhere who seek a better world.



Asian cities move toward more inclusive Bus Rapid Transit



Ahmedabad, India's, BRT system takes care to keep the platform-to-bus gap as small as possible for all passengers (photo at left sent by Sam Zimmerman). Taking its cue from Ahmedabad, Indore – 400 km to the east – has installed an innovative approach, as shown in the insert, that provides bus drivers with more confidence to safely minimize the gap (above photo sent us by Gerhard Menckhoff).

ASIA: As seven large cities in western India continue to build or operate Bus Rapid Transit systems with a spectrum of access features for seniors and for passengers with disabilities, Amritsar and Ludhiana, major cities in northern India, have also announced plans for BRT construction. A recent tabulation of BRT systems, probably already outdated, reports thirty-three Asian cities with BRT corridors that serve over eight million people every day.

AFRICA: Cape Town, South Africa, has launched several highly accessible low-floor feeder bus services to serve its inclusive Bus Rapid Transit system. The system, called MyCiTi, is thought by many to be Africa's most accessible BRT project. The Cape Town system aims to integrate all public transport modes.

LATIN AMERICA: BRT systems with many access features continue to undergo explosive growth in the region. New systems are being planned in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Belo Horizonte, Brazil's, new system will be named "MOVE" – a name with a common meaning for Portuguese, Spanish, and English speakers. And Mexibús, in the State of Mexico, has initiated a second BRT corridor with expanded service now involving 150 buses (photo courtesy of Janett Jiménez).



REVISED BRT GUIDE: The Institute for Transportation Development and Policy (ITDP) has announced that the much-delayed 4th edition of the Bus Rapid Transit Planning Guide will be available during 2014. Access Exchange International has assisted with compiling accessibility guidelines for incorporation into this publication.

With first steps toward accessible city buses in Bolivia and Paraguay . . .

All of South America has made a start toward inclusive transit



Rejoicing in La Paz: Virginia Cordero B., President of Bolivia's "Women for Independent Living," inaugurates the first lift-equipped city bus in this Andean nation. The Chinese-made vehicles are also customized to handle the 4,000 meter (13,000+ feet) altitude of the world's highest capital city. A total of 61 buses are being put into service (photos above).

Meanwhile, the city of Asunción, Paraguay, has initiated that nation's wheelchair-accessible bus services, notes the Fundación Saraki. Eight lift-equipped buses are planned at this time (photo at right). Accessible transport features, including lifts or ramps, are part of a new push for inclusivity in Paraguay, complementing accessible public transport norms published in 2012. While it is just a start in some locales, every major country in South America has now taken first steps to initiate accessible public transportation.* Hopefully, a planned Bus Rapid Transit system in Asunción will further enhance accessibility.



AEI has also been in contact with the Metropolitan Planning Institute of Caracas, Venezuela, which reports that 10% of the buses on two lines are wheelchair-accessible (photo at right). Access to Caracas' underground Metro will be enhanced by at least six elevator-equipped stations on a new line. The Institute is promoting an "Access for All" program.



*First steps toward inclusive public transport have not been reported in some Central American and several Caribbean nations, including Suriname, Guyana, French Guiana, Honduras, and Belize. Photos this page courtesy of MOLVI-BOLIVIA, Fundación Saraki, and the Instituto Metropolitano de Urbanismo de Caracas.

Working with our colleagues to make it all happen . . .

Transport access on the agenda at the U.N.



July panel sponsored by the United Nations Dept. of Economic & Social Affairs - Photo by Tom Rickert

Access Exchange International joined colleagues and advocates from around the world in presentations at a United Nations forum in New York this past July. The event explored options for practical action to include for the first time a focus on persons with disabilities as the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals are refined following their current target date of 2015. AEI was joined by leaders of EMBARQ, the ITDP (Institute for

Transportation Development and Policy), GAATES (the Global Alliance for Accessible Technologies and Environments), and other agencies.

Together we focused on universal access to public transportation as part of a larger picture which also includes access to the Internet and a spectrum of other development issues. Tom Rickert of AEI focused on the need to supplement "top down" policy formation and "bottom up" advocacy with a strategy to promote city-to-city involvement in the spread of inclusive transportation. He cited the example of the spread of accessible Bus Rapid Transit concepts from Brazil to Colombia & Ecuador, and then on to North America, South Africa, India, and many other countries.



A reflective moment after presentations at the U.N. Forum. From left: Tom Rickert, AEI's Executive Director; Ann Frye, who chairs the GAATES Transportation Committee; Mukhtar al Shibani, the President of GAATES; and Andrés Balcázar of Mexico City who is on their staff. Ms. Frye is currently heading up a global survey of the transportation needs and concerns of persons with disabilities.

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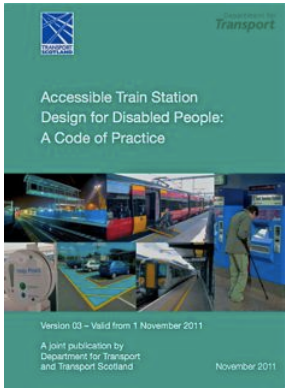
Our 15th year at APTA in downtown Washington January 16 DC Roundtable on access to public transit in developing countries

Our 15th Annual Roundtable on accessible transportation in the developing world will be held on Thursday, January 16, 2014, 9 a.m. to 12 noon at facilities provided pro bono by the American Public Transportation Assn. (APTA) at 1666 "K" Street, NW, in downtown Washington, DC. The Roundtable is co-sponsored by AEI and the International Centre for Accessible Transportation (ICAT) of Montréal, Canada. There is no charge for the event. However, space is limited and we encourage you to contact AEI to pre-register if you wish to participate.

News and Notes from Around the World

Europe

- **Scotland:** Google *Accessible Train Station Design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice* for this excellent joint publication by the UK's Department of Transport and Transport Scotland. The 300+ page document covers inclusive design for the full range of persons with mobility and sensory impairments and is valuable for Bus Rapid Transit and other transit stations and terminals as well. . . . Unfortunately, good design does not always prevent over-crowding of rail stations due to operating problems, reported as a growing concern in France and Germany.

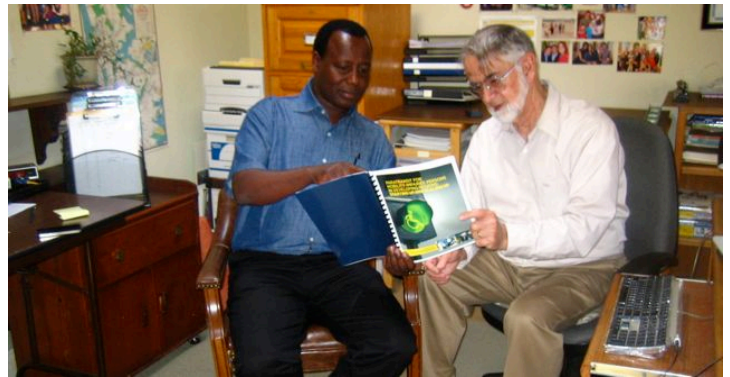


- **Austria:** AEI is part of a Scientific Advisory Board to assist the Zero Project, with staff in Geneva, to choose innovative projects from around the world that "have achieved concrete impact on the ground for improving the daily lives of persons with disabilities." Winners will be announced at the Zero Project Conference 2014 to be held in Vienna on February 27-28. Go to <http://www.zeroproject.org/> for information.

Africa

- **Zambia:** A report from Lusaka by Shaun Cleaver, forwarded by our colleague Steve Yaffe, states "As for the disabled, the current situation at least disadvantages, if not outright excludes, riders who have practical difficulties in meeting the expectation of boarding quickly and squeezing oneself into a tight space." Disabled persons are viewed as "problem riders" who are, in fact, seldom if ever seen on public transit. One problem: Financial squeezes on transport operators degrades service for everybody.
- **Ethiopia:** Accessibility features are being sought for a light rail project in Addis Ababa by concerned agencies including the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development.
- **Nigeria:** Plans have been announced to form a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, as part of a proposed Nigerian Disability Bill. (from *Vanguard*)
- **Tanzania:** Dar es Salaam Rapid Transit (DART) is evidently moving ahead toward opening day as construction continues on the 21 km busway for Phase 1 of the long-delayed project. (Our Executive Director

met with project planners in Tanzania in 2006.) The system has the potential for setting a standard for accessibility for much of eastern and western Africa. . . .



Modest H. Bayo, a school principal in Karatu, Tanzania, met with AEI staff this past August in San Francisco (photo) to discuss the transportation needs of children with disabilities who are unable to travel to special education classes in the Karatu region of Tanzania.

Americas

- **Brazil:** Curitiba continues to expand its already superior accessible transportation, with 94% of its vehicle fleet stated to be accessible for passengers with disabilities (up from the 86% reported to us in 2010). Bus Rapid Transit station accessibility has increased to 85%. In addition, accessible buses on 55 dedicated routes serve 2,440 children travelling to special education classes. . . . Regina Cohen of the Pro-Access Group of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro is serving as a visiting professor with the Design for All Institute of India, which in turn has prepared materials providing an international perspective on access and inclusion to tourist facilities in Brazil.
- **USA:** The World Bank held an initial meeting in September to familiarize staff with a new guide, *Improving the Accessibility of Persons with Limited Mobility*, prepared by Integrated Transport Planning Ltd. of the United Kingdom and benefiting by reviews from Philip Oxley, Tom Rickert of AEI, Maryvonne Dejeannes, and Gerhard Menckhoff. We will keep our readers informed as the Bank prepares to disseminate these materials and meanwhile thank Ziad Nakat, Julie Babinard, and others at the Bank for undertaking this initiative. Bank staff will benefit with a "road map" to assist them as they prepare transportation and other projects, looking at different accessibility options and overseeing detailed design, construction, maintenance, operation and evaluation activities. The guide will complement and supplement existing materials. . . . Search for "United States Access Board: *Proposed Accessibility Guidelines for*

News and Notes

(continued from page 7)

Passenger Vessels" for these important standards. . . . Ike Nnaji and Tom Rickert of the AEI Board of Directors participated in a public meeting of the U.S. Access Board during a special hearing some months ago in Berkeley, California. . . . We welcome Carol Wright as the new Senior Director of Project ACTION in Washington. This agency publishes helpful and relevant resources on accessible public transportation in the USA.

- **Caribbean Community:** Officials in Barbados, Grenada, the Bahamas, and Suriname have pledged to protect the rights of their disabled citizens, in a report from the Jamaica Observer passed on by GAATES.

Asia

- **India:** The Delhi Metro continues to add access features to new stations on its huge and growing elevated network which will extend for 330 km upon completion (more than the distance between New York and Boston in the USA!). . . . Meanwhile, advocates in India continue to promote access to transport modes. Samarthyam reports their ongoing efforts to educate Indian designers concerning the proper uses of tactile guideways for blind persons and other sidewalk and street crossing features that serve not only disabled persons but indeed everyone. . . . And 100 persons with disabilities protested a lack of accessible facilities on trains in the state of Tamil Nadu this past October, as reported in *The Hindu*.

- **Philippines:** The Asian Development Bank (ADB), headquartered in Manila, is moving ahead with ambitious projects including promoting bus rapid transit systems in smaller Chinese cities as well as the use of small vehicles in the region. Responding to a query from the ADB, Access Exchange International referred the Bank to Joseph Kwan, an accessibility consultant in Hong Kong, to assist them in their efforts to incorporate inclusive design into their work.

- **Malaysia:** Go to <http://wapenang.blogspot.com/>



for K. A. Tan's excellent blog titled "Wheelchair Access Penang." The site features practical advice and photos (see sample) relevant to practitioners in all countries. Tan also informs us of a forum

in Penang on "Reclaiming our streets: Towards a sustainable transport" held in September. Ms. Khu Li Fang highlighted transport access issues: Go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DR9sCkv7zs.

- **Nepal:** Initial construction of accessible walkways got under way in September in Kathmandu, according to *The Himalayan Times*, evidently a result of a directive issued by the government some months earlier to make public places accessible.

Access to Air Travel

This photo of a passenger reading Braille signage at an air terminal in Turkey illustrates progress in many



countries as advocates and planners continue to address issues which have either humiliated or denied service to passengers with disabilities. Anglee Agarwal has contacted us with excellent media coverage concerning advocacy for better access to air travel in India. In Russia, new legislation makes it illegal for

airlines to discriminate against persons with disabilities. And workshops and better training for staff continue to move forward in the USA.

News items above from Nigeria, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Nepal and Russia were found on GAATES' news service. Readers may subscribe at www.gaates.org.

Planners, advocates, students!

We have fresh resources for you

AEI's website offers more than a hundred annotated links to resources in our field in eight languages. We have updated existing links and added fresh new information sources from Malaysia, Paraguay, Venezuela, Canada, Portugal, the USA, India, and Brazil. Learn more about access to transport modes ranging from articulated buses to cycle-rickshaws. Explore how to make sidewalks and street crossings accessible. Learn more about training drivers and transit staff. **Go to www.globalride-sf.org.**



Following up our June newsletter's report on a study tour of Nigerian engineers, we welcomed a study visit in November from Ferdinand Obiora Ezeoha from the capital of Abuja, shown at left with staff of the Accessible Services Office of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency - AEI photo by T. Rickert