

# Accessible Transportation Around the World

The Newsletter of  
Access Exchange International

June 2017

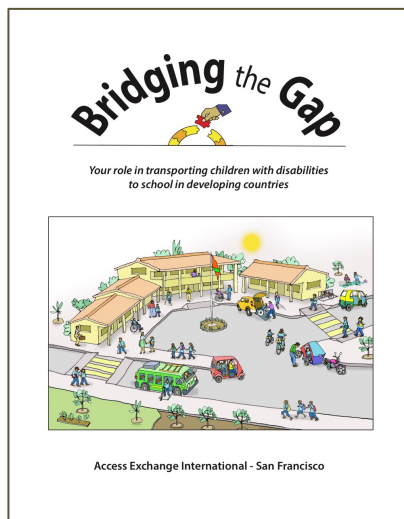


A labor of love is complete . . .

## Transportation-to-school guide is published by AEI

More than fifty contributors and reviewers from 21 countries have volunteered their time over the past two years to create a unique guide to help put walking or riding to school on the agenda for millions of children with disabilities and their parents in developing countries.

The guide is posted for downloading on the home page of our website at [www.globalride-sf.org](http://www.globalride-sf.org) and has been sent as a PDF to more than



a thousand practitioners in eighty countries. The guide addresses topics ranging from removing obstacles to walking to school in rural areas to the operation of fleets of school buses for students with disabilities in large cities. Fourteen case studies from

Asia, Africa, and the Americas serve as input into the guide.

The guide is informed by the results of surveys received from more than forty public and private schools serving more than 7,000 students with disabilities in Africa alone, as part of a collaboration between AEI and Professor Paul M. Ajuwon of Missouri State University in the USA. Surveys are also incorporated from the State of Hidalgo, Mexico, and Karachi, Pakistan.

And now the real work begins . . .

## Join us as we encourage better transport policies and practices

Research discussed in our guide underlines the role of transportation to and from school as a key factor in enabling millions of children with disabilities to attain the knowledge and skills to enable them to be more productive and independent adults within an inclusive society. The guide's findings and recommendations will help carry out the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for transportation and for persons [To Page 2](#)→

We are pleased to announce our receipt of a grant of US\$21,000 from the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability to help defray a *portion* of the costs to follow up the guide, including funds for translation and in-service training.

### Also on the inside



**Pages 4 & 5** 25 years later: A fresh look at accessible public transportation in Moscow

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## Transport to school: The real work begins - from Page 1

with disabilities. Here are the steps being taken by AEI and our colleagues around the world.

### Step 1: Publish the guide in Spanish

A Spanish translation of the guide by colleagues in Buenos Aires is well under way and scheduled for completion in coming months. The guide will assist stakeholders in Latin America as well as Spanish-speaking children with disabilities in the USA and elsewhere. (The United States, with 41 million Spanish-speakers, has the second largest number of Spanish-speakers in the world, topped only by Mexico.)

### Step 2: Publish the guide in Hindi

A Hindi version of our guide is in preparation thanks to Svayam, an initiative of the Sminu Jindal Charitable Trust based in New Delhi, India. Svayam works to promote dignity for people with reduced mobility and advocates an enabling and accessible environment for all. We thank Svayam for this contribution to work in India to promote school transport for children with disabilities. The Hindi version will be available in coming months at the Svayam website at [www.svayam.com](http://www.svayam.com).

In addition, colleagues in Japan have expressed interest in a Japanese version which would encourage outreach from that country – with well-developed school transportation for children with disabilities – to other countries in the region.

### Step 3: Prepare videos "to put a human face" on the needs of children with disabilities who must rely on transportation to get to school



Twelve video students from San Francisco State University (photo) are visiting locales in Mexico, June 1-25, to film the transportation challenges



### Walking to school in the State of Hidalgo

- by permission of Hidalgo Special Education Dept.

facing students with special needs as they seek to walk or ride to school. The work is at the invitation of the Special Education Department of the State of Hidalgo, Mexico, as well as other agencies. Preparations are coordinated by our colleague Janett Jiménez Santos, an architect with a leading role in preparing guidelines for accessibility for both Mexico City and the federal government of Mexico. Janett is working with SFSU faculty and staff members Betsy Blosser and Brian Favorite as well as Tom Rickert of AEI.

### Step 4: Collaborate with the EquallyAble Foundation to institute cash awards to agencies in developing countries who are innovating new ways to improve "walkability" and riding to school

The EquallyAble Foundation plans to offer awards to encourage new approaches toward collaboration and cooperation to improve the ability of children with disabilities in developing countries to walk or ride to school. Founded by Mohammed Yousuf, the Foundation works to integrate individuals into mainstream living by helping them become self-supporting and independent.

Pete Meslin (USA) and others active in the preparation of AEI's newly published guide plan to work with Mohammed Yousuf to prepare award criteria and serve on an advisory committee to select agencies for awards. **More information and award criteria will soon become available at the EquallyAble Foundation's website at [www.equallyable.org/](http://www.equallyable.org/)**

### Step 5: Engage practitioners at the United Nations as they work to promote transportation for children with disabilities

Our colleague Janett Jiménez Santos has been invited to a major gathering of nations marking the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to be held in New York, June 13-15. Janett will [To Page 3→](#)

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present our guide at a forum on the "New Urban Agenda" organized by the United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs. At this and other meetings, she will provide a needed focus on the importance of school transportation.

**Step 6: Prepare a series of flyers to help parents and teachers advocate for more and better transportation for their children with disabilities.**

Richard Schultze (USA) has drafted eleven one-page flyers for different communities of interest (e.g., parents, teachers, transport providers). Prof. Gretel Silvestre (Dominican Republic) has drafted Spanish translations. Each flyer will list practical steps to enhance travel to school. Contact AEI for information.

Planning for TRANSED 2018 in Taipei

## Working toward transport for all in Asia, and beyond...



Executives and staff of Taiwan's Eden Social Welfare Foundation met in December with colleagues at the Institute of Transportation – part of Taiwan's Ministry of Transportation and Communications – as preparations moved forward for the TRANSED conference scheduled for November 12-15, 2018, in Taipei (photo). Joey Goldman, co-chair of the accessible transportation committee of the USA's Transportation Research Board, and Tom Rickert of AEI, were brought to Taipei by Eden to help prepare for the conference. Eden is one of the largest paratransit operators in Asia, operating 587 vehicles to serve persons with disabilities in Taiwan. More information will be available soon by going to Eden's website at <http://eden.international/>. We encourage individuals and agencies in all countries to begin planning for TRANSED 2018 by including this event in their annual budgets.



- Photo above by Tom Rickert

### NOTICE TO OUR READERS

The international team members preparing our guide have worked as volunteers over the past two years. However, we lack sufficient funds to cover the travel, printing, mailing, and other costs needed to promote school transport for children with disabilities. Contributions by USA donors are tax-deductible and readers in many countries can send a check to AEI by regular mail (address on p. 8) or go to PayPal on our website at [www.globalride-sf.org](http://www.globalride-sf.org). We urge you to consider your role in promoting transport to school for children with disabilities!





# A long journey continues: A fresh look at accessible public transport in Moscow

**Introduction by Valeria Sviatkina (Russia) and Tom Rickert (USA)**

Tom and Susan Rickert first visited the then Soviet Union in the late 1980s as part of a Quaker peace tour which helped create their vision for accessible transportation. One result was that Tom stepped down from his job managing access for what is now the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency in order to found Access Exchange International in 1991. Many changes have occurred since those early years. One challenge facing Russia and other countries within the Soviet Union was the need to catch up with advances in inclusive transport which were already maturing in western Europe and North America. The challenge was sharpened by the enormous size of Russia's inaccessible transport fleet: 10,000 buses, trams and trolleys in Moscow alone, not to mention the world's largest subway system! With replacement cycles of up to twenty years or more, massive changes were going to require a lot of work over many years.

AEI's work during the early 1990s included extensive collaboration with dozens of disability and newly created social service agencies in Moscow, including a meetup with the head of Moscow's surface transport agency (Mosgortrans), and a meeting of seventeen agencies in Moscow's City Hall in June, 1992, which contributed to the larger planning process to make



Moscow more accessible. Our activities relied on our staff person in Moscow, Valeria Sviatkina (photo). Valeria writes of those far-off days, "The decision was taken to join efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to begin the adaptation of (the) city environment. The working team of the participants on different levels initiated the 5-year 'Accessible Transportation' Program which soon became very popular among the disabled Russians. It is pleasant to stress that AEI promoted each stage of this Program and its successful results could be hardly overestimated. What is obvious in Russia today is that this process, which was in an 'embryonic stage' in 1992, has embraced the whole country."

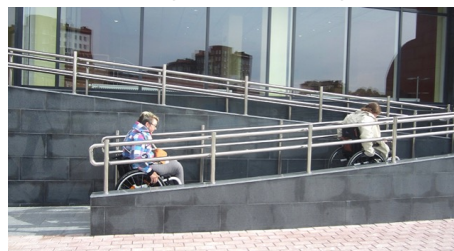
*What follows is a summary of Valeria Sviatkina's larger report received by AEI this March*

## Regulatory framework

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Russia in 2012, serves as a guiding document for the sixty constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The results are impressive, first of all in Moscow and St. Petersburg, followed by Sochi, the republic of Tatarstan, and other locations. Followup regulations were established by the Ministry of Transport in May of 2016.

## Access to the built environment

Access to a new building in Moscow (photo): "Projects acquire the character of an entire movement in creation of a barrier-free environment. . . Practically on each crossing the markings, tactile strips and curb cuts



can be seen in central Moscow. Pedestrian signals at some intersections provide audio information to blind persons. . . There are still a

lot of problems that must be solved. . . For example, many old historical buildings do not have access. This situation must be improved step by step."

## Metro accessibility



As with cities such as London or New York, Moscow has an old Metro which requires a gradual program to increase accessibility. Valeria writes, "Out of the 196 stations of Moscow metro only 30 are accessible for the wheelchair users. The lifts are installed in new stations. Ten more accessible stations will be opened

in a few years. Positive changes are noticeable concerning adaptability for visually impaired people. Tactile paving, marking in yellow the platform edges, electric blue lines along the sides of the escalators are helpful for the disabled persons. Mobility centers for passengers (with disabilities) are open on 87 stations in metro. . . . If there is not a lift on the station the special conveyors are available for the wheelchair users there."



The Metro's new Tagansko-Krasnopresnenskaya line features six trains with a new model of articulated cars fully adapted for wheelchair users and with an array of accessibility features. (See photo at upper left, previous page.)

### Buses, trams, and trolleys



"During the past year . . . routes of the city surface transport have been expanded. . . . 450 buses, 700 medium-capacity buses and 700 minibuses are equipped for wheelchair users and other people with

limited mobility. All vehicles are low-floored, eco-friendly, with audio and visual stop announcements. 89% of Moscow's buses, 62% of trolleybuses and 20% of trams are low-floor. The entire fleet contains 5,607 low-floored vehicles. (Photo above from Hotykova)



### Commuter and inter-city rail



Commuter rail is not accessible to wheelchair users. However, 300 cars on inter-city trains are built with many features to accommodate persons with disabilities with advance registration. These cars feature accessible compartments and toilets (photo).

### Door-to-door paratransit services

" 'Social taxis' – equipped with lifts or ramps – operate in many Russian cities. They require advanced notice. Funding sources include local municipal disability agencies, city budgets, and the users themselves." [Go to [www.globalride-sf.org/paratransit/Guide.pdf](http://www.globalride-sf.org/paratransit/Guide.pdf), pages 41-43, for a detailed case study of Moscow' paratransit services on AEI's website.]

### Summing up

As with most countries, major cities in Russia have more – and more accessible – public transportation than do smaller cities or rural areas. The challenges are enormous. In a uniquely important paper, Vadim Donchenko of Russia's Scientific and Research Institute of Motor Transport was the first author of a paper in 2014 based on input including 22,500 surveys from twelve large Russian cities, 121 towns and mid-sized cities, and 400 rural settlements. The paper examines this input in terms of types of disability and age groups while looking at all elements of trip chains for use of public transport. He concludes that "the main barriers for people with limited mobility in transport at present are non-prepared pedestrian routes on approaches to transport infrastructure facilities." The paper concludes that the level of accessibility of persons with disabilities, taking the Russian Federation as a whole, was nearly 25%. This figure incorporates the lack of accessibility in rural areas. Readers may Google the paper, typing "Donchenko 'Ensuring transport systems accessibility for persons with disabilities in the Russian Federation'," published by the Transport Research Arena in Paris.

**A list of the donors who sustained our work during the past year.  
(We could not have done it without you!)**

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**Every \$1 donated to AEI in 2016  
was more than matched in  
donated staff time and services  
for our work.**

# News & Notes from Asia and Latin America

**ASIA** India: Access to rail transport is an issue that will not go away. With more than seven thou-



sand stations covering 65,000 km of routes, the importance of access to India's enormous rail system is difficult to overstate. The issues are daunting (photo at top from *The Hindu*). In January, courts ordered railroads in Mumbai to comply with orders to make local train stations more accessible. And access features for hundreds of stations in New Delhi are under consideration, reports *The Times of India* in news passed on by GAATES. . . . AEI is in contact with the World Resources Institute in Bengaluru in southern India as they seek better ways to connect passengers between metro stations and their destinations. Their program focuses on enhancing last-mile connectivity between stations via walking and cycling modes, universal access for persons with disabilities, and accessible parking.

Vietnam: Toan Bui reports that Hanoi's new bus rapid transit system is "accessible to some extent." "We need to see how it really works when it is in operation," he concluded.

Thailand: The case for "Transportation for All" is made by Sawang Srisom in a video posted on YouTube at <<https://youtu.be/xrMicf8MqtM>>

Iran: Improved access in Tehran is on the agenda, and at this point 26 buses and 62 vans are

offering services to 2,500 persons with disabilities, reports the *Tehran Times*. A start has been made.



Indonesia: A commuter train in Jakarta has initiated the use of portable ramps to enhance access for customers with disabilities (photo). The availability of the ramps at 74 train stations was scheduled to begin in May, notes the *Jakartapost*.

**LATIN AMERICA** Speaking of YouTube, we invite our Spanish-speaking readers to visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt-AYie6fek> for a video making the case for inclusive design for persons with disabilities, prepared by the Inter-American Development Bank.

Cartagena, one of the oldest cities in the western hemisphere, is the latest city in Colombia to initiate accessible service on its recently-completed bus rapid transit line. Our colleague Gerhard Menckhoff recently visited the line and sends us the photo showing landscaping at one of the stations. He noted the good accessibility to the system, with generally reduced gaps between the raised platforms and the floors of the buses. Feeder buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts.



Accessible buses do not do well at this bus stop in Costa Rica. Oscar Rivera writes us, "This is a recent photograph taken in my country.



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# News & Notes

(continued from Page 7)

The bus (itself) is fairly accessible, the drivers are well trained and motivated. If they see you using a walker or a wheelchair, they tell you, 'the sidewalk levels up with the road about 4 blocks from here.'" The Spanish text concludes that universal design favors everyone, not just those with disabilities.

## 18th Annual Roundtable held in Washington, DC

More than thirty participants attended our 18th annual international roundtable on accessible transport in developing countries, held in Washington in January and co-sponsored by AEI (USA) and ICESA (Canada). Participants from nine countries gathered for the event, which was hosted by the American Public Transportation Association as a public service at their conference center. A highlight of the roundtable was a report by Eric Ghozhong Zhang of the United Nations Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, who discussed how the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) promote accessible transportation for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

An interesting piece of research, presented by Billie Louise Bentzen at the event, pointed to a way to make it easier for blind pedestrians to



locate crosswalks and align themselves to cross at such crosswalks at locations *not* at intersections. Such locations include mid-block crossings and roundabouts. The research demonstrated the

benefits of a tactile guidance surface of raised bars installed across the width of the sidewalk and with the bars oriented perpendicular to the direction of travel on the crosswalk, as shown in the photo. Tests conducted indicated improvements in the ability of blind persons both to easily locate the crosswalk and to accurately align themselves to cross the street. (Photo by Billie Louise Bentzen)

伊甸社會福利基金會  
Expectation on Eden Accessible Transportation Service  
伊甸在交通上的服務願景  
Provide comprehensive service  
Go to school in the future

The Eden Social Welfare Foundation presented an update on research going forward to improve transportation to school for children with disabilities (image above, also see the article on page 3).

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