

Accessible Transportation Around the World



The Newsletter of
Access Exchange International
December 2021

This is our last Newsletter . . .

After pioneering universal access to public transportation for the past thirty-one years in low-income regions around the world, yet faced with the retirement of Tom Rickert, our founder and Executive Director, the Board of Directors of Access Exchange International recently approved the following statement of intent -

Having examined options for the continuation of our work upon the retirement of our Executive Director in early 2022; thankful for the significant impact of the work of Access Exchange International over the past thirty-one years in the growing field of inclusive mobility for persons with disabilities around the world; encouraged especially by the expanding work in our field by the United Nations, the global development community, and national and local agencies in the Americas, Asia, and Africa; and with our deep appreciation for the donors and colleagues that have made our work possible since our founding in January of 1991, the Board of Directors declares its intent to lay down our work by approximately March 31, 2022.

The Board's decision was informed by a four-year planning process which faced the difficulty of funding a full-time staff after relying on the largely voluntary work of our Executive Director over these many years.

Now that we have shared the somber part of our decision, we are left with a great deal to celebrate! AEI is part of a much larger story which had hardly begun when our Executive Director stepped down from his role as Manager of Accessible Services for the San Francisco Muni in 1990 to found AEI. This Newsletter tells a positive story and we thank our readers for being part of that story, which only deepens as time goes by.



Mexico: State of Hidalgo officials are working with AEI and our colleague Janett Jiménez to recommend next steps to improve travel to and from school for Hispanic children. - Screen shot from Hidalgo work session

School transportation report on USA and Mexico moves ahead

AEI's new report with recommendations on school transportation will be available shortly at www.globalride-sf.org. Titled *Hispanic Children with Disabilities: Recommendations on School Transportation in the United States and Mexico*, the report will be released after delays due to the pandemic. Meanwhile, AEI has been collaborating with colleagues in the state of Hidalgo, Mexico, (photo above) on a case study featured in the report with followup activities in the city of Pachuca de Soto to demonstrate access to a school for students with disabilities.

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Reflections

by Tom Rickert

Back in 1990 I stepped down from my position as Manager of Accessible Services for San Francisco's



municipal transportation agency in order to found Access Exchange International. The photo shows me with Angelo Figone on the right, with a plaque at a luncheon held for me at the time by

my colleagues at "the Muni."

That was thirty-one years ago and a whole generation has passed in the meantime. Back in those days, everyone was just starting on a journey. We were all innovators who had learned a lot from persons with disabilities here in San Francisco and then, in widening circles, from around the world: I'll single out John Edmonds, an engineer who used a wheelchair, for starting me on my current path, but then quickly add my appreciation for the transport planners, friends and donors and family members (especially my wife Susan) who fueled our endeavors. Initially we worked with colleagues in the then Soviet Union and expanded to South Africa and Mexico and then to dozens of countries. We continued to be "part of the story" as the United Nations, key development banks, and transport professionals in South Africa and elsewhere added more muscle to our collective work.

When I announced my retirement in the last issue of this Newsletter, I indicated I would share the lessons I have learned. As I look at the wave of activity occurring in our field, I have decided to let them speak for themselves. Surely one could ask for no more than this. Read on, about South Africa, Pakistan, India, the USA, Canada, Colombia, Mexico, the UK, and elsewhere around our world. And then work that these good efforts may spread to smaller cities and towns and to the countryside which support them, that all may ride.

A Word from our President

by Richard Weiner

In 1993 I was a newly arrived transportation planning consultant in California. Tom called our office to speak to one of my colleagues, and by the end of the conversation he had me hooked. Since that time, I have had the opportunity to conduct AEI work as a volunteer in my home country, South Africa, and serve a couple of stints as Board President of this amazing organization. I have said on numerous occasions that without Tom Rickert there would be no Access Exchange International. And that is certainly true.

But it is just as true that without Sue Rickert, the Board members, the donors, and the hundreds of people who have contributed in countless ways to the organization, AEI would have ceased to exist many years ago. Ours is a shoestring operation that has had an incredible impact on accessible transportation around the world. And as we fold our tent with dignity and the knowledge that seeds have been planted worldwide to continue this work, on behalf of the Board I would like to thank all of you for the myriad ways you have helped make a difference in the lives of millions of people we will never know. Thank you.



Photo from an AEI Board of Directors meeting shows (top row) Pete Meslin, guest; Ike Nanji; Tom Rickert, Executive Director; Susan Rickert, staff volunteer; Peter Straus; Susan Worts, Vice-President; Richard Weiner, President; Lucy Crain, Treasurer; and Janett Jiménez Santos, guest. Seated: Bruce Oka, Secretary, and Cheryl Damico.

South African cities expand access to public transport



The Department of Transport of South Africa has continued to roll out integrated public transport networks which provide accessible public transportation for the first time to persons with disabilities. The newly inclusive systems have had to contend with the results of systems built under an apartheid regime which was planned to separate people from one another rather than link them together. The new system is multi-modal, connecting people to industrial and commercial areas in a way that also enables safe walking and cycling rather than using public transport alone.

Two municipalities currently receiving grant support are George, in southern South Africa, and Ekurhuleni in the northern area of the country. The photos at top are from George. At top left, a community outreach worker explains the new transit system and where it will go, in a language and in terminology that people can understand. This is an important aspect of putting accessible transportation into place: People who have been denied service in the past now have the opportunity to redefine their lives. The photo at top right shows the system in use, using a lift on the smallest of George's three sizes of vehicles.



Another city currently receiving public transport grant support is the City of Ekurhuleni (CoE) in South Africa's Gauteng Province. The Ekurhuleni bus rapid transit system is called 'Harambee,' which in Swahili means 'working together.' The system covers a large area consisting of 9 towns and 17 townships. Harambee will connect people in the CoE with their jobs, family, friends, education and medical facilities, and more.

Nine stations on the new BRT line run through Thembisa, one of the biggest towns in the CoE with a population of over half a million persons. The photo below shows the Mayor of the City of Ekurhuleni cutting the ribbon to officially open the stations on the new trunk route of the Harambee Bus System.



The CoE is the first city in South Africa to develop a clear Universal Access Commitment Statement

(Article continues on Page 8)



in the photos at bottom left of the entire bus and then, in greater detail, of the exterior "alignment curb."



This is combined with a "Kassel Curb" on the station side to provide a good fit between the station and the vehicle, visible in the photo above.

Finally, there is a boarding bridge to achieve a zero horizontal gap at all doorways, as seen below.



The system was developed via a partnership between the government and a disability rights NGO which continues to monitor the project, as shown in the photo below. Using lessons learned



from Peshawar, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is now implementing a similar project in Karachi. The Peshawar project is jointly funded by the ADB and the French Development Agency. (Source: Lloyd Wright of the Asian Development Bank; Photo credits: TransPeshawar)

Eliminating the platform-to-bus gap Universal Access at a Pakistan BRT

The Peshawar, Pakistan, bus rapid transit project has been in operation now for one year. The system has a full spectrum of universal design features including the footpaths leading to the thirty stations through to the stations and onto the buses. But let's focus on how the system bridges the gap between the station platform and the bus, which in many countries makes BRT systems inaccessible to many wheelchair users and others who are unable to cross the gap.



The system uses a concept known as an "alignment curb," which physically directs the vehicle into a close fit with the platform, as shown



Upcoming publications and conferences

TRANSED 2022 planned for September



Go to the website of the Transportation Research Board (USA) for updates on the 2022 TRANSED conference and call for abstracts, organized by TRB's Standing Technical Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility. Submit your abstract by March 1, 2022 for this virtual conference. TRANSED will focus on inclusive mobility, demand-response service, and fixed-route transport, and will be a major topic of the committee's work at the TRB Annual Meeting to be held January 9-13 in Washington DC. First held in Cambridge, UK, in 1978, the TRANSED series has educated stakeholders around the world about promoting inclusive accessible transportation. For information, go to TRB at <https://trb.secure-platform.com/a/page/TRANSED2022/TRANSEDAbstractCall>

Topics of special interest for the 2022 TRANSED include policies and strategies for achieving inclusion, equity, and human rights for all through accessible transportation; inclusive transport along the trip chain; specific successes and challenges for both the system and rider; improvements for enhancing the accessibility of specific travel modes or services; and innovation in accessible mobility. The deadline for receiving abstracts has been extended to March 1, 2022.

A needed revision of a pioneering guide

An updated version of *Enhancing the mobility of disabled people: Guidelines for practitioners*, is coming right up! First published in 2004 and known as Road Note 21 as part of a series published in the UK, the revision is due to be published during the first quarter of 2022. AEI was a major contributor to the original "ORN-21," and, eighteen years later, welcomes this needed update. The revised guide will include current internationally-recognized standards as well as case studies that seek to inspire practitioners in

lower and middle-income countries to improve the accessibility of transport services and infrastructure in their local contexts.

The guide will include new information specifically related to the provision of accessible school transport for children with disabilities and assisting people with less visible 'hidden' disabilities. Prepared by Integrated Transport Planning (ITP), the guide is funded by UKAID through the High Volume Transport Applied Research Programme and working with a team of international experts including AEI, Crystal Asige and Svayam.

Our readers can help! ITP is currently seeking photos and images of accessible transport infrastructure, vehicles and services to include in the guide. All images selected for inclusion will be credited to their owners. If you feel that you are able to contribute or would like to receive a full list of images that are needed, please contact gtaylor@itpworld.net.

A fresh focus on urban areas worldwide

The Institute for Transportation Development and Policy (ITDP) will soon publish *Access and Persons with Disabilities in Urban Areas*, part of their series on Policies for Inclusive Transport-oriented Development. The publication is set for release in early 2022 and is an example of the ITDP's increasing focus on equity, access, and inclusion for all.



This photo is planned to appear on the front cover. (Photo credit: ITDP Mexico)

Donations received during the past six months

\$2,000-2,999

Calvert de Coligny
The William F. Crandall, Jr., Trust

\$1,000-1,999

Elizabeth Boardman
Dan Rosen
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- Donations from Elizabeth Boardman, Anne Collins, Calvert de Coligny, Lori & Mark Horne, and Steven Yaffe were in honor of Tom Rickert

Memorial gift received

- Tom & Susan Rickert, in memory of Marilyn Golden and Calvert de Coligny

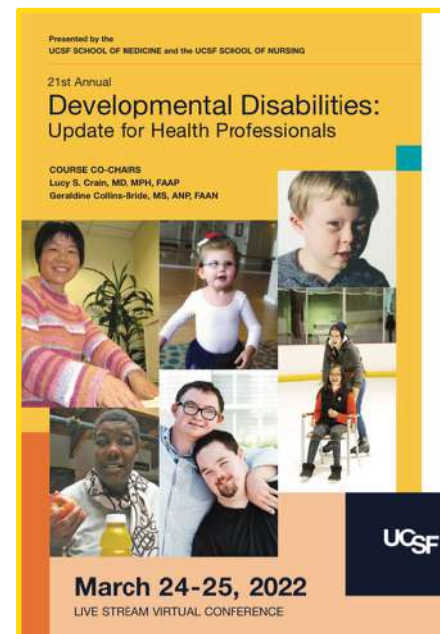
In memory of Marilyn Golden



Marilyn Golden died at age 67 in September at her home in Berkeley, California. Marilyn was nationally known as a remarkably effective disability advocate, bringing her superb sense of strategy to the table when it came to promoting national causes such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. Marilyn was also a good friend and faithful supporter of our agency over many years. She is missed by a great many friends in the disability and transportation communities.

Honoring Billie Louise Bentzen

Billie Louise (Beezy) Bentzen recently retired after a long career as a key researcher in the field of accessible design for blind persons. We first came in contact with Beezy when she presented her work at the first light rail accessibility conference on the USA's west coast, sponsored by the San Francisco Muni back in the early 1980s.



Developmental Disabilities Update in March

We congratulate AEI Board member Dr. Lucy Crain for her many years as co-chair of a conference series on developmental disabilities sponsored by the University of California in San Francisco. Dr. Crain is Professor of Pediatrics (Emerita) at UCSF School of Medicine & Adjunct Professor of Pediatrics at Stanford University.

Readers are invited to register online at cme.ucsf.edu for this live stream virtual event. Registration information is available at 1-415-476-5808.

AEI's past Newsletters & publications will remain available

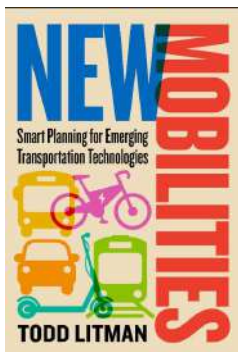
AEI's archives will be a unique source of information on the history of accessible transport and inclusive mobility in less wealthy regions around the world. We intend to keep our Newsletters and publications from 1991 through 2021 available for downloading on our website at www.globalride-sf.org.

Researchers may contact AEI at tom@globalride-sf.org to learn more.

News and Notes from Around the World



USA: Riders with differing abilities were able to ride adaptive bikeshare bikes in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco in a demonstration project shown in the photo at top, sponsored by San Francisco and SF Bay Area transportation agencies in recent months. (Photo from *The Bay Link*, published by MTC and ABAG. Contact info@bayareametro.gov for more information) . . . The San Francisco Muni pioneered an Essential Trip Card program to provide 4,400 seniors and persons with disabilities with safe door-to-door taxi service to essential services during the pandemic as a supplement to existing Muni fixed-route bus, trolley-bus and rail services. The program was available to those affected by service reductions during the pandemic. The service supplements San Francisco's existing door-to-door paratransit system. . . . His Wheels International, a faith-based endeavor in Midland, Michigan, is seeking donations of hand-pedaled bikes, go to <https://www.hiswheels.org>. . . . Following up a story in our previous Newsletter, Mobility Worldwide held a virtual conference in September to bring together different producers and distributors of personal mobility aids for persons with disabilities in low-income countries. To learn more, go to <https://mobilityworldwide.org>.



Canada: We recommend a close look at a new book by Todd Litman of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute. *New Mobilities: Smart Planning for Emerging Transportation Technologies* has arrived at a time when we all need to evaluate the good and the bad amidst a flood of new travel concepts.

Brazil: The Institute for Transportation Development and Policy (ITDP) published an article on October 12 titled "Why Transit Inequality Persists in Brazil," noting that although public transport is "called a fundamental

right, in reality, transit operates with inequality, especially for Black and low-income people." . . . Maria Isabel da Silva reports that 88% of Brazil's cities with bus service have yet to comply with making their buses accessible. Other cities have nearly 100% accessible bus service, including Curitiba, Uberlandia, and Maceió, and São Paulo (population 12 million) is at 80%.

Colombia: Braille placards have been installed as a pilot project on an initial fifty TransMilenio bus stops in Bogotá (photo below). The stops were selected by the National Institute of Blind Persons and TransMilenio, with the intention of expanding to 7,000 stops once the results of the pilot study are evaluated. (Source: Diana Sandoval Rincón; Photo credit: Prensa Secretaría de Movilidad).



Belgium: The tram network of Brussels is being upgraded to increase accessibility for passengers with disabilities. Plans call for combining a raised platform with the insertion of rubber platform edges to fill the horizontal space between the platform and the tram.



(Source: The Brussels Times, June 9, 2021; Photo credit: STIB, the public transport operator) **More News & Notes on page 8**

News and Notes from Around the World

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Hong Kong: The Society for Rehabilitation in Hong Kong has launched a project offering free point-to-point transport for late-stage sick children using wheelchairs, with trips to and from the city's Children's Hospital. The program aims to help reduce stress and exhaustion from a long-distance journey and minimize risk of infection of Covid-19. Trip time is now halved from 90 minutes to 45 minutes. (Photo credit: Hong Kong Rehab Society)



India: The Ola Mobility Institute has published a report titled *On the Move: Urban travel experiences of Persons with Disabilities and a path to build more inclusive transport systems*. More at <https://ola.institute>. . . . Go to Svayam at <http://www.svayam.com> for more about their work, now in its 22nd year of promoting accessible transportation in India.

News in our field needs to be shared!

This is our last Newsletter as AEI is planning to lay down our work. We seek to assist non-profit NGOs interested in carrying on, and hopefully expanding, the coverage we have provided of international news and events concerning equity and inclusion of public transportation with a focus on less-wealthy countries and regions. We can help you by approaching our contacts around the world to assist your news coverage. Learn more by contacting

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Telephone: 1-415-661-6355

South African cities . . .

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to ensure that all planning and development going forward will take universal access into account. This statement is viewed as a ground-breaking document for South Africa and also represents a standard that could serve as a goal for other countries in the region. The photo below shows the Mayor of Ekurhuleni signing the statement.



The large urban area composed of the City of Ekurhuleni and its many subdivisions is thus the scene of significant forward movement in South Africa



Employees ready to welcome passengers on board at the opening of the Harambee BRT line for the City of Ekurhuleni. Bus drivers and station staff are trained in universal access principles.

Middle East & North Africa (MENA): Accessible bus rapid transit projects are springing up in the MENA region. Construction of the Amalway Agadir Trambus in Agadir, Morocco, began this past March. In August, trial runs began in Amman, Jordan, on its BRT line. (Sources: UITP MENA and the Jordan Times)