



Meetings in the USA and Nigeria put universal access on the agenda  
*Visitors from Nigeria in San Francisco at an SF Muni access ramp: See story on page 3 . (AEI photo)*

# Accessible Transportation Around the World

The Newsletter of

Access Exchange International

June 2013



*The struggle for dignity in Paraguay (left, photo courtesy of Fundación Saraki) is in sharp contrast with the universal access found in a Bus Rapid Transit line in Brazil (right, TransOeste in Rio, courtesy of EMBARQ)*

## The struggle for mobility for all: Latin American BRTs show the way

There is much work to do, but Latin America's largest cities are now operating Bus Rapid Transit systems that are increasingly accessible – and they are learning as they go! Mexico City, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lima, and Bogota, with a combined total of 90 million (to page 2)

### Also on the inside

[Paratransit:](#) AEI's guide to door-to-door transport is now available in Spanish: See page 4

[News and Notes:](#) The Americas and Asia/MidEast show major gains: See pages 5, 7 and 8

[We thank our donors:](#) See page 6

## Latin American Bus Rapid Transit systems show the way forward



Older people, like the women on the left in a BRT station of Rio de Janeiro's TransOeste line, can ride public transport if seats are provided in safe, accessible stations. Wheelchair users (right) are only a small portion of those who benefit from universal access. - Photos courtesy of EMBARQ

(continued from page 1) residents, all are home to some of the world's best Bus Rapid Transit systems, according to a new standard that ranks BRT transit corridors around the world, issued by the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP).<sup>\*</sup> In fact, 30 of the 40 BRT corridors around the world that received a "gold" or "silver" ranking are found in fourteen major cities in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru. The remaining ten corridors are scattered in Asia, North America, and Africa. North America, for example, does poorly due to low transit ridership which makes it financially difficult to build full-featured BRT systems.

Why does Latin America do so well? One reason is that Bus Rapid Transit is a Brazilian invention and then was refined in Colombia and Ecuador be-



Grade-level crossings at Lanzhou, China's, BRT stations eliminate the need for pedestrians to climb steps. - Photo courtesy of ITDP

fore spreading elsewhere. Latin American transit experts have now "spread the word" around the world. It is also significant that most Latin American BRT systems use high-floor buses which tend to dock closer to ramped high-floor stations. Drivers appear to be better trained to keep gaps as small as possible. The high-floor stations also lend themselves to a range of other positive features. High-floor buses have other advantages on BRT trunk lines, often costing less to buy and carrying up to 16% more passengers than low floor buses.

Most of all, Latin American systems are "learning as they go." Our colleague Lilian Salazar reports that new BRT corridors in Mexico City tend to correct problems that occur in earlier corridors. And in Rio de Janeiro, EMBARQ has performed an accessibility inspection of TransOeste, finding that 400,000 people with restricted mobility may benefit especially by improvements to access to sidewalks and street crossings leading to the stations. "Accessibility is directly related to BRT efficiency and its role in providing efficient mobility for all citizens," EMBARQ concludes. Meanwhile, a pilot project to demonstrate state-of-the-art pedestrian access to a major BRT station in Lima's *Metropolitano* is now under way.

While "one size does not fit all" when it comes to BRT systems, universal access for disabled persons, seniors, and many others stands to benefit as such features are adapted by other countries. For example, Chinese agencies have failed to insist on access for all to BRT lines. But Chinese officials recently visited Brazil and improvements are seen in Lanzhou's new system (see photo bottom left). And India, after a rough start, is moving decisively toward a "Latin American" model found in Ahmedabad and now being applied in planning and construction of new BRT systems in Rajkot, Indore, Hubli, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Surat, and Pune. Everyone will benefit from universal access!

<sup>\*</sup> The ranking system is not without controversy, including the fact that it may discriminate against smaller BRT systems. But the system awards points for accessibility features such as pedestrian access, level boarding, a small bus-to-platform gap, comfortable stations, etc. The only system awarded a "gold" or "silver" ranking that requires passengers to climb and descend steps to its center-island stations is Guangzhou, China, which excelled by other measurements while flunking on universal access. As Guangzhou's population ages in coming years, added pressure will occur to upgrade access for all passengers.



**Top: Our colleague Kit Mitchell, left, shown with Hon. Alhassan Ado Doguwa, MP, in charge of Nigeria's work on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, greeting Ike Nnaji of the AEI Board. Right: Nnaji and Mitchell discuss future activities with some of Nigeria's leading advocates for rights for persons with disabilities during their meetings in the Nigerian capital, Abuja. - Photos courtesy of Ike Nnaji**

**Time to convert promises into reality . . .**  
**Nigeria considers first steps to improve mobility for persons with disabilities**



Nigeria is not a success story when it comes to enabling its disabled citizens to get to or use public transportation. Yet this nation – the seventh largest in the world in terms of population – has ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities and enacted followup legislation. And meetings in Nigeria (photos above), as well as a study tour by Nigerian engineers in San Francisco (below), create an opportunity which might lead to needed action.

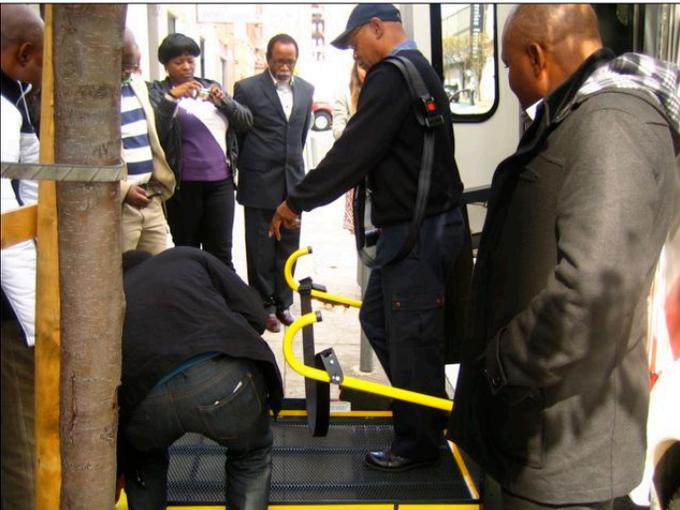
Dr. Ike Nnaji, access officer for the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) commuter rail

system and a member of AEI's Board of Directors, has grasped this opportunity. Nnaji represented Access Exchange International in meetings held in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, this past November. More recently he returned to Nigeria to speak at a conference on road safety in Abuja in February, working in partnership with our British colleague, Dr. Kit Mitchell, who had been invited as a featured speaker at this conference.

**Nigerian transit engineers visit S.F. Bay Area**

In a remarkable coincidence, fifteen transit engineers from the Nigerian Society of Engineers visited the San Francisco area the following month, led by Engineer Christopher Chigboh in Abuja. The study tour, hosted by Nigerian-American officials working for California transit agencies, welcomed AEI's involvement. Working together, AEI coordinated visits with staff of San Francisco's Municipal Transportation Agency and with the Paratransit Brokerage, headed up by Marc Soto, the President of AEI. Participants in the study tour hope to see followup activities and Ike Nnaji and Tom Rickert of Access Exchange International are ready to assist.

*AEI is "part of the story" in pioneering relevant low-cost access features for public transport in other countries, sharing knowledge and skills since 1990 through publications and through workshops in nearly thirty countries in Latin America, Asia, eastern Europe, and Africa.*



**Nigerian engineers inspect a wheelchair lift on a San Francisco paratransit van during a day of meetings in March at the city transit agency and the paratransit brokerage. - Photo by Tom Rickert**

# Paratransit for All: Thinking outside the box



The Spanish version (cover at left) of AEI's new guide to starting up and scaling up paratransit services in less-wealthy countries has now been distributed throughout Latin America. Photo above: Transit experts from Europe, the Americas, and Asia at a January 17 brainstorming session on this topic, in Washington DC. (AEI photo)

## AEI paratransit guide published in Spanish for use in Latin America

In most countries, door-to-door paratransit services are either not available or are too expensive for persons with disabilities and others who most need them. Incarcerated where they live, millions of persons have no opportunities to attend school, get to a job, or get to medical help except in extreme emergencies. This situation is not acceptable.

AEI's new guide, *Paratransit for mobility-impaired persons in developing regions: Starting up and scaling up*, plays a unique role in addressing this situation. Now the impact of this guide is being upgraded by our new Spanish version, translated in Mexico City by Andrés Balcázar of ABC-Discapacidad. *Transporte puerta a puerta para personas con movilidad limitada: Su inicio y su desarrollo*, has been sent to hundreds of stakeholders in the Spanish-speaking world and will soon be posted on our website. Funds for translation of this publication were provided by the Foundation Veolia Environnement in Paris, France, while all other services were provided pro bono by AEI.

Both the English and Spanish versions provide case studies of paratransit services in various countries as well as a wealth of practical advice based on decades of accumulated experience in the field including direct experience in twenty cities in eleven Latin American countries. Practical suggestions are made concerning service models, eligibility certification, fund raising, planning, driver training, and other relevant topics.

## Brainstorming session focuses on how to expand paratransit services

On January 17, 24 international transport specialists met in Washington DC to share their ideas on how to initiate and expand door-to-door services. The venue was the annual roundtable on accessible transport in developing countries sponsored by Access Exchange International and the International Centre for Accessible Transportation (ICAT) of Montreal, Canada. Contact AEI for a copy of the results of this brainstorming session that included participants from India, Mexico, Taiwan, Canada, Portugal, and the UK as well as USA participants. One special guest was Aleksandra Posarac, Team Leader of the World Bank's work on Disability and Development.



## Turkey moves ahead with plans for accessible land, sea, and air transport

The cities of Istanbul, Bursa, Eskisehir, Keciören-Ankara, and Konya are implementing action plans that will lead to more buses, trams, metros, and light rail systems having a low floor and other accessibility features, as reported by our colleague Ad van Herk in his work with the Turkish Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs, and Communications. All new buses in Turkey comply with EU accessibility standards for urban buses.

The ministry has also initiated *Unimpaired Airports*, a project to enhance airport accessi- (continued on next page)



(*Turkey: from page 4*) bility, such as tactile guideways leading to airport counters, and *Accessible Seas*, to improve access to passenger ships and ferries. High speed trains under construction will be fully accessible. And, while implementation is off to a slow start, standards and legal requirements have been developed for new construction of sidewalks and street crossings. We plan to follow up with more detailed reports in the future.

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## Student architects focus on mobility for all

The Berkeley Prize, awarded annually to architectural students around the world, is being awarded this year to students preparing the best essays on "The Architect and the Accessible City." Several dozen photos from the Photo Tour on AEI's website are used to illustrate this topic at [www.berkeleyprize.org](http://www.berkeleyprize.org).

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## Motorized auto-rickshaws are a hot topic

The role of motorized "three wheelers" in the provision of paratransit services around the world is on the agenda at conferences in many countries, and right here at AEI! We hope to provide greater coverage of this important topic in future newsletters.

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## Kuala Lumpur: A collaborative approach to "making access happen"



The mayor of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (third from left), hosted the Swedish ambassador (second from left) at a "seminar on collaboration between Sweden and Kuala Lumpur towards an accessible city," held in March. A broad spectrum of government, community, and disability agencies supported the event, again illustrating the collaborative approach taken in this huge city (see the feature article in our newsletter this past January). The day-long seminar included a focus on public transportation, led by Dr. Naziaty Mohd Yaacob of the University of Malaysia and others with strong support from Prasarana, the government agency mandated to upgrade accessibility to transit systems.

**Please send address changes, news and photos from your country, and contact information for others to receive our newsletter to**

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#### **Donations *In Memoriam* this past year**

- Diane J. Moore, in memory of George Moore
- Gertrude E. Denney, in memory of the Rev. Glenn Fuller
- Tom & Susan Rickert, in memory of Joe Trimble, Ellen Barrier, Dwight & Vivian Johnson, Fran Picone, Paco Cisneros (Mexico), and Moacir Mariano da Costa (Brazil)
- Ann Lubeck & Peter Silverberg, in memory of Diane Leibowitz

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#### **APPLICATIONS OPEN TO HOST TRANSED 2018**

A Request for Letters of Intent to host TRANSED 2018 – the 15th International Conference on Mobility Solutions around the World – has been issued by the Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility of the Transportation Research Board. Contact Ann Frye at [ann@annfrye.co.uk](mailto:ann@annfrye.co.uk), for a copy of the request in order to submit a letter of intent by the due date of October 1. TRANSED 2015 will be held in Lisbon, Portugal on July 29-31, 2015. Information about the conference will be posted at [www.ist.utl.pt](http://www.ist.utl.pt).

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# News and Notes from Around the World

## LATIN AMERICA



• **Costa Rica:** Our colleague, David Koffman, reports "significant progress" based on his observations during a recent visit to this progressive Central American republic. "There is now widespread adoption of wheelchair lifts on urban buses and there are numerous wheelchair-accessible taxicabs, not just in San Jose but in other cities as well." While efforts to improve access to sidewalks and street crossings are underway, pedestrian access remains poor. His photos depict an accessible taxi (top), a lift-equipped bus, and a curb ramp (bottom).

Advocates are seeking more participation in the implementation of Costa Rican legislation affecting their rights, according to the *Tico Times* newspaper.

• **Mexico:** High speed rail is planned to link Mexico City with Queretaro, with service planned to begin in 2-3 years. AEI is working with Mexican colleagues to keep our readers informed about its accessibility features. . . . The Mexico City government issued a decree promoting universal access in February.

• **Uruguay:** Officials in Montevideo are testing ramped low-floor buses to add to their accessible bus fleet, notes Eduardo Alvarez.

• **Bolivia:** Our colleague Gerhard Menckhoff notes that efforts are going forward to assure universal design of the new Bus Rapid Transit System planned for La Paz.

## NORTH AMERICA

• **USA:** In a decision which shocked disability advocates around the world, conservative forces in the

United States Senate narrowly blocked ratification by the USA of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The vote, taken in December, fell short of the 2/3s majority needed to ratify the treaty. The USA joins Venezuela as the only other nation with more than a million population in North, Central, or South America that has not ratified the UNCRPD. Some 130 nations with 85% of the world's population have already ratified the document. . . . The U.N. General Assembly has scheduled a major meeting on disability and development on September 23.

Inspirational videos have been prepared by the San Francisco paratransit system. Search for "paratransit heroes" on YouTube. You will not be disappointed!

Two agencies offer formal online courses relating to accessibility, with continuing education units. Go to [www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/home/](http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/home/) to learn about online courses on universal design in both public accommodations and public transportation. And a program providing Trainer and Driver Certification for community transportation drivers serving disabled passengers is available at <http://training.ctaa.org/>. Meanwhile, Easter Seals Project ACTION in Washington DC continues to offer materials relevant to our international readers. One recent addition is *GET Going! – Guiding Everyday Travel*, of special relevance to passengers with cognitive disabilities. Go to [www.projectaction.org](http://www.projectaction.org/) for information. . . . The Global Disability Rights Library is now available in Spanish: to learn more go to <http://www.usicd.org/>.

• **Canada:** *The Destinations for All World Summit* is planned in Montreal in October, 2014, bringing together agencies from around the world dedicated to accessible tourism. For information, go to [www.Keroul.qc.ca](http://www.Keroul.qc.ca) (in English and French).

## EUROPE

**Berlin**, Germany, has been proclaimed the winner of Europe's annual award for accessible cities. Runner ups for the Access City Award 2013 were **Nantes**, France, and **Stockholm**, Sweden. . . . A Mobility and City Transport Exhibition was scheduled in **Geneva** in late May with a focus on universal design to meet the needs of ageing societies in growing cities. . . . The **European Commission** is making accessibility an essential requirement for new or upgraded rail infrastructure, with more information at <http://europa.eu>. . . . Two papers presented by practitioners from the **United Kingdom** at the TRANSED conference in New Delhi this past September shed light on important issues. *The fragility of older road users in Britain*, (continued on page 8)

# News and Notes

(continued from page 7)

which summarizes data over several years, shows that older people are more likely to sustain injury and death in an accident than younger people in the same situations. (Contact [kitmitch@googlemail.com](mailto:kitmitch@googlemail.com) for a copy.) And a paper by Ann Frye, titled *Wrong questions, wrong answers: The statistical barrier to accessibility*, documents how poorly done surveys can result in absurdly low (or high) data on disability. This paper is of value to policy makers. Contact [ann@annfrye.co.uk](mailto:ann@annfrye.co.uk) for the full paper.

## AFRICA

- **Tanzania:** The first 29 km of Dar es Salaam's DART BRT system is now under construction, notes Oscar Kikoyo. DART will feature nearly 150 articulated buses serving some thirty accessible stations.
- **South Africa:** Cape Town is currently rolling out 200 low-floor accessible feeder buses to serve its Bus Rapid Transit network, notes Jim Stanbury.

## MIDEAST-ASIA-PACIFIC



Australian government. We especially recommend that readers go to pages 102-122 on "Transport systems and infrastructure." . . . Not all is perfect at home, however: advocates in Australia are concerned about the quality of accessible taxi services, notes a recent issue of *Accord*.

- **India:** Women activists in New Delhi rose as one as India's capital celebrated *One Billion Rising*, part of an international movement to protest incidents like the horrific violence against women on a Delhi mini-bus reported this past December. Women with disabilities joined the event and cooperated with Delhi Metro with events at Metro stations and signs on board Metro cars saying "Let's make Delhi safe for women and girls." (information from Samarthyam and *The Hindu*) . . . In a related matter, *The Times of India* reports an increase in the number of women training to drive buses and other transit vehicles: a step which may increase the confidence of women to use public transit.
- **Iran:** A member of the Tehran Council for Improving Public Spaces is seeking better support from Iran's Interior Ministry to enhance access to transit stations, subways, and buses. (Radio Zamaneh)

- **Israel:** 80% of Israel's intra-city buses are now accessible, notes a report from Bizchut.

- **Korea:** A poster by E. Kim and E. Choi, at a transport conference in Washington in January, reported research that fuel consumption goes up while safety goes down when drivers use "aggressive acceleration." It turns out that doing the right thing to protect disabled passengers (as well as everyone else) will also save money on fuel for transit agencies.

- **Saudi Arabia:** Experts from more than 20 countries were featured at a major three-day international conference organized in recent months by GAATES: The Global Alliance on Accessible Technology and Environments.\* With more than 400 attendees, the Saudi Forum on Universal Design was a first for Saudi Arabia and the Mid-East. . . . And the Saudi government has ordered 3,000 wheelchair lifts for vehicles there.

- **Singapore:** The government is committing more than US\$500 million to provide more accessible and elderly-friendly pedestrian access to transit stations and terminals, including elevators planned to supplement access at pedestrian bridges, notes *Today*. . . . Accessible buses are being deployed on nine additional routes in Singapore.

- **Thailand:** Bangkok's Ministry of Transport is planning accessibility improvements for land, air, and maritime transport modes as well as sidewalks and crossings. This will include access features on 3,183 new public buses, reports the *Bangkok Post*. Subway access is also being upgraded.

- **Taiwan:** Thirty accessible mini-van taxis are being procured by Taipei's city government, which also is offering a subsidy to other taxi drivers to make their vehicles accessible. (News & photo from *Focus Taiwan*)



\*Our news items from Iran, Singapore, Thailand, and Saudi Arabia were forwarded by GAATES. Readers may subscribe to their news service, covering a broad range of disability issues, at [www.gaates.org](http://www.gaates.org).