

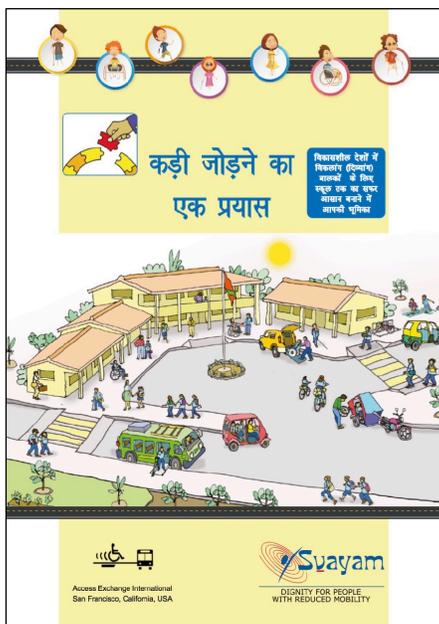
# Accessible Transportation Around the World



The Newsletter of  
Access Exchange International  
January 2018

## Pete Meslin represents AEI at Svayam in India

Announcing the Hindi version of *Bridging the Gap*, our guide to help children with disabilities to walk or ride to school



The Hindi version of AEI's guide (left) was unveiled on October 26 by Sminu Jindal, the founder of Svayam in New Delhi, India, in a joint presentation with Pete Meslin, representing Access Exchange International (photo at right). Sminu Jindal is the founder of Svayam, an initiative of the Sminu Jindal Charitable Trust. Svayam works to promote the dignity



of people with reduced mobility and advocates an enabling and accessible environment for all. Pete Meslin is an authority on school transport for children with disabilities in the USA and is Director of Transportation for the Newport-Mesa Unified School District in southern California. He is a member of the team that created the English version of AEI's guide. The Hindi guide is at [www.svayam.com](http://www.svayam.com).

Meslin visited three schools that serve children with disabilities in the New Delhi area, operated respectively by public, private, and non-profit agencies. He learned about the different transportation challenges facing each school while also speaking from his own [To Page 3 →](#)

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# Videos "put a human face" on school transport issues, following filming in Mexico by an SF State Univ. team



Officials from the education and social service departments of the State of Hidalgo, Mexico, welcome a team of students and staff from San Francisco State University (SFSU) and AEI at a ceremony held in the state capital of Pachuca in early June. Transport and disability agencies and individuals in Mexico City and the State of Mexico also participated in making the videos for AEI. A screening of the films took place at SFSU on November 9. See our next Newsletter for a report on a screening of one of the films at the United Nations in December, celebrating the UN's International Day of Persons with Disabilities in New York. Each of these short films has a distinct purpose. The videos are for different audiences around the world. - Photo by DIF Hidalgo



Alejandro Bautista Bautista (left) and Octavia Velez Hernández (center) discuss transportation issues facing their son, Diego. Travel costs make it impossible for Diego to attend school more than part-time. Janett Jiménez Santos (second from left) coordinated the filming for AEI. Sofía Alquicirez Tellez, at right, of the Hidalgo State social services department (DIF), also takes part in the discussion. - AEI photo by Tom Rickert

## We hope you will share these films!

We invite our readers to share these films with friends and colleagues in the worlds of education and transport. We welcome everyone's comments.

- **Making the case for better transport**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogsiR79hGxY&t=35s>  
"A Missing Link: Transporting children with disabilities to school" (13 minutes). A six-minute version of this film is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A795B3Fh3Hs&feature=youtu.be>

- **Promoting volunteerism around the world**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eu1kVIE8YB0> (4 min.)

- **Bus rapid transit helps children get to school**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JhKt-cllyo> (2 minutes)

- **A wheelchair user faces challenges getting to school**

[vimeo.com/242880639](https://vimeo.com/242880639) (4 minutes)

- **Different transport modes to get to school**

[vimeo.com/242880330](https://vimeo.com/242880330) (1 minute)

Permissions by participants in videos are on file at BECA, SFSU, San Francisco



Teachers joined Pete Meslin at this school in New Delhi for discussion of transportation challenges. The school serves children with disabilities from low-income families. - Photo courtesy of Svayam

### ***Bridging the Gap in Hindi*** - from Page 1

experience as an innovator of improved travel training to enable children to more safely travel to school on different types of vehicles. Called "Bus in the Classroom," the program uses school bus drivers and other transport personnel in the classroom to directly communicate with children with disabilities. The program helps children to interact more safely once on board, with the potential of reducing a requirement in many countries that an adult must accompany each child. This in itself can enable more low-income parents to send their children to school.

### **Coming soon: Spanish and Chinese versions of the school transport guide**

Spanish and Chinese versions of *Bridging the Gap: Your role in transporting children with disabilities to school in developing countries*, are in final stages of preparation. The Spanish version will be published in Mexico with the help of our grant from the United Nations. The Chinese version will be published by the Eden Social Welfare Foundation in Taipei, Taiwan. Eden is also the host agency of the TRANSED conference announced on page 6. See our next Newsletter for details.

### **Also in preparation: One-page flyers**

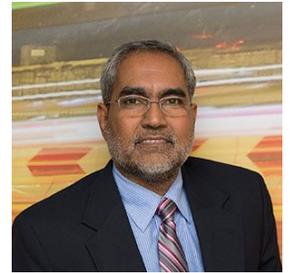
These simple "how to" handouts will list ways to promote school transport, with versions for teachers, parents, students, and others. They have been prepared by Richard Schultze and translated into Spanish by Gretel Silvestre of the team that prepared our guide.

## **Working together to bridge the transport gap EquallyAble Foundation to consider proposals to improve travel to school**

Schools and agencies in developing regions are invited to consider an initiative to enhance travel to school by children with disabilities in an announcement with grant criteria to be posted by December 15, 2017, at [www.equallyable.org/](http://www.equallyable.org/), the website of the EquallyAble Foundation.

Proposals submitted by January 31, 2018, will be given consideration by a review committee which includes Mohammed Yousuf (photo below), the founder of the EquallyAble Foundation, as well as Pete Meslin and Tom Rickert of the team which developed AEI's recently published guide, *Bridging the Gap: Your role in transporting children with disabilities to school in developing countries*. Proposers will benefit by reviewing the findings, recommendations, and other material in the guide. Up to \$25,000 will be awarded.

The mission of EquallyAble Foundation is to integrate individuals with disabilities into mainstream living to help them become self-supporting and independent. Since 2001, EquallyAble has provided assistance for access to education, equipment and employment to over 6,000 people with disabilities around the world. AEI welcomes this collaborative effort by our colleagues at the EquallyAble Foundation.



**NOTICE TO OUR READERS**

**We seek your help to provide the needed funds to reach out to policy makers, educators, and transport operators around the world with the help of our colleagues and our guides and videos. Contributions by USA donors are tax-deductible and readers in many countries can send a check to AEI by regular mail (address on p. 6) 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!**



From left: Janett Jiménez Santos, representing AEI; Martha Lucía Gutiérrez Echeverri, General Secretary of SIMUS; Verónica Justiniano Oller, Dept. of Urban Mobility of Tarija, Bolivia; César Luis Dockweiler Suarez, Executive Director of "Mi Teleférico," the La Paz aerial cableway; and Cecilia Medrano, consultant on urban mobility in Tarija.

### Report from La Paz

## Conference in Bolivia includes a focus on vulnerable groups

Janett Jiménez Santos represented Access Exchange International at a conference in October in La Paz, Bolivia, organized by SIMUS: The Latin American Association of Integrated Systems for Sustainable Urban Mobility.

Both as a panelist, and through a pre-conference interview published by SIMUS, Ms. Jiménez provided a focus on inclusive mobility for vulnerable groups. She also met with the Director of Mobility Planning of El Alto, Roberto Guardia Ramírez, to discuss bus accessibility in that city of more than a million persons adjacent to La Paz. El Alto bears the distinction of being the highest major metropolitan area in the world. Several accessible aerial cableways now connect El Alto with La Paz.

AEI thanks the Interamerican Development Bank, the City of La Paz, and other agencies for covering Janett's travel and other expenses.

### Germany reaches out to the developing world

## Our transport-to-school guide presented at a conference in Berlin

Janett Jiménez accepted an invitation from Germany's Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to present our transport-to-school guide at Inclusion Days 2017 (Inklusionstage 2017) in December. See an update in our next Newsletter.

## Inclusive transport in developing countries 19th International Roundtable coming soon in Washington DC

Our annual event only seems to become more popular. AEI (USA) and ICSA (Canada) are again pleased to announce our annual Roundtable, planned for Thursday morning, January 11, 2018, in downtown Washington, hosted by the American Public Transportation Assn. (APTA) at 1300 "I" Street some four blocks from the White House. While the roundtable includes updates on all modes of accessible transportation, the presentations will include a focus on school transport in regions where children with disabilities can only get to school with difficulty, if at all.

Security arrangements at this site require pre-registration with AEI and will be on a "first come, first served" basis. We suggest you contact us at [tom@globalride-sf.org](mailto:tom@globalride-sf.org) well before our final registration deadline of Friday, January 5.



The newly published BRT Planning Guide is available electronically at [www.brtguide.org](http://www.brtguide.org). Tom Rickert of Access Exchange International is the lead author of Chapter 30 on Universal Access, based on earlier work performed for the World Bank. John King and Gerhard Menckhoff also contributed graphics and text for this chapter.

### Want to learn a lot more about inclusive transport?

Visit our website at [www.globalride-sf.org](http://www.globalride-sf.org) and browse through our newly updated resources section, which now includes more than 100 links to agencies in twenty countries. And don't forget to visit our newsletters in English and Spanish, for those wanting to cover events in our field over the past dozen years.

## Report from Africa: The world's fastest growing continent

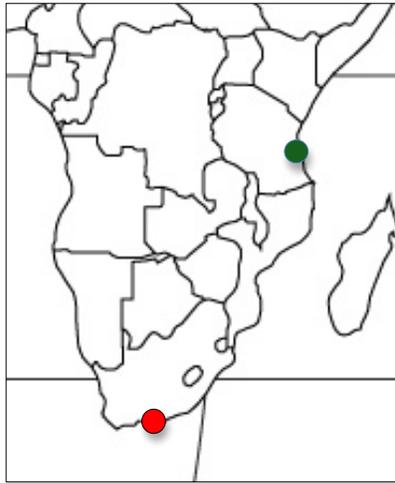
### ● George, South Africa

The City of George in South Africa's Western Cape province is located on the southern coast between Cape Town, to the west, and Port Elizabeth, to the east. With an estimated population of around 220,000, George is dwarfed by larger cities in South Africa, but it holds the distinction that every one of its 104 public transport vehicles is accessible to persons with disabilities, not only in terms of on-board features, but with curbside access provided to the entire bus fleet with sidewalks sized to accommodate lifts and ramps used by the buses. Both the minibuses on feeder routes and regular-size buses on main routes operate on a fixed schedule.

In other words, when it comes to public transportation, George is arguably one of the most accessible cities in all of Africa, although far-larger cities, such as Cape Town and Johannesburg, have made great progress on a larger scale, as we will report in future newsletters. George serves as a model for future roll-outs of accessible services in other smaller cities in South Africa and beyond. The service is operated by an agency called GoGeorge, which is perhaps indicative of its "can do" approach. GoGeorge is funded and operated with a mixture of national, provincial, and municipal monies.



Carlo Zietsman boards a mini-bus in George - Photo courtesy of GoGeorge



### ● Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Dar es Salaam is one of the world's fastest growing cities, with a current population of some five million, or more than twenty times the population of George. With its swelling population come enormous public transport challenges, not the least of which is the need for persons with disabilities to get around like everyone else. One response has

been the creation of DART, which opened in 2016 as the first bus rapid transit system in all of east Africa. DART's 140 large buses have exclusive rights-of-way, speeding passengers on their way, while ramped platforms lead to level boarding at stations that provide access to passengers with disabilities. Funding is provided by the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and Tanzanian sources.



AEI's Executive Director visited the BRT planners in Dar es Salaam to discuss DART's access features in 2006. (Yes, this project has been much delayed!) DART will receive a Sustainable Transport Award in January in Washington DC, with Moscow receiving an honorable mention for gains described in a feature in our last newsletter.



DART's exclusive right-of-way. - Fotos courtesy of the Institute for Transportation Development and Policy (ITDP)

**Abstract submission due by April 30**  
**Registration is open for TRANSED**  
**2018, November 12-15 in Taiwan**

"Mobility for all: Connecting the World with Accessible Transportation," is the theme of TRANSED 2018, to be held November 12-15, 2018, at the Taipei International Convention Center.



The event is sponsored by the Eden Social Welfare Foundation, one of the largest paratransit providers in Asia, which currently operates nearly 600 vehicles serving the

needs of persons with disabilities.

Tom Rickert of AEI was brought to Taiwan a year ago by Eden to help prepare the conference, which is co-sponsored by the USA's Transportation Research Board.

**Go to [www.transted2018.com](http://www.transted2018.com) for registration and information.** The conference will focus on topics such as accessible tourism; safe mobility for elderly persons and persons with disabilities; collaboration between information, financial, and transport services; and features of the Asia-Pacific region and worldwide as cities work together to promote inclusion and sustainability. We encourage our readers to consider their roles in promoting and participating in this important conference.



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**AEI is tax-exempt under Article 501(c)(3) of the USA's Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to our work from USA donors are tax-deductible. Each dollar of donations during our most recent fiscal year was matched by more than two dollars in cost sharing. Financial compilations are available.**



- Photo by Annette Williams

**Queretero transport agency initiates an accessible school bus service**

Queretero, Mexico's, Secretaría de Movilidad (Dept. of Mobility) has initiated public school bus services which include an initial transport service for children with disabilities with the bus shown in the photo. The project will test how to meet the unmet needs for children to get to public and private primary and secondary schools as part of a larger program. Efforts also include work on bicycle and pedestrian paths, improved bus stops, ride sharing coordinated with parents, and other types of mobility management.

**Editorial comment**

**Inclusive policies are gaining traction**

There appears to be a global shift toward public policy and universal design that promotes the inclusion of vulnerable populations, including seniors and persons with disabilities.

Consider our mission of promoting accessible transportation around the world. At a policy level, we can point to support for accessible transport in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified by 164 countries) and, more recently, in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Recent trends indicate that global policies (top down) and advocacy (bottom up) are being matched by cities copying cities (the horizontal spread of good practice) when it comes to inclusive transport. For example, every country in North and South America has at least made a start toward public transport with accessibility features. Accessible bus rapid transit concepts have flowed from Curitiba, Brazil, and Bogotá, Colombia, on to the rest of the Americas and thence to India, China, South Africa, and beyond. It is all chronicled in the fifty newsletters we have published in the past twenty-six years: Four hundred pages documenting solid achievements.

## Chile: Confronting the need for inclusive public transport

"CiudadAccesible" (AccessibleCity) is a Chilean agency that promotes accessibility and independent living in a comparatively wealthy country which still has a long way to go when it comes to access to public transport, especially for those living outside the capital city of Santiago. The agency reports that even in Santiago, access is limited to slow-to-materialize improvements to the subway system, and an overcrowded bus rapid transit system called Transantiago.

Problems on Transantiago focus on finding a travel path to buses which, when not overcrowded, often appear to have adequate access features once inside. But the bus stop can be the main obstacle, as it is in many countries. The angle of a ramp to the bus can easily be too steep if the stop is not high enough to permit safe deployment of the ramp at, ideally, no more than a 12% grade. (Compare photo above with the flat entry in the photo from Yichang at top left.) Ramps should have proper safety edges on their sides and should not have edges at either end which cannot be easily surmounted by the smaller wheels typically at the front of a wheelchair.



CiudadAccesible reports other problems, including turnstiles which can block easy access by passengers and problems with passengers with disabilities having to climb up into raised "preferred" seats which are above floor level.

Fortunately, the advocacy of organizations such as Ciudad Accesible will help cities such as Santiago to improve their accessibility. Find publications in Spanish at [www.ciudadaccesible.cl](http://www.ciudadaccesible.cl). - Photo and image courtesy of Ciudad Accesible, with thanks to Andrea Legarreta and Lake Sararis for background on accessibility issues in Santiago.



Gap filler deployed at Yichang BRT station

## "Minding the gap" in Yichang, China: Progress on a baffling problem

Otherwise accessible bus rapid transit systems have long grappled with how to further reduce the platform-to-bus gap that makes boarding more difficult for all passengers, and especially for many persons with disabilities. This ITDP photo from Yichang's bus rapid transit system, sent to AEI by Gerhard Menckhoff, illustrates a promising development in efforts to reduce the gap between the platform and buses at BRT stations. The yellow gap filler, mounted under the platform, slides out to close the gap. The mechanism does not delay boarding for passengers and may decrease boarding time by providing a safer environment. (Type "Yichang BRT gap filler" in YouTube to see the mechanism in operation.) Shanshan Li, of the ITDP in China, writes that the electric retractable gap filler automatically measures the distance to the bus and then deploys the mechanism accordingly. This approach is now being replicated in Guangzhou's bus rapid transit system.

Yichang's initiative is one of the more promising solutions to a decades-long history of frustration to make BRT systems as accessible as new rail systems which often feature consistent minimal gaps in modern stations. For example, the station-to-bus gap at Mexican BRT stations consistently fell short of standards as measured by a nationwide assessment of accessibility made by the Mexican agency El Poder del Consumidor. AEI has long advocated more research to quantify the problem. Help may be on the way as colleagues in Chile and elsewhere consider research and other initiatives to "mind the gap" with a more scientific approach to this vexing problem.

# News & Notes

**ASIA** India: Extensive coverage of universal accessibility is included in the "Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Design Guidelines for Indian Cities," just published by the Indian Road Congress (photo).



The section includes major inputs from Indian agencies and promotes "opportunities to make the system inclusive by incorporating universal design features," citing the BRT access guidelines compiled by AEI's Executive

Director for the World Bank. . . . State governments are said to be dragging their feet in response to President Modi's ambitious Accessible India campaign. Progress remains slow in making more than 1600 public buildings accessible. . . . Hong Kong: Proposed transport improvements include further progress on barrier-free public transport.

## ดัชนีการเข้าถึงระบบขนส่งสาธารณะ Public Transport Accessibility Index (PTAI)

Thailand: Sawang Srisom has developed an assessment tool which has become a Public Transport Accessibility Index which measures (1) compliance with the local accessibility code, (2) inclusivity for those with different needs, and (3) connectivity.

**AMERICAS** Uruguay: ¡RampitaUY! is a new "participative" Smartphone app that stores information on access to a full range of sites integrated into a national map of Uruguay, notes Dra. Graciela Borelli, referred to us by Dr. Federico Montero in Costa Rica. Go to [www.rampita uy/](http://www.rampita uy/) for information.

USA: **Pete Meslin and Tom Rickert plan to represent AEI at the "Transporting Students with Disabilities" conference near Dallas, Texas, scheduled for March 9-14.** Meslin will lead a workshop on his innovative "Bus in the Classroom" program, report on his work in India, and join Tom in promoting better transport to school in developing countries. For more information, go to [www.stnonline.com](http://www.stnonline.com). . . AEI will be well represented at the USA's Transportation Research Board (TRB) annual meetings in Washington DC on January 7-11. One new feature: TRB's Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility has formed a subcommittee on Policy and Practice which includes a focus on the new Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

**EUROPE** Georgia: Persons with disabilities protested inaccessible public transport and pedestrian ways at a rally this past June, notes "Georgia Today". . . . Portugal: Diogo Cunha Martins notifies us that a new task force has been formed in Lisbon to improve access to the city's pedestrian and public transport networks. . . . Russia: Moscow State University has engaged with Montana State University (USA) on a joint project to support the development of accessible transport in Moscow, notes Susan Gallagher of MSU's Western Transportation Institute.

**AFRICA** Morocco: Marrakech has a new fleet of accessible buses and is moving ahead with tactile paving and other accessibility improvements. . . . Zambia: Liswaniso Mwanalushi has written AEI about "The Commuter Magazine," a unique publication based in Lusaka "advocating for accessibility rights for the disabled at bus stations in Zambia." Safety is a major concern. The photo below from "The Commuter Magazine" shows one reason why. Google "The Commuter Magazine



Zambia" for more information. Our thanks to Drs. Donna Staton and Lucy Crain for referring Mr. Mwanalushi to AEI.

(We thank GAATES and its Global Accessibility News service for some of the items on this page.)

## CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE NEWS

A focus on transport to school is hard to find among the many excellent publications in English and Spanish which focus on the accessibility of school buildings after a child with a disability has reached that destination. One agency of general interest for all low-income persons is INTALInC, the International Network for Transport and Accessibility in Low Income Communities, suggested to us by Gina Porter, a researcher with special interest in situations facing children who walk to school. Google "INTALInC" for more information. We also recommend Googling research in Zimbabwe and Kenya by Leonard Cheshire Disability, which recognizes the important role of transport in getting children to school.