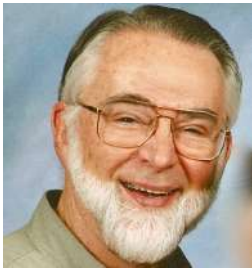


Accessible Transportation Around the World



The Newsletter of
Access Exchange International
January 2020

International Team Moves Ahead on Border States Initiative



USA and Mexican colleagues are collaborating on finding a way forward to enable more Hispanic children and youth with disabilities to ride or walk to school in the four American and six Mexican states bordering their common frontier.

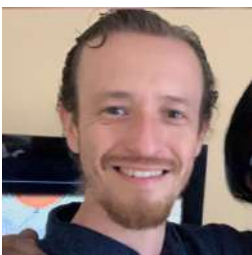


Our enlarged team, pictured from top left, now includes:

- Tom Rickert, Coordinator of AEI's guide, *Bridging the Gap: Your role in transporting children with disabilities to school in developing countries*



- Janett Jiménez Santos, an architect in Mexico City consulting with federal and state governments in Mexico



- Pete Meslin, retired Director of Transportation for California's Newport-Mesa Unified School District



- Javier Guerrero Aguirre, educator and consultant on special education with Mexico's public education department

- Rachel Carp, a journalist and writer currently residing in Dallas with a focus on migrant children and youth in Texas

Our unique initiative will explore the complicated and often hidden obstacles that confront Hispanic children

and their parents when it [More on page 2 →](#)



Safer buses are needed for children in Thailand. One answer: Keep schools nearby so they can walk!

(Photo modified to prevent identification of children) [To page 3](#)

Also on the inside . . .

Pages 4-6

A SPECIAL REPORT FROM INDIA



also

- Page 3:** Helping children walk to school in Delhi, plus our annual Washington Roundtable on January 16
- Page 6:** Road Congress in Abu Dhabi
- Page 7:** Accessible rail transit grows in China, plus an innovation in school transport for children with disabilities in Nigeria
- Page 8:** Reports from the USA, Mexico, Uruguay, and Spain. Also news from Botswana, Liberia, Rwanda, and Nigeria.



The ten states along the common USA-Mexico border
 Source: Texas Dept. of Agriculture

International Team . . . (continued from front page)

comes to walking and riding to school, and then look at ways to address these obstacles. More than eleven million children with a Spanish-speaking background live in the ten state region, of whom up to 800,000 have been *identified* with a mobility, sensory, or intellectual disability. Nor does this take account of *hidden* children who have failed to even register for school.

In the USA, diagnosis is a key step in obtaining transportation to school. Federal legislation requires children with disabilities in public primary and secondary schools to receive free school transportation if needed. But if a disability is not diagnosed, or if parents do not receive accurate information or are afraid to send their children to school, their children may not qualify for or be able to benefit from needed transportation. In Mexican states along our common border, a need to accompany a child with special needs to and from school on public transportation often prevents a child from attending. The burden is simply too great for parents who must work full time to put food on the table for their families.

As we look at the differences between the situation in the USA and Mexico, we are also conscious of the many similarities that also influence the situation. Little has been done to analyze the multiple factors which cause an inability to walk or ride to school to impact the educational attainment of Hispanic children. What we learn from the situation in USA and Mexican border states may be surprisingly relevant to other borders elsewhere in the world.

Access Exchange International plans to release our report-in-preparation with recommendations later in 2020. Meanwhile, we have much work to do as our international team tackles this major task. Stay tuned!

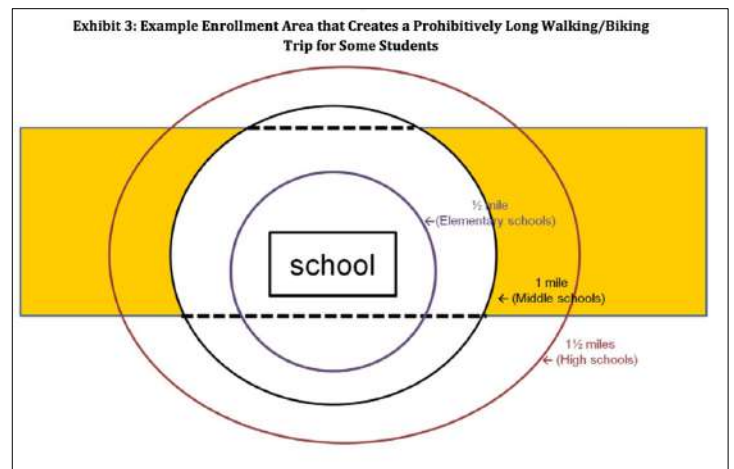
Editorial

In spite of the positive international trend toward more inclusive education for children with disabilities, the data indicate that in the lowest-income countries the widening gap between educational attainment by children with and without disabilities will continue and increase in years to come.

Much, and in some countries most, of the dynamic behind this global failure is ignorance about the need for transportation to get children to school or, alternatively, ignorance about the need to build inclusive schools close to where children live. Either the child must find transportation or migrate to a location nearer the school, or the school must go to the child. Transportation obstacles which are immediately obvious to parents may escape the attention of both researchers and major international institutions which have hardly begun to look for solutions. Inclusive schools will not serve children with disabilities who cannot reach them.

One factor behind this concern is that transportation is deemed too expensive. Parents who find it cheaper to pay for a few annual round trips may send their children to boarding schools – often serving only students with disabilities – precisely to avoid the costs of daily transportation. Educators may see no easy path to affording the needed transportation.

Transportation departments, development banks, and major NGOs and social service agencies with an interest in developing countries need to systematically investigate transportation solutions when they look at what it means to provide inclusive education in low-income countries. This problem is rampant in regions where most children with disabilities never see the inside of a school, and it exists in poverty-stricken areas of the United States as well. Our report in 2020 hopes to define this concern as it affects Hispanic children with disabilities in northern Mexico and the USA states bordering Mexico.



Source: US EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection, *School Siting Guidelines*, Oct. 2011

"Bridging the Gap" grant helps children with disabilities walk to school in Delhi

Most children with special needs are able to walk or roll or be carried a modest distance to school, but only if they do not encounter obstacles that bar their way. Concerned with improving walkability to school, the EquallyAble Foundation partnered with Access Exchange International in 2018 to promote key recommendations in AEI's guide, *Bridging the Gap: Your role in transporting children with disabilities to school in developing countries*. In collaboration with AEI, EquallyAble provided "Bridging the Gap" funds to ASTHA, a school for children with special needs in a Delhi slum, in order to identify and eliminate walkability barriers and then to share the results of the project to encourage other agencies in India and beyond to do the same.

The results are in, with a spectrum of improvements to show what can be done by involving the community to identify the specific barriers faced by children, one child at a time. See the photos below of "bridging the gap" of a small drainage ditch and a large drainage canal that were made with the funds from EquallyAble. Also go to the article on a companion project in Nigeria on page 7. We encourage our readers to learn more about the good work of EquallyAble and its founder, our colleague Mohammed Yousuf, at <https://equallyable.org>.



Neither safe nor inclusive: Photo of school children crowding into and onto a vehicle in Thailand, courtesy of Sawang Srisom. Clearly, this type of transport is especially daunting for children with disabilities. (Photo modified to prevent identification of children)

Thailand (continued from front page)

Sawang Srisom, a colleague in Thailand, sends us the photos above and on our front page of children without disabilities using different types of vehicles to get to school. But children and youth with special needs lack the options of other children if schools are far away. The schools may be better resourced, but what if they are out of reach? Greater distance can be a barrier which brings education to a complete halt for many children with disabilities.

Srisom cites a joint publication of The Asia Foundation and UKaid which underlines the difficulty in a report from northeastern Thailand. Low-income parents usually opposed a policy of consolidating small local schools into fewer better-resourced schools. But it turned out that 74% of the population in one study would accept the consolidation of small schools into larger schools if good transportation was provided. Sawang Srisom points out that transportation for children with disabilities is especially needed. He recommends a multi-step process for phasing in larger inclusive schools with safe and inclusive transportation.

Hosted by APTA, sponsored by AEI (USA) & ICSA (Canada) **21st Annual Roundtable set for Jan. 16 in Washington DC**

Our 21st annual roundtable on inclusive transportation in developing countries is planned in Washington DC on Thursday morning, January 16, 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon, following the annual meeting of the USA's Transportation Research Board. Space is limited at this no-cost event hosted by APTA: The American Public Transportation Association. Pre-registration is required by contacting AEI at tom@globalride-sf.org. And thanks again to APTA for making this event possible over the past two decades!

Update on Transport for All in the World's Largest Democracy

Svayam is an initiative of the S.J. Charitable Trust based in New Delhi, India, with the mission of creating a barrier-free and inclusive world. Access Exchange International has partnered with Svayam on several projects and conferences. We have visited Svayam's activities four times in recent years. Svayam recently published the Hindi version of our guide promoting school transportation.



By Subhash Vashishth, Director, Svayam

Accessible Transportation & Mobility in India: A Game Changer

The Indian government reports that transport demand has grown by almost eight times since 1980 – more than in any other Asian nation. Technology has had a special role in enabling the transportation sector to develop in the midst of urbanization in recent years.

Besides heavy investment in the last five years in large scale infrastructure development for urban mobility, the government is also building infrastructure to promote non-motorised transport such as bicycles, cycle rickshaws and walkways for pedestrians.

In 2015, the Prime Minister of India underlined the importance of inclusion by rolling out the “Accessible India Campaign” to increase access for persons with disabilities to public space and transport. Svayam, India’s leading accessibility rights non-profit, has been one of the key contributors to this ambitious campaign and audited the access of 340 public buildings in eight major cities across India. In 2016, India passed new legislation titled the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) with more focus and stricter provisions on mobility and transportation.



India's Smart Cities Mission promotes inclusive transport

The Smart Cities Mission, launched by the Govt. of India in 2015, focuses on 100 smart cities in its first phase. One major component of India's Smart Cities

Mission is creating and developing an efficient public transport system that provides a variety of transport options. Smart Cities can build upon the successes of bus rapid transit (BRT) systems now in use or planned in many Indian cities (see photo on page 1). BRT systems often provide access features that benefit all passengers and especially those with disabilities. Around ten mass rapid transport projects have already been initiated by Smart Cities, plus projects in intelligent traffic management and integrated multimodal transport.

Svayam has been part of the Bureau of Indian Standards committee working to formulate Smart Cities standards and to ensure that accessibility remains a key component in the Smart City indicators.



Accessible Rural Transportation: A must for a country with 70% village population

Smart Cities alone cannot make India a Smart Nation; Smart Villages are equally important, given the fact that 70% of India's population is rural. While major cities are slowly waking up to the need for and benefits of accessible infrastructure and transport systems, rural India is still left behind when it comes to transportation options available to people with reduced mobility. This leaves a vast section of society dependent on others and unproductive in terms of economic growth. Lack of awareness, failure to prioritise accessibility in development projects, and lack of funds poses a big challenge to the goal of inclusive mobility and transport for elderly and disabled people in rural parts of the country.

Accessible Metro sets an example for mainline railways

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is a model public transport system that with few exceptions is accessible for people with disabilities. In 2018, Svayam was invited by DMRC to conduct an access audit of



ten major DMRC stations built at different times and to recommend further access improvements now being implemented. To offer better "last mile connectivity," DMRC has partnered with Uber India to make hiring a cab from a Metro station in Delhi a lot easier. Uber has won a competitive bid to expand its operations across 210 Delhi Metro stations. DMRC will provide Uber with dedicated pickup and dropoff points at the stations. Delhi thus becomes the ninth city globally and first in Asia to have such a feature. Svayam is pushing hard to make this Uber service accessible for people with disabilities through advocacy and legal mechanisms.

In another recent development, DMRC has also taken over the operations and maintenance of an ailing metro service in a nearby town of Haryana State adjoining Delhi. The ridership of this service never picked up despite being connected to Delhi Metro, as commuters had to pay extra Rs. 35 (50 cents US) when they changed between the two metro systems. After integration and a common management, it has picked up again and now provides a seamless, convenient and cheaper travel option for commuters. The DMRC not only is accessible but also provides personal assistance to travellers with disabilities on request.

Indian Railways start its march towards accessibility

Indian Railways has a huge inventory of rolling stock and railway stations. It is challenging to enforce accessibility in one go. India's railways have been making access improvements at larger stations for several years. From 2018 onwards,



India's Railway Board has entrusted the Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation (IRSDC) with the development and redevelopment of all railway stations belonging to Indian Railways. IRSDC has been organising an international design competition for specific stations to assure designs that are inclusive for all users, reflect local heritage, and include other advancements in rail station design.

On the rolling stock front, Indian Railways has launched the Vande Bharat Express, an Indian semi-high speed intercity electric train. Despite progress, platform-to-coach height differences and lack of accessible on-board toilets make rail access a concern. Recently, the Railway Ministry announced plans to form a committee to finalize the guidelines, access standards, and access features for persons with disabilities in railway systems. Svayam is trying to ensure that stakeholders are involved as active members in the proposed committee and that it be mandated to prepare standards of accessibility for infrastructure and services at railway stations and coaches. For this purpose, Svayam has also shared a draft access code with the railways for consideration.

India's Judiciary ensures disabled-friendly buses

In June 2018, when the City Govt. of Delhi wanted to purchase standard-floor inaccessible buses to meet urgent needs of its depleted fleet of accessible buses, the Delhi High Court rapped the city government for "not taking a single step for ensuring accessible transport to disabled persons in the national capital" and restrained it from procuring standard-floor buses as it impedes their mobility. The court stated that the Delhi government and the Delhi Transport Corp. (DTC) were treating the disabled as "non-existent". The city government wanted only ten per cent of the buses to be disabled friendly which shows that "they are bent upon treating the disabled as non-existent, or, in any case not having any rights." Finally the Court allowed the City Govt. to buy the standard floor buses to meet the urgent requirement of public transport with a caveat of installing hydraulic lifts in each bus and earmarking seats for passengers with disabilities. By September of 2019, 55 such buses had already been



deployed. Svayam has been raising the issue and demanding accessibility and ease of use for commuters with disabilities. Even with low-floor accessible buses served by bus shelters at the same height as the bus floor, the buses often stop too far from the kerb and thus are not usable by passengers with disabilities. Svayam has conducted sensitization workshops for the

(INDIA: from page 5) drivers and conductors of the buses to fill this gap and ran a campaign in partnership with AEI through billboards on bus shelters.

Women Empowerment with free rides on Delhi buses

Taking a step towards women's empowerment, the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) launched its much anticipated free ride service for women passengers in October of 2019. The free-ride service was used by 4.77



lakh (477,000) women using DTC buses on the very first day. Men with disabilities are now demanding similar benefits so that more and more people with disabilities can gain the mobility needed to get to work.

Tech leads the way to digital & app based mobility

India's urban transportation is witnessing new technologies which will revolutionise the sector. Shared mobility, digital payment integration, and automation are flourishing and many more start-ups are expected to add value to this growth. Use of technology is increasing at stations and in coaches and cars as well as in the shape of wearable devices with user groups. Mobile phones play the biggest role and provide a connected digital platform offering many services to make transportation more hassle-free.

The Delhi government has launched a common mobility card 'ONE' which can be used for travel in metro trains, DTC and cluster buses. Delhi will also launch an app through which commuters can plan multi-modal trips, including buses and metro trains in the city. This will help provide a seamless, high-quality travel experience on the city's public transport system. The last 15 years have been tech savvy in India. Transportation, like any other sector, saw increased use of web-based applications to improve user experience.

Svayam's Outreach in Kenya

Kenya got its first-ever fleet of 25 access auditors this past June as Svayam, in collaboration with Kenya's Nat'l. Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), organized a five-day 'Basic Access Auditor' training course in Nairobi (photo at right). The training course was a part of the 'Accessible Kenya Mission,' a joint

A pioneering look at inclusive design United Arab Emirates hosts World Road Congress in Abu Dhabi



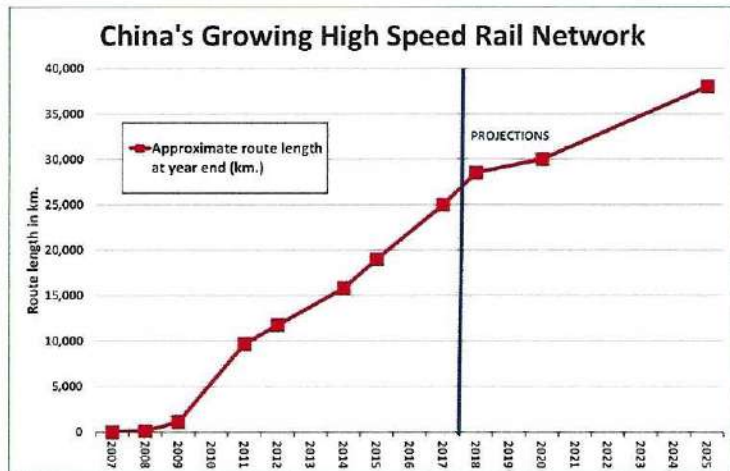
Delegates from around the world met in October in Abu Dhabi, the scene of a pioneering session on Disability-Inclusive Road Transport. Photo from left: Louise Cathro, Amin Amir Andani, Mohammed Yousuf, Janett Jiménez Santos, Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo, Daniela Bas, Subhash Chandra Vashishth, Ann Frye, Clare Smith, Patrick Malléjacq, and Bernard Obika. The session was organized by the Dept. of International Development and Dept. of Transport of the UK with assistance by DFID's HVT Programme. The host for the overall event was PIARC: the Permanent Int'l. Assn. of Road Congresses. Go to <http://www.imcworldwide.com> to download a followup publication, *Why Accessibility Matters: Practical steps to making public transport disability inclusive*.

initiative of Svayam & NCPWD. This partnership is aimed at promoting accessibility in the public infrastructure of Kenya to make mobility and transportation more inclusive and to realize the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals linked to accessibility. As part of this collaboration, Svayam will assist Kenyan stakeholders through training courses on strategies to achieve accessibility to built environments, public transportation and services in Kenya. An additional training was scheduled this past November in Nairobi. More outreach programs are being planned to take the message and practice of inclusion and accessibility to other African nations.



All photos pages 4-6 courtesy of Svayam. Page 1 photo courtesy of Gerhard Menkhoff.

A boon for persons with disabilities
China's high speed inter-city rail and city subway systems move ahead



Source: Salvatore Babones, Forbes, Feb. 13, 2018

China has the world's largest and fastest-growing high-speed rail network, now totaling some 30,000 route-km (nearly 19,000 miles) and connecting all of its major cities. China also has rapidly expanded its urban subway/elevated rail systems in more than thirty cities. Shanghai now has the longest subway system in the world, with 672 route-km (418 miles of routes).

These new rail systems are generally accessible to wheelchair users and other persons with disabilities. Unlike the many modern bus rapid transit systems being built in China and elsewhere, rail systems provide smaller and controlled gaps between station platforms and rail car floors. In spite of many access features, BRT systems have failed to keep up, partly due to a lack of international research on automatic bridges that would span the gap between buses and station platforms.

The photo below, courtesy of our colleague Gerhard Menckhoff, is from the Hufangqiao metro station in Beijing. Note the flat entry into the car, as well as the sliding doors on both the car and the platform.



Testing a safer way to transfer a child with special needs from wheelchair to vehicle seat at the Open Doors Special Education Centre in Jos, Nigeria

- Photo courtesy of Dr. Joanne Umolu, Director of Open Doors

A center in Jos, Nigeria, works to improve transport access for its students

As children with special needs grow older and heavier, it becomes more difficult to transfer from a wheelchair to a vehicle seat and can even become a barrier to their continuing in school. In collaboration with AEI, the EquallyAble Foundation provided a small "Bridging the Gap" grant to the Open Doors school in Nigeria to address this problem (also see story on page 3). Work on the project is still under way, but the use of a sliding wheelchair seat to bridge the gap between the wheelchair and the vehicle seat promises to improve safety. The seat remains affixed to the wheelchair even as it slides toward the vehicle. We thank EquallyAble for their grant, as well as Dr. Umolu and others who have moved this project forward.

News and Notes from Around the World

Transport Innovations from the Global South: The International Transport Forum has released a study on innovative practices originating from less-wealthy countries, ranging from the invention of inclusive bus rapid transit in Curitiba, Brazil, to accessible cable car transport for commuters in Medellín, Colombia, to the rise of 3-wheeled autorickshaws or 2-wheeled motorbike-taxis in Asia and Africa. Change is in the air, and blowing north. These and other efforts are chronicled in AEI's newsletters. The recommendations from the study are focused on reforming regulation, often with a "light touch" to allow more room for experimentation. Learn more at <https://www.itf-oecd.org/transport-innovations-global-south>. Also note the articles from Africa below.

Liberia: Motorcycle taxis are rightly considered to be a dangerous method of travel for all passengers. But a study released by Swansea University in the UK indicates that the hard realities of rural life in sub-Saharan Africa illustrate that the advantages of this mode of travel may outweigh the dangers, if rural footpaths can be inexpensively upgraded to supplement or replace conventional rural roads. Go to <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/228201285.pdf>

Botswana: Go to <https://www.amend.org> for a helpful video on making the approaches to schools safer for all children in low-income countries.



Rwanda: Eleven new ramp-equipped buses have been purchased from China and were put into service this past August, with nineteen more on the way for service in Kigali, Rwanda's capital. (photo by Emmanuel Kwizera in The New Times, via GAN.)

Nigeria: Congratulations to Christopher Chigboh, who headed up an AEI-assisted study tour of transportation engineers from Nigeria to San Francisco in 2013. He hopes to found a much-needed Centre for Urban Transportation Studies at Enugu State University.

Mexico: The national government recently published a 200-page Spanish-language Guide of Recommendations for Accessible Transport in the Tourism Sector (cover at right). Prepared by Janett Jiménez Santos, the guide links different tourist transportation modes with Mexican, international, and other norms for accessible land, sea, and air transportation. Google the Spanish title to download the guide.



Uruguay: Our colleague Eduardo Alvarez reports that the capital city of Montevideo has mandated that all new buses be ramp-equipped low-floor models with on-board space and securements for wheelchairs.

USA: For the past 45 years, the USA has assisted local agencies with grants to procure vehicles and transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities. To learn more, go to "USA FTA Section 5310 grants" on a search engine such as Google. While governments in less-wealthy countries may not be able to match the large investment in mobility by this long-term program, it nevertheless can serve as a model with a proven track record that has assisted millions of persons.

Spain: 144 of the 157 stations of the Barcelona Metro are accessible, with remaining stations scheduled to become accessible by 2024. (Report via GAN.)

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Photo from a recent Board 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.

AEI is a non-profit agency, tax exempt under Article 501(c)(3) of the USA's Internal Revenue Code. Financial reports are available.