

Accessible Transportation Around the World

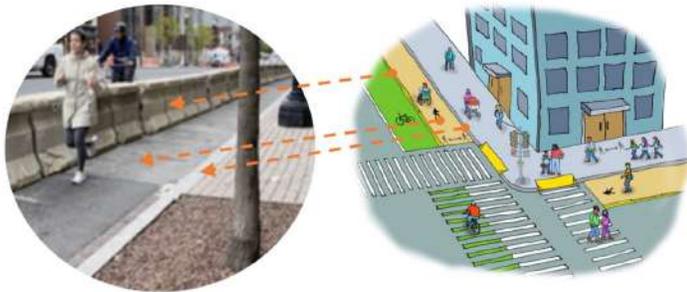


The Newsletter of
Access Exchange International
June 2021

Opportunities and challenges when it comes to inclusion

More than a hundred participants from fourteen countries around the world attended AEI's 22nd Annual International Roundtable held earlier this year via Zoom. Presenters from eight countries came up with a variety of approaches to meeting a crisis in transportation in general – and inclusive transportation in particular – that challenges our goal of "mobility for all" in our lifetimes.

A hopeful note came from Janett Jiménez (Mexico), discussing new approaches to "walkability" for everyone, as noted in her diagram in our last News-



letter of a pedestrian lane making more room for everyone, including those with disabilities.

Roger Mackett (United Kingdom) presented his research on gender differences, concluding "more women than men are prevented by their mental health condition from leaving home." The research indicated that "the greatest need seems to be policies and actions that will increase . . . confidence when travelling, such as access to staff when assistance is required and clear information when travelling." (Ed. Note: *The Irish Times* reported in March on a survey indicating that "over half of Irish women avoid public transport after dark," an all too common situation around the world.)

Christopher Chigboh (Nigeria) reported that his country has scarcely begun its long journey toward accessible transportation for all, noting that a newly-created national commission may offer a ray of hope in a situation where mobility needs are ignored by government. See the story on page 5.

Presenters from South Africa discussed their "Integrated Public Transport Networks" with various access features and the challenges they faced. "Enforcement and compliance are a problem, and the unresolved barriers created by apartheid spatial planning remain in the background. . . Progress is being made, but it is very slow and in some municipalities has stalled," they concluded.

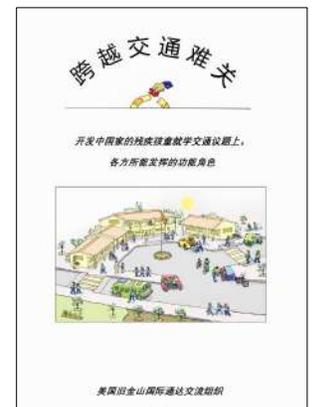
City	IPTN System
1 Johannesburg (Operating)	Rea Vaya 
2 Cape Town (Operating)	MyCiti 
3 Ekurhuleni (Operating)	Harambee 
4 Tshwane (Operating)	A re Yeng 
5 Nelson Mandela Bay (Operating)	Libhongaletu 

See page 7 of this Newsletter for a summary of a presentation by María Rodríguez Romero (Argentina), who discusses the situation in Buenos Aires.

And see page 5 of the Newsletter for an update on progress on AEI's activities in San Francisco, USA, and the state of Hidalgo, Mexico, as we prepare our report on school transportation for Hispanic students with special needs in these two countries.

Our "Bridging the Gap" guide to school transport now posted in simplified Chinese

The Eden Social Welfare Foundation in Taiwan has now translated our guide to school transportation into simplified Chinese to complement their earlier translation into traditional Chinese. Simplified Chinese is used in mainland China, while traditional Chinese is often used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other locales. The approx.



150-page guide is also available in English, Spanish, Hindi, and Japanese. Go to <https://bit.ly/2RvQIQE> for information on the simplified Chinese version.

A key publication is updated

Updated guide to enhance inclusive transport to appear later this year



Integrated Transport Planning is charged with revision of the 2004 publication. The current editorial team, shown above from top left clockwise: Nick Ayland, Laura Marshall, Crystal Asige, Neil Taylor, Tom Fleming, Ruby Stringer, Georgia Taylor, and Subhash Vashishth.

"ORN21 - Enhancing the mobility of disabled people: Guidelines for practitioners," published in 2004, is undergoing a long-awaited revision.

The document provides comprehensive good practice insights for policy-makers and practical guidance for practitioners seeking to improve the accessibility of transport systems for persons with disabilities and individuals who experience mobility challenges living in lower and middle-income countries. This revision will update the guide with current internationally recognized standards and with case studies that seek to inspire practitioners wishing to improve the accessibility of transport services and infrastructure in their local contexts. Fresh material is also provided on the needs of people who experience less visible 'hidden' disabilities. In discussion with Access Exchange International, the document will include new information specifically related to the provision of accessible school transport for children with disabilities. The team is working with international experts Subhash Vashishth, Crystal Asige and Svayam.

The British firm Integrated Transport Planning (ITP) is working with this international team on behalf of the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office to update the publication, originally produced as part of a series of Overseas Road Notes (ORNs) produced originally by TRL. The revision has been commissioned through the High Volume Transport Applied Research program. Tom Rickert of AEI was part of the team which worked on the original publication

which appeared in 2004. His contributions focused on the Americas, rounding out the contributions of team members from South Africa, the United Kingdom, and India.

Deadline for abstracts is July 30

TRANSED Conference in Seattle set for September 2022

TRANSED 2022 is the latest in a series of International Conferences on Mobility and Transport for Older Adults and People with Disabilities, first held in Cambridge, UK, in 1978 and held in different countries roughly every three years since. These conferences have become a mainstay covering accessible and inclusive transport and have provided more than forty years of literature on the topic.

The next TRANSED is planned for Seattle, Washington, USA, in September 2022, organized by the USA's Transportation Research Board (TRB) as a physical conference with a virtual stream for those unable to travel. The deadline to submit abstracts is July 30, 2021. For information, search for 'TRANSED 2022 TRB conference info'.

The TRANSED series has gone beyond academia and the research community by educating stakeholders around the world to become involved in this topic. The conference series has changed perspectives in the countries where they are held. One example is shown in the photo below from a conference in India hosted by Svayam.



Signs at many bus stops in New Delhi encouraged respect for seniors and passengers with disabilities as a leadup to the TRANSED conference there in 2012. The signs were based on the Transit Access Training Toolkit, prepared for the World Bank by AEI's Executive Director and pre-tested by Svayam in New Delhi by a focus group of bus drivers.

Another part of the travel chain

Conference on mobility aid provision & distribution set for September 20-22



Many agencies are committed to making and distributing mobility aids for low-income people with disabilities in countries around the world. Personal mobility aids such as wheelchairs, crutches and walkers, and different types of tricycles are clearly needed to enable many people with mobility concerns to navigate the "travel chain" to get to their destination. But with such a big task, coordination is required to make sure that well-built and well-fitted mobility aids reach the people who most need them, including poor people in rural areas.

AEI applauds one of these agencies, Mobility Worldwide, for taking the initiative to hold an "inaugural conference for mobility device provision and distribution" on September 20-22 of this year at the Courtyard by Marriott Conference Center in Columbia, Missouri, USA. The conference will explore "mobility device provision, innovation, best practices in collaboration, and evidence based decision-making in the provision process." Research and design and production techniques will be featured, along with demonstrations of the latest assistive technology. Registration is \$249 (\$99 for students) and lodging is inexpensive. Readers can learn



more about the conference by going to www.IMDPD.org or by calling 1-770-407-8796.

Mobility Worldwide operates in many countries and produces mobility aids (originally called personal energy transportation, or PETs) at centers in the USA and Africa. Of special interest to AEI, the agency is initiating a pilot project in Liberia to get children with disabilities to school using their mobility aids. Next step: To encourage agencies promoting inclusive public transport to work with agencies promoting personal mobility aids.

- Photos and art courtesy of Mobility Worldwide



Announcement

All things come to an end, and my approaching 85th birthday reminds me that in coming months the time will arrive when I retire from my position as Executive Director of Access Exchange International. It has been a wonderful experience, beginning back in 1990 when I stepped down from my position as Manager of Accessible Services, for what is now the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, in order to found AEI.

In our next Newsletter I plan to reflect on the past thirty-one years and the lessons I have learned as an individual and as a worker in the field of inclusive transport and equity for persons with disabilities and others living in low-income regions. But let me share lesson #1 in advance: Nothing worthwhile happened without the collaboration and creativity of friends and colleagues around the world!

Meanwhile, AEI's Board of Directors is thoughtfully considering different options for our agency. So stay tuned!

- Tom Rickert



Editorial

IT'S TIME TO MIND THE 'BRT' GAP!

Newer subway and railway stations are clearly superior to bus rapid transit (BRT) in their ability to produce a controlled platform-to-train gap which can be counted on by all passengers — including those with disabilities — to not vary from one train to the next. Older subway systems are often an exception, such as the London Underground with its famous "Mind the Gap" signs.

But it is time for the world's proliferating BRT systems to take the gap more seriously, as it can obstruct passengers with special needs when, in other respects, BRT systems can provide excellent accessibility features such as level boarding. Surprisingly, BRT planners who can quantify all manner of metrics for measuring the quality and quantity of BRT service have failed to quantify the value of different methods to eliminate the station-to-bus gap. We are not aware of a single research project to compare the speed of passenger flows entering and exiting BRT buses with and without a "gap filler," ignoring the likelihood that passengers who are confident they can board a bus without stepping into a gap will enter the vehicle more quickly. Nor have they quantified the costs — in system delays, loss of ridership, and injuries to passengers — when passengers ride (or choose not to ride) a BRT system with wide gaps. BRT planners should research this issue. It matters to persons with disabilities, older passengers, small children, and other vulnerable groups.

The photo on page 7 of this Newsletter illustrates the problem of the vertical or horizontal gap when it becomes an obstacle to boarding a bus. It is time for our colleagues in the BRT world to *measure* the problem and compare the most cost-effective solutions. Isn't this known as "following the science"?

A powerful instrument for measuring the inclusivity of public transportation



The subjective experiences of persons with different types of disabilities who navigate the chain of travel to their destinations can, when taken together, provide a quantified understanding of the actual accessibility of their trip. Go to <https://publications.iadb.org/en/node/19908> for this Interamerican Development Bank publication which is currently only available in Spanish. We thank Lauramaría Pedraza Sánchez for guiding us to this publication and hope it will soon become available in English.

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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.

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

A report from the front . . .

Access to Public Transportation is Virtually Nonexistent in Nigeria

With a population of 210 million, Nigeria is the world's seventh largest country, with at least twenty-five million persons with disability. They have little access to Nigeria's public transportation, states Christopher Chigboh, a transportation engineer who led a study tour of colleagues to the San Francisco Bay area eight years ago. AEI helped coordinate that tour, which included visits to San Francisco's accessible bus, rail, and door-to-door paratransit services.

In a report in May, Chigboh notes that even new construction does not include accessibility features, although Nigeria signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) back in 2007 and ratified this document in 2010. In 2019, a national law was signed to implement portions of the UNCRPD, followed up by the establishment of a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities. The Commission is faced with a daunting task.

Chigboh reports that many roads are designed and built without pedestrian walkways and when they do exist "the walkways are not ramped for wheelchair users, the motorists do not respect them and the authorities are doing nothing about it." When the sidewalks do exist, they are used for parking or have open manholes. But safer pedestrian overpasses are reached only by stairs. Children with disabilities especially find it difficult to cross roads on the way to school, having to dodge traffic at intersections. Getting to school often requires paid aides to assist, to help to protect their lives.

When it comes to public transport, deaf persons or blind persons have little if any visual or audio signage to guide them or others who are not familiar with the system. Getting to a bus and boarding is all but impossible for persons with mobility problems.



Engineer Christopher Chigboh (standing at rear, center) is shown in 2013 inspecting a wheelchair lift on a San Francisco paratransit van. The issues facing persons with disability using public transport in Nigeria and many other countries are difficult to imagine. - Photo by AEI

Facilities such as government buildings typically lack disability features for those with mobility, sensory, or cognitive disabilities.



Parading with a purpose: Tuk Tuks in Karachi show the way to employment

With a fleet of accessible autorickshaws ("Tuk Tuks") as background, drivers with disabilities celebrate a march on a vintage street of Sadar, the historic heart of Karachi, Pakistan. The march was held recently by NOWPDP, a key NGO promoting the rights and employment of persons with disabilities in Pakistan. The Tuk Tuk March was held "to reiterate the right of economic empowerment and mobility for people with disabilities," many of whom are drivers of NOWPDP's autorickshaw fleet. The "three-wheelers" are modified so that the wheelchairs used by drivers can be stowed on board. Other features assist passengers with disabilities. - Photo courtesy of Amin Amir Andani of NOWPDP

Collaborating with San Francisco and Hidalgo agencies AEI partners with others in preparation of our report on school transportation

In collaboration with the San Francisco non-profit agency Support for Families of Children with Disabilities (SFGCD), Access Exchange International has held a series of focus groups with Spanish speaking parents of children with special needs. The events were moderated by Janett Jiménez Santos, working via Zoom from Mexico City, with coordination by Olga Maldonado of SFGCD and Tom Rickert of AEI. This initiative is part of our preparation of a case study of San Francisco as part of our larger preparation for our report on school transportation for Hispanic children in the USA and Mexico, with a focus on the contiguous border states in the two countries. Primary funding for the report is from the United Methodist Church in San Francisco.

Meanwhile, AEI and Janett are working with authorities in Pachuca in the Mexican state of Hidalgo. The goal is to prepare maps indicating the neighborhoods where children with disabilities reside and illustrating access features (or lack of same) and transportation routes as a tool to improve transportation to and from school.

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

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- Tom & Susan Rickert, in memory of Adrienne Humphrey, Trilla Jentzsch, Natasha Martin, and Stephen Matchett
- Richard Segan, in memory of George Kopelson and Edward Kopelson
- Tercia Moore, in memory of Edward Kopelson

Advocacy group spotlights access issues in Buenos Aires



"20 years more of inaccessible subways is not admissible: Accessible Subways!" states this woman's sign at a public gathering in Buenos Aires.

At AEI's virtual Roundtable earlier this year, the advocacy group Fundación Rumbos put a spotlight on issues which have created lack of access to public transport in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



Otherwise accessible buses may have overly large horizontal or vertical gaps that stop passengers with disabilities from crossing from platform to bus floor.

Residents often encounter obstacles to public transport, and approximately four out of ten find problems with sidewalks and crosswalks. Different transport modes and pedestrian walkways provide most of the problems.



Sidewalks and curb ramps are often broken or defective, advocates state. Buenos Aires is a colonial city and narrow sidewalks compound the problem.

The photo at right illustrates a maintenance issue at a subway entrance. Even when working, only one third of stations are reported as having elevators for travel in both directions. Lack of access to pedestrian walkways and to subways, buses, trains, taxis, and school buses are a serious issue. Rumbos states that the lack of inclusion hinders getting to schools and universities, excludes persons with disabilities from jobs, limits opportunities for socialization, and makes it difficult to lead a full life.



AEI thanks María Rodríguez Romero for photos used in this report. For further information in Spanish about Fundación Rumbos, go to www.rumbos.org.ar.

News and Notes from Around the World



USA: The Transportation Research Board is sponsoring the first **Conference on Advancing Transportation Equity**, to be held September 8-10, 2021, in Washington, DC. The conference plans to include physical attendance and also virtual participation, with a focus on issues impacting people of color, low income groups, persons with disabilities, older adults, youth, and others. Go to trb.org or Google the conference for more information, including any pandemic-related changes in plans. Readers should note that the deadline for lower registration fees is June 7 and the cost increases again after July 30 For more on equity issues, readers may wish to download *Answers from the Margins: Participatory Planning with Disadvantaged Communities*, a 28-page publication of the Institute of Transportation Studies of the University of California at Davis.

Hong Kong: We mourn the passing of Rex Luk on January 25. Rex was a pioneer of accessible transportation in Asia and beyond, the Director of Operations of the para-transit services of Rehasub in Hong Kong since 2006, and a contributor to this Newsletter over the life of our agency. He was active in the TRANSED conference series (see page 2). Rex was known for his humor, and



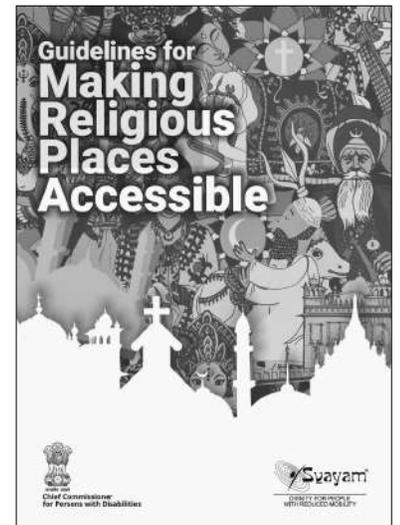
the photo at left, posted by the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation, shows his cheerful demeanor.

France: A brief history of some of the high points in the development of accessible public transport in Europe was prepared this past year by Danae Penn, a colleague who was active in our field over many years. Our readers may contact her at danae.penn@wanadoo.fr to receive a copy of this document.

Mexico: The universal right to safe mobility was added to the nation's Constitution this past October, providing that "Every person has the right to mobility under conditions of safety, accessibility, . . . inclusion and equality." A release by the World Resources Institute this past November notes that the amendment "could shift road safety discourse and save thousands of lives."

Maldives: A small fleet of accessible vehicles is being donated to this chain of islands in the Indian Ocean by the government of Japan, notes the Global Accessibility News.

India: Readers may be interested in Googling the 30-page publication, "Guidelines for Making Religious Places Accessible," a publication by Svayam published jointly with the Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities of the Government of India. More recently, Svayam has signed an agreement with India's School of Planning & Architecture (SPA) in Delhi "to help ingrain accessibility into the curriculum of its architectural courses." This training in universal design would supplement a faculty development programme for SPA teachers while encouraging research projects on universal design. Svayam has assisted in conducting access audits ranging from ten metro stations in Delhi to workshops for the Kenyan National Council for Persons with Disabilities.



Japan: The wheelchair seats in Japan's famous bullet trains are about to increase, notes Yoshihiko Kawauchi in correspondence with AEI. Where formerly there were only one or two wheelchair positions, up to six seats will be available in newly produced trains. Meanwhile, steps are being taken to reduce the vertical and horizontal gaps between station platforms and the trains to 3 cm and 7 cm as a temporary goal which would allow 90% of wheelchair users to readily enter the trains without assistance. See pages 4 & 7 for more on gaps.