

Accessible Transportation Around the World



The Newsletter of
Access Exchange International
January 2011
20th Anniversary Issue!

Not just Bus Rapid Transit: *All buses are becoming accessible*

Curitiba and Uberlândia: Two Brazilian cities point the way toward fully inclusive mobility for all passengers



Left: Juan Carlos Pineda of Medellín, Colombia, checks out the ramp at one of Curitiba's well-known "bus tube" stations. Right: Passenger with cane benefits from level alighting in Curitiba.

– Photo left courtesy of Juan Pineda, photo right courtesy of URBS, Gov't of Curitiba

We would be the first to underline the potential of Bus Rapid Transit systems being built around the world to improve mobility for millions of persons with disabilities and all others who benefit from "universal design." However, two major issues must be addressed:

1. Some BRT trunk lines in some regions of the world lack key access features.
2. Many BRT feeder bus lines lack inclusive design, as do the sidewalks leading to them.

The World Bank responded to this concern by commissioning Tom Rickert of AEI to prepare *Technical and operational challenges to inclusive Bus Rapid Transit: A guide for practitioners* (see report on next page). And, increasingly, many cities around the world are now providing good examples of inclusion to all their buses, including their BRT systems. Brazil, for example, reports measured steps to address

these issues in response to overall accessibility legislation passed in 2004 and covering a broad spectrum of disability issues, as presented in an update provided to AEI this past June by Angela Carneiro da Cunha, a Brazilian official playing a leading role in this field. One goal of this major legislation is that transit systems in Brazil must achieve full accessibility nationwide by 2014. Curitiba and Uberlândia are leading the way.

Curitiba, Brazil's seventh-largest city with a population of 1.8 million, is (*continued on page 2*)

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Curitiba & Uberlândia

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located in southern Brazil. In addition to having an accessible Bus Rapid Transit fleet, 86% of Curitiba's feeder and other buses are already lift-equipped, with securement positions for wheelchair users. Curitiba's goal is to have 100% of its buses accessible to all passengers by 2014. 81% of the bus tube stations are already accessible via elevators or ramps, and all transit terminals in Curitiba are accessible, with ramps and accessible bathrooms, reports Silvia Mara dos Santos Ramos of the municipal government.

The results? Curitiba provides 21,000 daily trips for disabled persons registered with the system to travel free of charge. Of this number, some one thousand individual wheelchair users ride the system daily according to a survey in 2008, implying in excess of 500,000 one-way trips per year, a number which forms part of some 8 million annual trips by all registered disabled persons and their attendants. Unregistered persons with disabilities are not counted, nor trips by some 2,400 special education students served by dedicated buses on 51 pickup routes.

Uberlândia is a city of .6 million located in south central Brazil. It is the first city in Brazil to achieve the national transport access goals by 2010, four years ahead of time. All 405 of its buses are accessible, as well as fifty adapted vans that provide 700 daily door-to-door trips to supplement the buses. Uberlândia has installed 5,000 curb ramps, 300

parking spots reserved for persons with disabilities, and all its public buildings are accessible. As a result, some 70,000 disabled persons and seniors in Uberlândia are very much part of the daily life of the city and its businesses and culture. Readers (even those not speaking Portuguese) will enjoy watching "Uberlândia: A City for Everyone," a video found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3la1cTOJFQ&feature=player_embedded#.

We thank Juan Carlos Pineda, an architect and disability activist in Medellín, Colombia (go to www.plural.com.co), for input into this article by facilitating contacts with colleagues in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Curitiba, and elsewhere during his recent visits there. In turn, colleagues in southern South America are visiting Medellín to share their experiences in implementing inclusive public transport.

The Latin American approaches toward accessible bus transportation are, at their best, models worthy of consideration in Asia and Africa. When it comes to access for passengers with disabilities, BRT trunk lines with ramped stations served by high-floor high-capacity buses can provide fast boarding as well as level bus floors and seating so that everyone can quickly and intuitively navigate the system. This model has been shown to work well in developing countries. Among the dozens of Latin American cities with BRT systems, the use of boarding bridges to serve all passengers, found in Curitiba as well as in Quito and Guayaquil in Ecuador, is of special interest. Boarding bridges entirely eliminate the

Want to go deeper into these issues?

Request a copy of *Technical and operational challenges to inclusive Bus Rapid Transit: A guide for practitioners*. This guide examines issues of access to pedestrian bridges, the gap between bus floor and station floor, issues of high-floor and low-floor buses, and the vexing problem of access to sidewalks and pedestrian ways in developing countries. Of special interest is a section on how transit officials can work more successfully with the disability community. A helpful check list for transit officials is included as an appendix.

This World Bank publication is available for downloading in English and Spanish at <http://go.worldbank.org/MQUMJCL1W1>. Or contact tom@globalride-sf.org for a print or CD version.

Comments about the English version of the guide have already been received from around the world:

"A very timely and resourceful document for public transport companies" (India)

"This information will prove very valuable in our BRT work." (a consultant in Japan)

"Useful . . . to implement upgrading transportation facilities in our country." (Malaysia)

"I'm taking your work as a reference . . . in my work on BRT systems." (Argentina)

"I particularly liked the sections on Forecasting demand for inclusive BRT design . . ." (France)



- Courtesy City of Cape Town – HHO Africa & ARG Design

horizontal gap between the bus station and the bus, as shown in the above photo from Cape Town.

But level boarding is only part of this larger solution. Attention to detail is also needed. For example, Monica Vanegas, who heads up Pereira, Colombia's, BRT system, sends us this photo of a combined large-print and Braille guide to their bus system.



Concerns especially in Asia and Africa

The Board of Directors of Access Exchange International has expressed concern that some BRT systems, especially in Asia and Africa, are falling short when it comes to accessibility for seniors, persons with disabilities, and other beneficiaries of universal design. Lack of elevators or ramps to pedestrian overpasses, large platform-to-bus gaps,

and other concerns point to a need to learn from experience as new bus corridors are planned, so that the rapid expansion of Bus Rapid Transit systems can fulfill their potential as a model of inclusive design to be copied in Asia and Africa's burgeoning cities. To help address this concern, the 13th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons in New Delhi, India (see story on page 5) has included Bus Rapid Transit as a key conference theme.

Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities **"Expert Group Meeting" at World Bank provides accessibility guidelines for United Nations document**

The United Nations brought experts on accessibility from around the world to prepare practical guidance for countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Participants volunteered their time to work with peers at a meeting co-hosted by the U.N. and held at the World Bank in Washington DC this past summer.

The meeting focused on access to transport and the built environment, as well as on universal design and the Internet. Transport accessibility experts included Phillip Thompson (South Africa), Søren Ginnerup (Denmark), Joseph Kwan (Hong Kong), Mukhtar Al Shibani (Saudi Arabia) as well as Tom Rickert of AEI and others. All benefited from a major background piece prepared by Cynthia Waddell. Readers are invited to download the resulting document at www.un.org/disabilities.



Participants in the UN/World Bank meeting included Ambassador Luis Gallegos, a famous figure in the development of the UN Convention (left) as well as Aleksandra Posarac, who heads up the Bank's Disability and Development Team, and Akiko Ito and Eric Guozhong Zhang of the United Nations staff.

- Photo by Tom Rickert

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Access Exchange International



Photo taken in 1990 at the Janet Pomeroy Center in San Francisco following the testing of a wayside platform with a boarding bridge to provide access to buses for persons who need level entry. Leaders in the disability community are shown with staff of the Center and of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. The successful tests led to the founding of Access Exchange International to promote inclusive transportation in developing countries around the world. Transit officials and persons with disabilities have worked together through AEI ever since.

The world was a less accessible place back in 1990 when Tom Rickert quit his job developing access for San Francisco's bus, rail, and door-to-door transport in order to found Access Exchange International. Since that time, Tom and his colleagues have held hundreds of meetings and workshops arranged for AEI during 109 separate visits to 53 cities in 28 countries. Tom has worked with the World Bank to publish a series of three guides while AEI has directly published three additional guides. These and other materials in at least fourteen languages have introduced stakeholders around the world to accessibility issues facing seniors and persons with mobility, sensory, and cognitive disabilities. More than 100 transit professionals and disability leaders from a dozen countries have been hosted by AEI on study tours of accessible transit in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our *Newsletter* is sent twice a year to 1,500 individuals in some eighty countries, while annotated links on our website are kept current with some 130 agencies around the world.

Clearly, a great deal has happened, and AEI's staff and Board is part of the larger story of the rapid development of inclusive transportation. None of this would have been possible without the support of hundreds of individual donors and close cooperation with colleagues in transportation agencies, development banks, disability NGOs, the USA's Transportation Research Board, and other agencies around the world. To all of you, our deepest thanks. There is much to do and we will continue to work together as a team. The train is leaving the station and *everyone* wants to be on board!

First China, and now India, become the focus of global conferences to promote accessible transportation around the world



Setting an attendance record, more than one thousand persons from around the world gathered in Hong Kong this past June for the 12th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons (TRANSED). The remarkably organized event was headed up by Mabel Chau (at left in above photo by Kit Mitchell), CEO of the

host agency, the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation. She is shown with Abha Negi, who heads up planning for TRANSED 2012 in India. Conference project manager Ling Suen noted that the Hong Kong event reported scientific advances while serving as a catalyst to sensitize both transit professionals and persons with disabilities to issues of inclusive transport and universal design. The conference also provided Hong Kong with the opportunity to showcase its excellent accessible air,

water, and land transportation. For conference proceedings, go to www.transed2010.hk.

March 30, 2011, deadline for abstracts for TRANSED 2012 in New Delhi, India

Moving from the world's largest country to its second largest, the next TRANSED conference will be in New Delhi, India, September 17-21, 2012. Held in English and Hindi, TRANSED 2012 will be hosted by Svayam, an initiative of the SJ



Charitable Trust with support from Jindal SAW Ltd., a major corporation in India. The Indian Ministry of Tourism, along with the Ministry of Transport of the Government of Delhi and the National Capital Territory, will co-host the event, which is co-sponsored by the Transportation Research Board of the USA. The International Steering Committee is chaired by Ms. Sminu Jindal, the CEO of Jindal Saw and a pioneer in promoting disability rights in India. Tom Rickert of AEI is an active member of this committee.

Access Exchange International urges our readers to go to www.transed2012.in for information on submitting abstracts for papers. Abstracts are due March 30, 2011. Dr. Geetam Tiwari, Associate Professor of Transport Planning at the Indian Institute of Technology in New Delhi, heads up the conference Scientific Committee. We urge interested agencies around the world to put this conference into their budget.

What's next for AEI?

We seek sponsors to help us prepare a guide to door-to-door and rural transport for seniors and persons with disabilities

Half the world's disabled persons live in rural areas or, if they live in cities, require door-to-door transportation because they cannot get to fixed-route buses and trains. People everywhere need a guide to explain "what works" when it comes to planning, funding, and operating accessible vans, mini-buses, taxis, autorickshaws and non-motorized vehicles to provide inclusive services in both urban and rural areas. *We need to document best practices and innovative concepts, looking especially to practitioners in Latin America, Asia, and Africa that have hard-earned experience in this field.*

AEI's Board of Directors has approved our seeking sponsors to produce this guide with the working title of *Community and Rural Transport for All: A guide for practitioners in less-wealthy countries*. For information, contact Tom Rickert at 1-415-661-6355 or email tom@globalride-sf.org.



From left, Subhash Vashishth and Mohini Chugh of Svayam, Julie Babinard of the World Bank, Jamie Osborne of MIT, and Kit Mitchell of the UK, at the TRANSED 2012 booth in Hong Kong. – Photo by T.Rickert

News from AEI



Meet our Board of Directors: (top) Marc Soto, Vice-President; Peter Straus; Tom Rickert, Executive Director; Richard Weiner, President; Ike Nnaji; (bottom) Lucy Crain, Treasurer; Bruce Oka, Secretary; and Cheryl Damico. – Photo by Susan Rickert



Recent visitors to AEI and to San Francisco's accessible transportation have included our colleague **Gerhard Menckhoff**, Vice-President of the Institute for Transportation Development and Policy (ITDP), shown above with Tom Rickert; **Ling Suen**, who heads up Canada's Intl. Ctr. for Accessible Transportation; and **Cecilia Leiva Muñoz** (photo left), a specialist in urban development in the government of Chile, who was also hosted by accessible services staff of San Francisco's transit agency.



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AEI is tax-exempt under Article 501(c)3 of the IRS Code

Unsung heroes of our work:

We deeply appreciate the volunteer work of **Maureen Blumenthal**, up to half a day each week in our office for the past five years. Born in the Belgian Congo, "Mo" was South Africa's water skiing champion in 1955 – a citizen of the world in the truest sense of the word. . . . And much gratitude to **Susan Rickert** (photo right) for her volunteer staff work on our behalf. Sue's volunteer work is focused on raising funds for schools and clinics in east Africa and the Amazon basin of Peru. . . . Warmest thanks to **Tanya Slesnick, CPA**, of the firm of Slesnick & Slesnick, for carrying out annual audits of our finances, so that we can assure our donors that every contributed dollar is well-accounted for. . . . And thank you to **Rachel Ede** of Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates for updating the Resources section of AEI's website, as well as to **Nicolas Finck** for help editing our Newsletters.



Thursday, January 27, 2011

12th Annual Washington Roundtable to Focus on Access in Developing Regions

AEI and ICAT (The International Centre for Accessible Transportation in Montréal) announce our 12th annual Roundtable on Accessible Transport in the Developing World on Thursday, January 27, 9 a.m. to 12 noon at facilities donated by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) at 1666 "K" Street in downtown Washington, DC. The event follows the annual meeting of the USA's Transportation Research Board. Contact AEI to pre-register and to order an optional box lunch following the event. This series has played a critical role in bringing together key people in our field from around the world.

AEI assists research in Cali, Colombia

Tom Rickert of AEI has volunteered to serve as a resource for students at the Universidad Autónoma de Cali, Colombia, who are researching innovative projects to provide better access to buses. The projects would provide raised platforms at the entrances of four universities, enabling persons with disabilities to board feeder buses at floor level to connect with Cali's large Bus Rapid Transit system. A second project would investigate alternative approaches to wheelchair securements.

News and Notes from Around the World

• **Brazil:** It took fifteen years, but legal action by the Independent Living Center of Rio de Janeiro has resulted in construction now nearing completion to make all of Rio's subway stations fully accessible, reports Geraldo Nogueira of Rio.



• **Bulgaria:** Audible and visual public transport information are combined in this kiosk in Sofia, one of many good practices in Europe being promoted by two research projects: Acces2All and Mediate. Both projects seek ways to

measure and assess accessibility in European cities, notes Ann Frye. More information is at www.mediate-project.eu and www.access-to-all.eu.

• **Canada:** A design competition for "The Next Generation Accessible Bus" will be part of a larger conference on Best Practices in Universal Design to be held in Toronto June 5-8, 2011. Information on several concurrent conferences at that time, all relating to disability, aging, and technology, may be found at www.ficcdat.ca . . . Toronto has ordered 182 highly accessible trams featuring 100% low floors, reports our colleague Christopher Hart. The step-less interior will mark a big step forward. . . . The Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES) is a leading agency in promoting the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. GAATES also presented AEI's Tom Rickert with an award for his work on accessible transportation in developing countries at a session on the Convention in Hong Kong this past June.

• **China:** Shenzhen, one of the world's fastest growing cities with a population of more than 8 million, continues to expand its accessible transportation per a report provided to AEI by Suning Huang of the Shenzhen Disabled Persons' Federation.



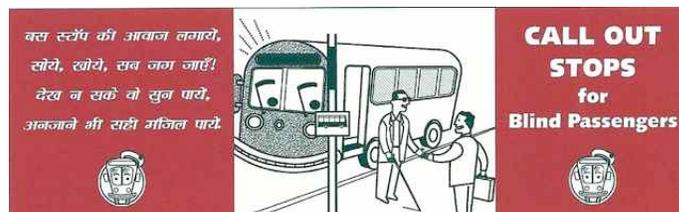
Five new underground subway lines with 131 stations are reported to be accessible (see photo of elevator) and a fleet of 100 accessible taxis is being put into place. This complements other projects, including 7,500 curb ramps, 500 accessible public toilets, and 250 km of tactile guideways for blind persons. . . . Forty mainland Chinese delegates at a TRANSED session this past June on "China's New

Look on Accessibility" expressed concerns about the pace of progress at a national level. One attendee noted that "The public does not understand the need for access features, nor are built facilities being well used." Scaling up from some 100 pilot projects in China to serve 83,000,000 persons with disabilities is clearly a daunting task! . . . Hong Kong continues to expand its accessible transport – go to the accessible city guide at www.wheelawaydisabledtravel.com.

• **Cuba:** Luis Rodríguez Villavicencio reports that the Cuban Ministry of Transport (MITRANS) is holding meetings with disability agencies with a focus on prioritizing transportation services for persons with disabilities.

• **France:** A pilot project supported by Canadian and Swedish agencies at ten Paris Metro stations is testing a mobile application to deliver live customized data for passengers with disabilities. Google "Mobile Transit Companion" for info.

• **Guatemala:** Congratulations to Marco Colindres for his Master's thesis, *Design for All in Guatemala City: Accessibility to urban space, architecture, and public transport*. "I got interested in this topic when we talked during a conference in Guatemala," he writes to Tom Rickert at AEI.



• **India:** Working with Tom Rickert of AEI, Svayam (see page 5) has adapted posters from the World Bank's *Transit Access Training Toolkit* for use by the Delhi Transit Corporation, adding winning limericks in Hindi from a contest to promote access to New Delhi's buses. A sample poster is shown above . . . Delhi's accessible Metro's 156 km of rail lines handle 1.5 million passenger trips daily. The system continues to expand, providing a remarkably accessible system within the challenging environment of one of the world's largest cities. . . . Joseph Kwan reports that a mobile wheelchair lift has been successfully tested for use at Indian rail stations. Senior officials from the Ministry of Railways participated.

• **Libya:** A national conference on access to transportation and the built environment is planned

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News and Notes

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in Tripoli on December 13-14, sponsored by GAATES, the General Assn. of Persons with Disabilities in Libya, and the University of Garyounis. Go to www.gaates.org for information in English and for Arabic go to www.disable.ly/.

• **Mexico:** New legislation in Mexico City passed in September decrees greater access to new buses and rail cars, as well as disability awareness training for transportation personnel, reports Libre Acceso A highly accessible one-km traffic-free pedestrian walkway has been constructed along Calle Madero leading to Mexico City's historic Zócalo. . . . The city of Chihuahua will begin construction of 20 km of an accessible Bus Rapid Transit system later in 2011, complete with 43 stations and two transfer terminals serviced by 84 specialized buses, reports CTS México.



• **New Zealand:** A great website loaded with articles for travel by persons with disabilities is found at www.accesstourismnz.org.nz. . . . And Ann Hawker sends in this photo of progress in the town of Hamilton.

• **Philippines:** People with disabilities are concerned at the slow-paced implementation of the country's Accessibility Law addressing buildings and public transportation, reports Disability News Asia.

• **Russia:** 600 bus stops in Moscow have been modified with features for visually impaired persons, while disabled persons in Tambov are now served by 14 new accessible trolley buses, reports Elena Goubenko. . . . The city of Sochi ranks low in any list of accessible cities, but organizers of the 2014 Paralympic Games have big plans to make the famous Black Sea resort a barrier-free model for Russia and beyond. (Report from Moscow Times, via Disability News Asia.)

• **Saudi Arabia:** Disability News Asia passes on an Arab News report that Riyadh has been declared the country's first disabled-friendly city. Following up, agreements to enhance accessibility have been signed with several government departments.

• **Sri Lanka:** Staff and advisors of the ministries of social service and of transportation are working with each other and the Sri Lanka Railway Department to include access features as they rebuild the destroyed railroad line to the northern part of the country. Plans include low ticket counters and toilets for disabled persons. Ranjith de Silva encourages our readers to send photos and designs of accessible

transit features to ranjith@ifrtd.org.

• **Taiwan:** President Ma Ying-jeou has vowed to improve access to railway facilities, in another report in Disability News Asia.

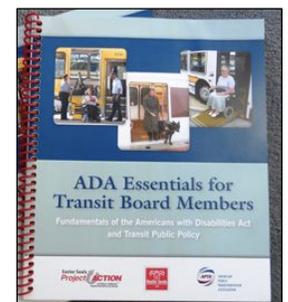
• **Thailand:** An innovative design competition was conducted in Bangkok to provide access to an area adjacent to the Siam BTS Station, writes Taisuke Miyamoto of Disabled Peoples' International.

• **United Arab Emirates:** The Dubai Metro's facilities got high marks in a recent access audit by persons with disabilities in the UAE (photo), but entrances to the stations from access roads received failing grades – a rather common problem in many countries (see India, above). (Image from Gulf News via Disability News Asia)



• **United Kingdom:** Type "Access to Sea Travel DPTAC" in a search engine for an example of useful advice for persons with disabilities in the UK, notes Bryan Myles of the Community Transport Assn. of the UK Major British disability agencies are pressing for more rights for disabled bus and rail passengers to bring the United Kingdom into line with European Parliament proposals, reports Tony Patterson of the Rushmoor Borough Council.

• **USA:** Go to www.itdp.org to download the *Guía de Planificación BRT*, the Spanish-language version of the well-known *BRT Planning Guide*. . . . And go to www.projectaction.org to download *ADA Essentials for Transit Board Members: Fundamentals of the Americans with Disabilities Act* (photo), developed in coordination with the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).



• **Vietnam:** This past June the National Assembly of Viet Nam enacted the first comprehensive national law guaranteeing the rights of persons with disabilities, reports Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped, an NGO with offices in Vietnamese cities as well as the USA. The government is now developing a regulatory framework and detailed guidance on how to implement the law. AEI is proud to have provided resources in past years to assist the Vietnam Ministry of Transport in its effort to enhance transit access.