

Accessible Transportation Around the World



The newsletter of
Access Exchange International
January 2008

AEI assists at meetings in Washington and El Salvador

Global policy, international guidelines, and accessible bus projects merge to give inclusive transit fresh energy in less-wealthy countries

Planning and construction is moving ahead on Bus Rapid Transit lines in dozens of cities around the world (see story on Page 3). At the same time, an international consensus is growing on accessibility guidelines. This rise in interest and activity goes hand in hand with the passage of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and has resulted in actions at multiple levels to convert policies and norms into practical action.

The United Nations Convention was adopted a year ago and is now being ratified by member countries. It was the topic of a workshop at the World Bank in Washington this past June to brainstorm on the practical implications of the Convention on operational work in countries by the World Bank and other development agencies. Tom Rickert of AEI was invited to present the Bank's *Bus Rapid Transit Accessibility Guidelines* as a case study of how to comply with the Convention. The event was co-chaired by Sandor Sipos, Manager of the Bank's Social Protection Sector, and Marc Juhel, Manager of the Bank's Transport Sector.



A disabled participant inputs into transit access workshop in San Salvador
– Photo by AEI

Putting the Convention to work: The case of El Salvador

El Salvador lives with the legacy of a vicious civil war and political rivalries run deep. Yet all factions were united in their unanimous ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on October 4. Access Exchange International was invited to *(Continued on page 2)*



The well-attended workshop included participants from the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and other agencies.

– Photo by Access Exchange International

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Press conference at San Salvador workshop

AEI workshops in Washington, El Salvador

(Continued from front page)

present four separate workshops on accessible transit in San Salvador later that month, responding to an invitation by CONAIPD, a government agency responsible for a spectrum of activities in the field of disability, including the preparation of national accessibility norms published in 2003. The same agency sponsored workshops by AEI in El Salvador seven years ago. But political and economic problems have stalled progress on “making access happen” when it comes to the aging and often unsafe bus fleet in this Central American republic. AEI’s workshops this October reached leaders within the disability community as well as staff of ministries charged with transport and access to public space, bus associations, and social service agencies. The workshops were widely covered by the media. One of our strong recommendations was that the ministry in charge of transport designate staff to formally handle access planning.

Will El Salvador’s ratification of the U.N. Convention run more than skin deep? Will it result in a step-by-step program to make its often-unsafe buses more accessible to its citizens? We have reason to think so, as the impact of the Convention takes root in years ahead. The Convention has been signed by 17 nations in North and South America (Belize, the USA, and



Accessible train for tourists in Costa Rica.

— Photo courtesy of Explobus

Venezuela have yet to sign) as well as by the nations of central and western Europe, India, China, and dozens of other countries. And planners in El Salvador have only to look to the neighboring Central American countries of Costa Rica and Panama to see more consistent movement in the right direction. Costa Rica, for example, leads the way in Central America with 450 accessible buses reported in service. Plans call for half of the country’s 4,500 buses to be accessible for wheelchair users by 2010, according to a report from Explobus in that country. There is a new tourist train that is accessible, too. Panama is moving ahead with a step-by-step implementation plan to improve accessibility for its disabled citizens.

At a global level, the Convention is of interest to all those who will benefit from universal design. “Our Rights, Our Convention, But for All” was the theme of the World Assembly of Disabled Peoples International in September, held in South Korea, with more than 2,500 participants from 71 countries. And in Mexico, the disability NGO Libre Acceso is working with other agencies to advocate reforms to harmonize Mexican law with the content of the Convention. Those interested in learning more about the Convention may go to www.un.org/disability and to www.icrpd.net.



AEI thanks Jeff & Rachel Lehto (photo) for their donation of \$1,000, matched by an anonymous donor, in response to the need presented in our last Newsletter for funding to sponsor our workshops in El Salvador. We thank CONAIPD for covering the in-country costs of the workshops.

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that AEI reports the passing of two pioneer advocates with disabilities: María Eugenia Antúnez Farrugia, a leader within Mexico’s Libre Acceso, and Topong Kulkhanchit, a leader of Disabled Peoples International in Thailand. Both passed away this year after making significant contributions to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They are deeply missed.

Bus Rapid Transit Introduces Access for All in Cities Around the World

The World Bank's *Bus Rapid Transit Accessibility Guidelines*, compiled by Tom Rickert of AEI, have been sent around the world to practitioners in fifty countries. A CD of the guidelines and related resources (see photo of cover) may be ordered from AEI. English and Spanish versions of the guidelines may be downloaded at www.worldbank.org by typing the title into the search box on the home page. The guidelines are cited in a new *Bus Rapid Transit Planning Guide* by Lloyd Wright and in the *Transport Innovator*, published by Breakthrough Technologies Institute. They are also featured in a bilingual English and Spanish publication of Mexico's Center for Sustainable Transport. An update of recent BRT news follows:

In Latin America, BRT construction in Brasilia has been approved for funding by the Inter-American Development Bank. Systems are proposed for Montevideo, Uruguay; Porto Alegre, Brazil; Arequipa, Peru; and ten Argentine cities including Córdoba, Mendoza, Rosario, and Tucumán. Guatemala City's *TransMetro* is now operating with 65 articulated buses. Concern has been expressed that access features need careful monitoring as Lima, Peru's 30-km BRT corridor undergoes construction. Latin America's BRT systems are the focus of several recent conferences. A three-day international conference was held in Pereira, Colombia, in August, celebrating the first year of operation of Pereira's *Megabús* BRT system. Cali, Colombia, with a system slated to open in 2008, sponsored a conference on accessible tourism in October. BRT-oriented conferences and expos were held in Mexico City in September and Bogotá in November.

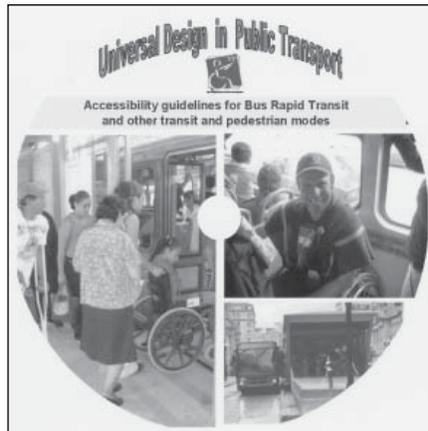
Around 200 participants from all eleven cities proposing BRT systems in India met in September in Ahmedabad, where a BRT system is scheduled to begin operation in 2008 with a total of 37 km of corridors. "Infrastructure has been carefully designed to make access convenient for everyone, including physically challenged individuals," notes the Institute for Transport and Development Policy (ITDP). An initial 14-km BRT corridor is under construction in Delhi. According to Haroon Yusuf, Delhi's Minister of Transport, six more corridors are planned for completion by 2010. Semi-low-floor buses in Delhi's trunk line corridors serve as feeder buses and also enhance access on the feeder lines.

In China, Beijing's BRT system is undergoing rapid expansion, with two new BRT corridors and plans to have 60 km in operation before the 2008 Olympics. Kangming Xu, a consultant with the China Sustainable Transportation Center, notes that China's systems are basically accessible via floor-level boarding. In Beijing, ramps are available for use at lower platforms or at curbsides. Each station has two to four attendants at all times who assist wheelchair users when it is necessary to cross the platform-to-bus gap. Drivers monitor all three doors via video camera. When a wheelchair user is preparing to get off, the driver uses an external PA system to advise a station attendant to be on hand to provide any needed assistance. In Hangzhou, an accessible BRT system is also in operation. Guangzhou's first corridor is scheduled to open by mid-2008, and construction is underway in Shenzhen. Proposals are going forward in Shanghai, Chengdu, and Changchou.

Other Asian cities are also moving ahead. Jakarta, Indonesia, now has seven corridors and some mistakes in accessibility in the initial corridor are now being corrected. Bangkok, Thailand's, first BRT line is expected to be completed early in 2008. Hanoi is proceeding with development of two accessible BRT corridors funded by a World Bank loan of \$155 million, with 37 km of segregated bus lines and 130 buses. The Asian Development Bank has funded a planning study for a proposed BRT line in Karachi, Pakistan. Istanbul is planning construction of three BRT lines that will total 55 km in length.

In Africa, the South African city of Johannesburg is rushing construction of its large 94-km *Rea Vaya* BRT system to open in 2010 in time for the World Cup. BRT planning in Tshwane (Pretoria) envisions 472 km of busways when completed, with platform-level boarding. A proposed system in Accra, Ghana, has a planning study funded by the Asian Development Bank. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, is now scheduled to open in 2010 with all trunk-line stops accessible and 10% of feeder buses accessible for wheelchair users. BRT is under consideration in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Information for this article was provided by Gerhard Menckhoff, Felipe Targa, Jorge Barney, José Isola, Walter Hook, the *Sustainable Transport Update* of the Institute for Transport and Development Policy (ITDP), Kangming Xu, Haroon Yusuf, Rasigan Maharajah, and Sandra Curtin of the Bus Rapid Transit Policy Center as well as its web site at www.gobrt.org and its *Transport Innovator* electronic newsletter.



See News and Notes on pages 7 & 8 for news about access to other modes of transportation.

Yes, Bus Rapid Transit is a breakthrough in developing countries,

But accessible buses and trains are not enough! Even accessible sidewalks and pedestrian paths to get to



Photos from slums in Nairobi courtesy of Karen Ande, www.andephotos.com

An Editorial

by Tom Rickert, Executive Director of Access Exchange International

During the past seventeen years, we have been part of a global process of promoting accessible transportation around the world. There is cause for great satisfaction in the progress we have chronicled in less-wealthy countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Some observers think the cutting edge of public transport is now coming out of Latin American innovations focused on Bus Rapid Transit corridors which include accessible-level boarding as part of a spectrum of needed reforms. We would not disagree. “BRT” systems are beginning to provide highly visible examples of access features which few would have dreamed of finding in cities in wealthy countries a decade ago, let alone in less-wealthy countries.

But it would be a tragedy to see accessible Bus Rapid Transit – or any other bus or rail mode – as a miracle cure. People need to get to public transit. If they cannot readily leave their neighborhood, whether “middle class” or an urban slum, in order to reach a bus or rail line, it is as if that public transit system did not even exist. As noted in the World Bank’s *Bus Rapid Transit Accessibility Guidelines*, “the design of a BRT system should require a comprehensive long-term planning process to prioritize the systematic construction of accessible paths to feeder-route bus stops.” This is not optional. It is required if a large percentage of those

Everyone – including those with disabilities – needs to public transit.

who will most benefit from good urban transit are actually to use that transit. If there are no all-weather footways, the most basic accessibility needs of people will not be met. The photo at the right, from the Kibera slum in Nairobi, shows a “pedestrian path” as it winds through an urban slum, and could just as well be a photo from similar slums in many parts of the world. When it rains, it is a sea of mud. It is inaccessible to everyone.

Governments in even the poorest countries need to set up programs to build and maintain all-weather footways. They need to start. They need to organize themselves to build and maintain basic infrastructure, year after year, as gradually a spreading network of sidewalks and other amenities permits more and more people – disabled or not – to get to the bus or other transit mode.

This is a practical part of the far larger need to create “sustainable cities.” Urban areas around the world, in cities rich and poor, face both an environmental and a mobility crisis which requires collaboration among people with many different interests. All of us are aware of the environmental issues and the need to address global warming, polluted air, and traffic congestion. We are also aware of the need to address the poverty which is created when anyone – especially those with any type of mobility problem – is unable to get to school or health care, let alone to bring their produce to market or get to a job. The day is ending when “single-issue advocacy” can exist in a vacuum without collaboration with people in many other fields. Accessible environments enable us all to work together. Inaccessible environments disable us all, creating frustration, poverty, crime and a host of other ills.



We all need to work together to create a better world. Those who think this is utopian idealism need to wake up.



José Isola of Lima, Peru, provides interpretation in Spanish for a Latin American participant at an AEI tutorial at TRANSED. – Photo by AEI

“The largest accessible transportation event ever” held in Montréal in June

More than 600 delegates from 36 countries attended the 11th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons (TRANSED), the most of any TRANSED to date, held this past June in Montréal, Canada.

Tom and Susan Rickert represented AEI, while AEI President Richard Weiner participated as a representative of Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates in San Francisco. AEI and the International Centre for Accessible Transportation in Montréal (ICAT) combined their resources to pay the registration fee for a key South American participant.

A highlight was the participation of more than forty delegates from developing countries in a pre-conference tutorial coordinated by AEI, with presentations by our Executive Director and Lalita Sen of Texas Southern University. Research and reports from around the world focused on access for disabled persons and seniors to bus, rail, taxi, automobile, and pedestrian modes of travel.



Tom Rickert (second from left) introduces Angela Werneck from the Rio de Janeiro subway system to Virginia Cordero (at right) from La Paz, Bolivia. At left, Renato Boareto, who heads Brazil’s ambitious program for accessible cities.

AEI & ICAT Plan TRB Workshop in Washington on January 13

Access Exchange International, in cooperation with ICAT of Montréal, Canada, is coordinating a workshop on Accessible Transport and Pedestrian Infrastructure in Less Developed Countries on Sunday, January 13th, 1:30-5:00 p.m. at the Washington Hilton. The event is sponsored by the USA’s Transportation Research Board during TRB’s Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Contact AEI to pre-register for the event, which continues a series of annual roundtables in Washington initiated by AEI ten years ago.

Collaboration Around the World

In a model of effective international collaboration, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and Disabled Peoples International (DPI) conducted seminars on the universal design of public transportation in Vietnam in July, utilizing a Vietnamese version of AEI’s *Mobility for All* guide as a resource. . . .

Ling Suen of ICAT recently visited Curitiba, Brazil, where she visited the birthplace of the accessible BRT systems now operating or being planned in dozens of major cities around the world (photo). . . . In recent months AEI was visited by Ramon Muñoz-Raskin



of the World Bank and Yorgos Voukas of the Centro de Transporte Sustentable (Center for Sustainable Transport) of Mexico City. . . . Our American colleague Harry Wolfe reports many contacts with friends of accessible transport during a visit to Cuenca, Ecuador.

Please send address changes and news from your country to Access Exchange International

112 San Pablo Avenue, San Francisco, California 94127
 Telephone: (415) 661-6355; Fax: (415) 661-1543
 web: www.globalride-sf.org, e-mail: tom@globalride-sf.org
 AEI is tax-exempt under Article 501(c)(3) of the USA’s Internal Revenue Code and contributions are tax-deductible. Our financial records are audited on an annual basis.

Board of Directors: Richard Weiner (President), Peter Straus (Vice-President), Bruce Oka (Secretary), Dorothy Skylor (Treasurer), Lucy Crain, Cheryl Damico, Ike Nnaji, Tom Rickert (Executive Director), Marc Soto, and Kate Toran.

Computer design by Nicolas Finck

News and Notes from Around the World

Asia-Pacific

CHINA REPORTS MAJOR GAINS

Representatives of the China Disabled Persons Association report gains in subway accessibility in Beijing and Guangzhou, enhanced access using floor-level platforms for new trains, access features at all large airports, and the introduction of low-floor buses in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and elsewhere. Pilot projects in accessible urban design have been expanded from 12 cities in 2004 to 28 in 2006, and work is now planned in 100 more cities. Accessibility work is helped by the need to make the 2008 Beijing Olympics and Paralympics fully accessible. Barrier-free construction codes are being enacted at national, provincial, and municipal levels, with 84 cities and 11 provinces having such codes as of two years ago. Work is going forward to add a new chapter on accessibility to China's disability laws. But Chinese authorities report little progress in rural areas.

INDIA: MORE RAIL & BUS ACCESS

Progress continues on India's railway access, with 1,400 accessible railway cars now reported in service. New Delhi is improving several railway stations with ramps, accessible toilets, and improved signage, while the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation is ordering 117 disabled-friendly cars which will use platform-level boarding. With 6,856 stations in the world's largest rail system, India has only begun its march toward accessibility, but impressive progress in now being made.

In New Delhi, the first of 525 low-floor buses with enhanced access features has been received by the Delhi Transport Corporation and plans call for up to 5,000 low-floor buses to be in service by 2010.

There is also a fresh focus on access to pedestrian ways. For example, a one-day workshop on barrier-free environments was organized by the Department of Architecture of Anna University in Chennai and major pedestrian improvements are reported from a World Bank-funded project in Mumbai.

Start-up problems evidently remain a concern, with users noting a need for more orientation of disabled passengers newly using the accessible Delhi Metro. Travel paths to accessible locations tend to be interrupted with many obstacles. Dealing with these and other issues, Sanjeev Sachdeva and Anglee Agarwal of Samarthy, an Indian NGO, met with officials of the Bangalore Transport Department to provide three days of training on how to carry out access audits and

provide universal design features at transport terminals. (Reports from Haroon Yusuf, Minister of Transport of Delhi; Disability India Information Resources; Sanjeev Sachdeva; and Jamie Osborne)



Jamie Osborne of Muni Accessible Services in San Francisco, USA, recently visited the Association for People with Disabilities in Bangalore (photo above) and hopes to work with various disability agencies in India to promote inclusive public transit. Working with others, Osborne has prepared a transit access needs survey to gather input from disability agencies and transit planners in India. For more information, contact jamie.osborne@sfmta.com.

- **Thailand:** Scott Rains reports that an international conference on accessible tourism was held in Bangkok in November assisted by United Nations agencies in collaboration with Thai NGOs and authorities.
- **Japan:** New guidelines for accessibility to public transport facilities and vehicles have been published. Japanese readers may contact Daisuke Sawada at d-sawada@ecomio.or.jp for further information.
- **Vietnam:** Plans for accessible subways are moving ahead in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Vietnam recently published draft guidelines for structures accessible to persons with vision and hearing impairments and Japanese experts are assisting with a review of the guidelines. (Information from Toan Bui, Junko Homma, and Yoshito Dobashi)
- **Malaysia:** Disability activists are concerned at the slow progress of making buses accessible in Kuala Lumpur. And, some months ago, 100 participants at a major Forum on Public Transport for Disadvantaged Groups, held in Penang, sharply criticized the slow pace of deployment of accessible buses. (Information from Christine Lee and Peter Tan of BEAT: Barrier-Free Environment and Accessible Transport.)

(Continued on page 8)

News and Notes

(continued from page 7)

Europe and North America

• The European Conference of Ministers of Transport has now become the International Transport Forum, scheduled to become fully operational in 2008 with the aim of becoming a more global body with an annual theme. Since the restructuring effectively ended the existence of the ECMT's Access and Inclusion Group, it is hoped that the inclusive design of public transit will remain high on the agenda, especially given the unmet need for accessible design in eastern Europe's transit systems. . . . In one of its final publications prior to being restructured, the ECMT published *Improving Access to Taxis* in collaboration with the International Road Transport Union. Copies of the 80-page report in English or French are available by contacting Mary Crass at mary.crass@oecd.org. Meanwhile, Project ACTION in Washington, DC, is working with disability agencies and taxi companies and manufacturers



to produce a training program to improve the availability of accessible taxicab service nationwide. Find accessible taxi service resources at http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_taxi_resources. Readers may have a special interest in English, Spanish, or Farsi versions of *The Taxicab Pocket Guide*, designed for taxicab operators and users with disabilities.

• **Brussels:** Our European readers are invited to comment on the European Commission's draft document, *Urban Mobility: Working together toward greener cities*, which also addresses accessibility issues http://ec.europa.eu/transport/clean/green_paper_urban_transport/index_en.htm (From Danae Penn in France)

• **Portugal:** Guidelines were recently approved for access to buildings and pedestrian ways, and a new National Plan to Promote Accessibility includes mass transport facilities. Detailed information is available at <http://acessibilidade-portugal.blogspot.com> in Portuguese or contact Pedro.gouveia@cm-lisboa.pt.

• **United Kingdom:** New guidance on passenger ship accessibility is available at <http://www.dptac.gov.uk/pubs/maritime/consult/2007/index.htm#index> to download *Designing and Operating Passenger Vessels and Passenger Shore Infrastructure: Guidance on Meeting the Needs of Persons with Reduced Mobility*.

• **Canada:** The Canadian Transportation Agency has released a code of practice for access to train, air, and ferry terminals along with a companion guide to assist in implementing the code. The guide is available at www.cta.gc.ca.

• **France:** Action plans to implement nationwide access to transportation and communication systems are being prepared as part of a plan to achieve full accessibility within the next seven years.

Latin America

• **Argentina:** A new norm for urban bus ramps, based largely on existing Spanish and British norms, is under public review. For information, contact Orlando Fernandez at ofernan@minplan.gov.ar. . . . A conference on Accessible Rural Tourism was planned for Buenos Aires in November.

• **Brazil:** Underlining the importance of accessible buses and trains, and in marked contrast to the USA's dependence on the automobile, public transit provides as many trips as the private automobile in Brazil according to a report released by the National Public Transportation Association in São Paulo. Brazil has nearly 100,000 buses and rail cars and 170,000 taxis, accounting for nearly 15 billion trips per year.

• **Cuba:** Plans are moving ahead to upgrade access for disabled persons between waiting rooms and vehicles at rural transit terminals. (Information from Luis Villavicencio of the Cuban Transport Ministry.)

• **Chile:** Our Spanish-speaking readers may wish to go to www.ciudadviva.cl for a fine web site on sustainable neighborhoods featuring mobility for all.

• **Mexico:** Guadalajara's light rail transport and feeder bus service provide integrated access for passengers with disabilities, notes Yorgos Voukas of CTS Mexico. The photo shows access on Guadalajara's PreTren feeder bus.

