

Accessible Transportation Around the World

The Newsletter of

Access Exchange International

January 2009



Door-to-door transportation also considered

South Africa's cities plan accessible bus corridors



Meet the team dedicated to “make access happen” in Cape Town, South Africa.

Access Exchange International was invited by South Africa's Department of Transport to review access plans in four of their cities this past summer. Tom Rickert of AEI met with Bus Rapid Transit officials in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Tshwane (Pretoria), and Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth) to discuss the many access features planned for their bus systems.

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A passenger boards Cape Town's door-to-door system, the largest in Africa, with 100,000 trips per year.

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Official from Shenzhen, China, visits AEI, and closes a circle begun 8 years ago



A recent visit to San Francisco from Huang Sun-ling of the Shenzhen Disabled Persons Federation closed a circle begun when Tom & Susan Rickert of AEI participated in a major conference on accessible transportation in Shenzhen eight years ago. Shenzhen has taken a lead in China with the development of accessible bus and subway services. The photo below is from an event introducing their accessible Metro to disabled passengers.



Disabled persons from several cities came together for an all-day Empowerment Seminar arranged by the Department of Transport and led by AEI.

SOUTH AFRICA (Continued from page 1)

The bus systems feature floor-level boarding for all passengers, including those using wheelchairs or with other disabilities. Ms. Khibi Manana-Mabuse of the DOT took the lead in arranging the many meetings in South Africa and forming a team of transit experts to join in visits to the four key cities.

The visit by AEI staff was co-hosted by the Southern African Transport Conference — an annual gathering in Tshwane which included a presentation by AEI of the *Bus Rapid Transit Accessibility Guidelines* compiled for use by the World Bank. South Africa's Public Transport Strategy, approved in 2007, calls for Bus Rapid Transit systems to be in operation in twelve cities by 2014. Each system is to be "100% accessible to wheelchair users and others with special needs such as the blind and deaf." It is hoped that many of the systems will be in operation in time for the World Cup in 2010.



Participants at a meeting of Johannesburg's public transit agency inspect a station model for their planned multi-corridor ReaVaya BRT system.

– Photos for this article by AEI.

Mexico City meetings kick off project to train bus drivers to serve disabled and senior passengers



This group of accessible transit advocates provided helpful guidance about how to make training materials for bus drivers more effective.

Anyone who has traveled much in less-wealthy countries knows what it is like to ride a bus in many parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Safety is a terrific problem and access for frail seniors and those with disabilities is the first victim. Buses careen around curves, passengers may have to dodge traffic to board in the middle of the street, or buses may only slow down while more nimble passengers jump on board.

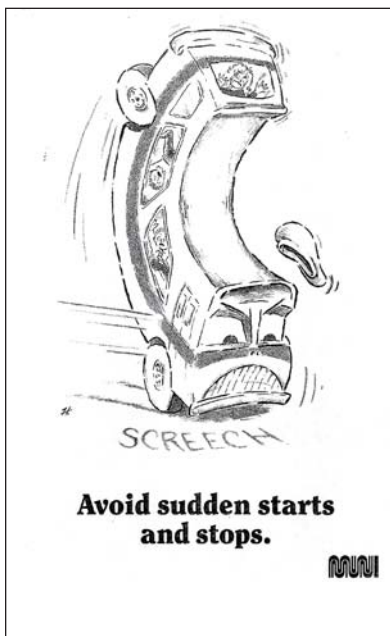
Driver courtesy is not easily addressed in “informal” systems with a lack of regulation, nor when drivers are paid directly out of the fares they collect and race to beat other drivers to the next stop. At its worst, personnel at bus stations in some countries may actively prevent disabled persons from getting on buses. Clearly, there is no magic cure for this type of situation. But Access Exchange International has long sought step-by-step reforms to begin to address – from the perspective of the rights of disabled passengers – a situation which has alarmed transit planners and government officials around the world.

One small step, that hopefully will be only a beginning, was taken in November when Tom Rickert of AEI was hosted by disability advocates in Mexico City to learn more from those on the front lines – the transit agencies, disabled passengers, and other stakeholders in one of the world’s largest cities. Sponsored by a Norwegian and Finnish trust fund within the World Bank’s Disability and Development Team, the modest project will prepare posters, scripts for sensitivity training, public service announcements, and other training materials to be made available free of charge



Some of the 40 drivers and staff of Mexico City’s trolleybus system who assessed materials prepared by Tom in order to elicit their comments. – Photos by AEI

around the world. Tom met with “focus groups” of drivers and staff at Mexico City’s Metrobús BRT system, as well as with trolleybus, subway, taxi and other agencies, at meetings arranged by Laura Bermejo of Libre Acceso, one of Latin America’s largest and most effective advocacy groups.



Tom presented both humorous and serious poster images for comment by stakeholders. Most reviewers favored humorous posters, such as this one prepared while Tom was at S.F. Muni, prior to founding AEI in 1990. – Poster courtesy of S.F. Muni, ©2008 DanHubig, www.danhubig.com

“I was impressed with the interest generated in this project in Mexico City,” Tom noted. “Participation was much greater than expected and enthusiasm ran high. More than 30 Metro staff and 40 trolleybus staff participated – and the remarkable thing is that just about everyone had ideas to share about how to motivate drivers to be more welcoming to disabled passengers.

It was a good idea to begin by tapping into the experience of this huge city,” he noted. Look for a follow-up report in our next newsletter.

Access Exchange International Hosts Paratransit Study Tour from Japan



– Photo by Tom Rickert

A study tour from Japan this past summer focused on accessible door-to-door transportation in San Francisco. Coordinated by Rika Takeda of the Center for Independent Living of Sapporo, Japan (seated bottom center), the tour provided an opportunity for an in-depth look at San Francisco's paratransit experience as it has developed over the past thirty years. Special thanks to agencies that welcomed AEI's guests to inspect their facilities: The Janet Pomeroy Center, Yellow Cab Cooperative, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (the Muni), The ARC of San Francisco, and Veolia Transportation.

SF Muni Accessibility Worker to Promote Access for All in India

Jamie Osborne, the Fixed-Route Accessibility Coordinator with San Francisco's Municipal Transportation Agency, is heading to Bangalore in southern India. During his stay in the first half of 2009, Osborne, an engineer and transit planner, will volunteer his technical experience in coordination with AEI. In San Francisco, he has worked to improve access to bus and rail services. He has made technical presentations to several international study groups hosted by AEI, and he continues a long tradition of "transportation workers without borders," who share their knowledge and skills to promote inclusive transit around the world. For more information, write to velaparatodo@gmail.com and go to his online survey of accessible transit needs in India at transitaccess.survey.sgizmo.com.

AEI, ICAT to Host International Roundtable in Washington, DC

Our annual Roundtable on Accessible Public Transportation in Developing Countries is planned for January 15 at facilities donated by the American Public Transportation Association in downtown Washington, DC.

As in past years, the event is co-sponsored by Access Exchange International (AEI) and ICAT (The International Centre for Accessible Transportation in Montréal, Canada). To participate, contact tom@globalride-sf.org.

Celebrating Thirty Years of Door-to-Door Services in the San Francisco Bay Area

AEI was part of the program at a meeting this past summer of paratransit stakeholders in Oakland, Berkeley, and other East Bay cities, as well as a celebration in November at San Francisco's City Hall commemorating thirty years of door-to-door paratransit services. San Francisco's paratransit services total more than one million trips per year.

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News and Notes from Around the World

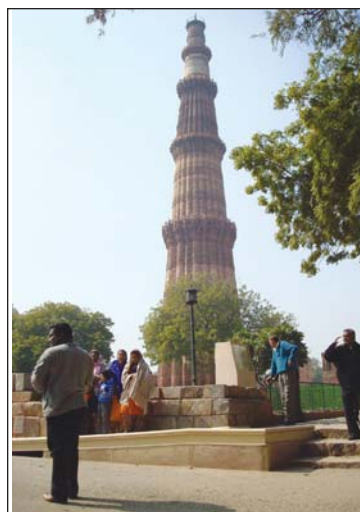
• **China:** TRANSED 2010 – the 12th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons – will take place at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, May 31 – June 3, 2010. A pre-conference workshop will be held on May 31, and the main conference and exhibition will follow June 1-3. The conference theme is “Sustainable Transport and Travel for All.” Detailed information is available at www.transed2010.hk, notes Mabel Chou of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation, the conference host agency. AEI urges our readers to consider participation in this conference.

• **Colombia:** Accessible Bus Rapid Systems are coming on line in Colombian cities. Bogotá and Pereira’s systems are in operation, Cali’s multi-corridor system is about to open, and Bucaramanga and Barranquilla are slated to open later in 2009. Medellín and Cartagena will then follow. (Information from Gerhard Menckhoff)

• **India:** An accessible Bus Rapid Transit system is nearing completion in Ahmedabad, with the first 15 km of a 60-km system now under construction and scheduled to open in February. The new corridors feature good pedestrian access and bike

lanes, along with level boarding to high-floor buses in this full-featured system. (Reports from Anan Sutaria of CEPT University and the ITDP). . . . Readers may contact Dr. Sudarsanam Padam at sud_padam@yahoo.com to request a copy of his interesting analysis, “Moving People or Moving Vehicles: The wages of decline of

public transport.” . . . In New Delhi, Svayam – an initiative of the SJ Charitable Trust – has worked with the Archaeological Survey of India and the Indian Tourism Development Corporation to build a spectrum of access features to major tourist destinations such as the Qutub Minar monument, shown above. Svayam is working with New Delhi city departments to host a conference on accessibility to public space and transport in metropolitan New Delhi.



• **Japan:** Walt Spillum, a champion of accessibility in Japan, reports that copies of AEI’s *Mobility for All* publication were distributed to disability leaders from five African countries hosted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency at a training course in Tokyo.

• **Malaysia:** Completing six years of successful operation, Kuala Lumpur’s demand-responsive “door-to-door” accessible transport service now has a fleet of six vans operated by the Mobiliti Association (Photo below courtesy of Halimah Abdullah).



. . In other news from Malaysia, the United Nations Development Programme is funding an accessible public transport project in Penang. We plan to report on progress in future newsletters.

• **Mexico:** Mexico City’s accessible bus fleet has been expanded to 250 vehicles.

• **Peru:** San Isidro in Lima has received the 2008 Award of Architectural and Urban Accessibility for Latin American Municipalities in a contest sponsored by Spain’s International Cooperation Agency. AEI congratulates José Isola, Jaime Huerta, and other colleagues in Peru, who continue to move toward the goal of accessible environments in Latin American cities.

• **Philippines:** Accessible transport was strongly advocated by participants in a transport forum sponsored by the Asian Development Bank and the global Transport Knowledge Partnership (gTKP) in Manila in September. Richard Arceno (Philippines), Bui Toan (Vietnam), and others pushed the Bank to take broader actions to promote inclusive transportation at a panel during the forum. For further action and follow-up of these initiatives, contact Xochitl Benjamin with the gTKP in the UK at xochitl.benjamin@gtkp.com. (Editor’s note: AEI is concerned that the Asian Development Bank has

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News and Notes

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evidently failed to take a lead in the region in promoting mobility for all. It is hoped that this forum will help put access for disabled passengers more firmly on their agenda.)

• **Spain:** The Barcelona Metro asked disabled people to design a new ticket machine, starting with what they needed. The result – now widely installed – is a machine that is intuitive for everyone to use so less staff time is taken up helping people understand where to put their money and how to extract a ticket. “If the idea of designing transport systems . . . for passengers rather than for engineers could be promoted more widely, who knows what we could achieve!” writes Ann Frye, a Partner with Euro Access, who points to this project in Barcelona as a success story. With funding from the European Commission, Euro Access aims to describe the laws, policies, and best access practices in the field of accessible public transportation in all 27 member countries of the European Union. More at www.euro-access.org.

• **Tanzania:** In a first for East Africa, the largest city in Tanzania plans to begin construction later this year for a Bus Rapid Transit system accessible to passengers with disabilities. Dar es Salaam’s DART system will serve a population of 3.5 million. . . . And the British government has launched a five-year program to improve access to rural communities in six African nations.

• **Uruguay:** Eduardo Alvarez reports that Montevideo is expanding its fleet of accessible low-floor buses.

• **USA:** Go to www.projectaction.org for helpful resources on accessible transportation in the USA. New projects under Project ACTION auspices include research on the use of taxis in door-to-door paratransit services, accessible pathways to bus stops and stations, access to Bus Rapid Transit service in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and communication technologies to assist passengers with disabilities. . . . How easy is it to see those detectable warning materials found at curb ramps on sidewalks, and elsewhere? We thank Mark Heimlich of Armor-Tile Tactile Systems for suggesting that universal design advocates go to www.access-board.gov/research/dw-fhwa/report.htm to learn more.

Championing Inclusive Design in the World Bank

Gerhard Menckhoff, a long-time member of the World Bank’s staff now serving as a consultant in its transportation section, is an example of what AEI would call a “universal design champion.” He promotes inclusive transportation for solid reasons – inclusion means more passengers, and most universal design features (such as wider doors on buses, better hand rails, floor-level boarding of buses) are cost-effective, provide better service for everyone, and thus make public transport more attractive.

In addition to providing valuable guidance to Tom Rickert of AEI in the preparation of *Bus Rapid Transit Accessibility Guidelines* for the World Bank,



Gerhard has shared the guidelines with key planning staff during his work with BRT planners in Hanoi, Accra, Lima, Guatemala City, and several cities in Colombia. And he has presented the universal design of BRT systems at conferences in Washington and throughout the world, including travel on his own time to present inclusive public transit concepts at a national conference on accessible

transportation in New Delhi; a “CODATU” conference in Lyon, France; and international conferences on accessible transportation and mobility in Rio de Janeiro and Montréal (TRANSED).

Gerhard is a Swiss citizen who makes his home in Washington, DC. Because his wife Pati is from Bolivia, he is also very much at home in Latin America. “Product champions” are found in major businesses around the world. When the “product” is accessibility to bus systems, the world can become a better place thanks to the leadership of people such as Gerhard Menckhoff. One aspect of our work at Access Exchange International is to encourage such champions in a growing number of institutions and transport ministries around the world.