

# Accessible Transportation Around the World



The Newsletter of

Access Exchange International

June 2012

## Access to small vehicles

AEI is preparing a ground-breaking guide to initiate and expand paratransit services in developing regions

### Register now for TRANSED 2012

The largest conference on accessible transportation and mobility ever held in the developing world will take place September 17-21 in New Delhi. You can be there by registering at [www.transed2012.in](http://www.transed2012.in).

This year's International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons (TRANSED) will look at issues of mobility through the eyes of stakeholders who have submitted abstracts from forty-five countries. The latest advances in bus rapid transit will stand alongside the use of bicycle-pedicabs and motorized rickshaws to provide a mind-boggling menu detailing how people get around in our world – or don't get around. We will take a sober look at how to increase the mobility of literally hundreds of millions of persons who need to make their contribution to the global movement toward sustainable cities. *(continued on page 2)*

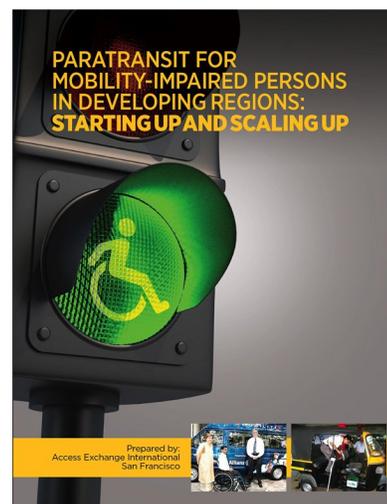


Supporters from many countries met in Washington, DC, this past January to review plans for this September's TRANSED conference. – Photo by AEI

New technology and new thinking about sustainable transport systems are coming together to enable fresh approaches to the door-to-door transportation needed by disabled persons in less-wealthy regions.

A new guide now being prepared by Access Exchange International will take a fresh look at everything from smart phone applications to ways non-profit NGOs can work together in order to scale up existing services. Titled *Paratransit for mobility-impaired persons in developing regions: Starting up and scaling up*, the guide will compile examples from some of the paratransit systems now operating beyond the "traditional" services found in Europe, North America, Japan, and Hong Kong – with fresh information from cities such as New Delhi, Cape Town, Istanbul, São Paulo, Kuala Lumpur, and Moscow.

Added to this international experience will be the expertise of paratransit *(continued on page 2)*



### ON THE INSIDE

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Different models of motorized auto-rickshaws were tested at this session coordinated by Svayam in New Delhi this past September. Call centers and smart-phone technology may someday assist disabled persons to more easily use these vehicles while paying lower fares. Svayam is also assisting with elements of guide design. – Photo by Tom Rickert of AEI

## AEI preparing Paratransit Guide

*(continued from page 1)*

practitioners in the USA with many decades of experience with public, private, and non-profit agencies using minibuses, vans and taxis.

Special acknowledgement is provided to Richard Schultze, with more than thirty years of experience in all public transit modes, who is drafting materials on service models, planning, scheduling, dispatching, marketing, personnel, vehicles, facilities, and other aspects of paratransit operations. These topics will in turn be enriched with contributions by AEI staff and colleagues from around the world. It is planned that the different topics will be summarized in the guide itself, while readers will be encouraged to go deeper into the material, with direct links to more in-depth treatments of each topic.

“No single publication can address the incredible variety of challenges facing stakeholders in cities and towns around the world,” noted Tom Rickert, AEI’s Executive Director. “But there is very little available to provide international guidance to those who are initiating or expanding services while dealing with the problems encountered in much of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Practitioners need to learn how to manage their vehicles so that they maximize the number of trips and coordinate with others to serve a broader spectrum of passengers. Meanwhile, new technologies are going to make new approaches possible in years ahead. We’re hoping this publication will contribute to the good efforts of

hundreds of agencies dedicated to providing greater mobility for persons with disabilities and for the many others who also benefit from universal access to public transportation.”

Plans call for the new paratransit guide to be kicked off at the upcoming TRANSED conference in New Delhi in September. The guide will be available free of charge and dissemination will be ongoing. Meanwhile, we welcome queries from our readers.

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## TRANSED 2012

*(continued from page 1)*

Topics will include all modes of accessible public transport in both urban and rural areas, pedestrian mobility and safety in livable communities, environmental impacts and sustainability, accessible tourism, and a range of other subjects. The conference is hosted by Svayam of New Delhi, an initiative of the S.J. Charitable Trust, in partnership with the national Ministry of Tourism, the Delhi Government, and the Delhi Transport Corporation. The event is co-sponsored by the USA’s Transportation Research Board.



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**The next TRANSED following New Delhi 2012 is planned for 2015, at a location to be selected.**

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**We have revised our Resources section at our website at [www.globalride-sf.org](http://www.globalride-sf.org).**

This is where our readers go to find what is arguably the most complete current list of resources on access to public transportation around the world. We invite you to browse through 134 annotated links to sources in nine languages in more than twenty countries. Learn more about how to promote, plan, and implement access to vehicles of all types as well as to sidewalks and public space.

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Do you have friends or colleagues that you would like to receive this Newsletter? We invite you to send us their contact information.

## Universal access to rural transportation: a hard road to travel

AEI is a long-time friend of the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD), a key agency in promoting mobility for all in places which often lack the buses and trains and other public transport that many city-dwellers take for granted. The IFRTD recently



dedicated an entire issue of their *Forum News* to accessible transport in rural areas, with articles by Tom Rickert of AEI and colleagues from the United Kingdom, Kenya, Argentina, India, South Africa, Guatemala, and the Philippines. Go to [www.ifrtd.org](http://www.ifrtd.org) to download a copy.

## Roundtable in Washington, DC promotes inclusive transportation

Updates from the United Nations, the World Bank, and from practitioners in the United Kingdom, Portugal, India, and the USA filled out a morning of reports about accessible transportation from around the world at our thirteenth annual roundtable held in January in Washington, DC. Two reports at a uniquely global level were provided by Aleksandra Posarac of the World Bank, on the first-ever *World Report on Disability* produced jointly by the Bank and the World Health Organization; and by Erick Guozhong Zhang of the United Nations, on the status of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The event was co-sponsored by AEI and the International Centre for Accessible Transportation of Montréal, Canada, and held at facilities donated by the American Public Transportation Association in Washington. - Photo by AEI



### The people's system

100 years old: "Muni # 1" accessible to all

San Francisco's municipal bus and rail system celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in style in April. Dignitaries gathered at one of the many ramped platforms designed to provide access for all to the "Muni's" light rail and streetcar system. Mayor Ed Lee and transit officials led the celebration, marking the first trip taken by the famous streetcar back in 1912. The vehicle has been carefully restored with features providing full accessibility to all passengers, in this photo by AEI.

Access Exchange International has deep roots in San Francisco's highly accessible public transport system, where our Executive Director worked for ten years back in the 1980's, helping to pioneer access to bus, rail, van and taxi modes. Current and past Muni staff and advisors continue to assist our work, hosting international visitors and serving on AEI's Board of Directors.



## Moving toward the day when everybody is invited on board!



Imagine if someone had said to us back in 1990 that the time would come when we could visualize accessible bus corridors in *most* of the world's emerging megacities in Latin America and Asia and Africa!

It is a long march, with many challenges yet to be faced, but Latin America is moving decisively toward this goal, many cities in India are heading in this direction, and South Africa will hopefully set a standard that other cities in Africa will eventually follow. The new *BRT Standard Version 1.0* published this year by the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy reflects most of the goals supported by AEI, including promotion of a smaller horizontal gap, easily crossed by everyone, between buses and station platforms.

The width of the gap is important for small children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and everyone who has to slow down "to mind the gap," thus slowing down the system. This problem especially can occur with low-floor buses when they dock adjacent to BRT stations and stops. When there is less visible need for a narrow gap (because the bus is low to the ground) then bus drivers often treat a new BRT system just the same as "the way things were before." Instead of docking close to the platform, drivers often let the bus remain far from the platform edge. This often occurs with BRT systems in the USA. Yet many cities in France and Germany use low-floor buses that achieve accessible gaps due to excellence in design and better trained and monitored bus drivers. Meanwhile, managers and drivers of high-floor BRT buses (and 75% of BRT corridors in Spanish-speaking Latin America use high-floor buses) are more aware of the need to maintain a smaller gap when they dock at station platforms, helping these systems to be more competitive with other transit modes and achieve level boarding comparable to rail systems.

All this points to the need for more research into the tradeoffs between high-floor or low-floor buses on BRT trunk lines, noting that low-floor buses on feeder lines have their own distinct advantages if they are equipped with ramps or lifts. Food for thought! And then for action! No matter *what* the height of the bus, excellence in accessible public transport is needed by everyone.

## Conference in Istanbul focuses on accessible transport

Speakers from the Americas, Africa, Europe, and



Asia spoke to issues of accessible public transport for disabled persons at a conference sponsored by the World Bank and other agencies in Istanbul,

Turkey, in February. AEI thanks Dr. Kit Mitchell of the UK for volunteering for a keynote address on accessible transport, providing examples of



good practice from around the world. The conference sign (photo top) promoted barrier-free transport and learning from the experience of other countries.

Istanbul is a city which exhibits different levels of accessibility. Only limited access is reported on its Bus Rapid Transit system. More significant access is found on its surface tram system – which features wheelchair ramps as well as the level boarding shown in the photo above by Dr. Mitchell. There is also a 60-vehicle door-to-door system, and a spectrum of improvements are reported in place at Istanbul's international airport. Enforceable national regulations, requiring more accessible public transport in Turkish cities, were passed seven years ago and reports on compliance are due this coming month.

### We appreciate our USA volunteers!

Special thanks to Maureen Blumenthal, now in her sixth year volunteering in our office. . . Also to Susan Rickert for volunteer staff work for AEI and to Nicolas Finck for helping to edit our Newsletters. Special appreciation to Tanya Slesnick, CPA, with the firm of Slesnick & Slesnick, as she continues to carry out pro bono annual audits of our finances.



From left: Ling Suen, Tom Rickert, Eric Guozhong Zhang, Russell Thatcher, Lalita Sen, and Abha Negi at a breakfast hosted by AEI in Washington, DC. Thatcher and Sen are co-chairs of TRB's Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility.

Photo courtesy of Ling Suen

## Introducing Eric Guozhong Zhang to our colleagues in universal access

Access Exchange International was pleased to introduce Eric Guozhong Zhang, of the United Nations staff in New York, to leading promoters of universal access to public transport for persons with disabilities at activities this past January in Washington, DC. Zhang is a lead officer charged with implementing the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and accepted our invitation to take part in our annual roundtable on accessible transport in developing countries (story on page 3).

Accessible from the ground up

## New vehicle provides access for all



Cheryl Damico, Vice-President of AEI, tries out the new MV-1 vehicle at a demonstration in San Francisco. The MV-1 went into production this past September and is the first vehicle built from the ground up to provide service for all passengers, including those using wheelchairs, without need for further modifications. Go to [www.vpgautos.com](http://www.vpgautos.com) for more information.

- Photo by Tom Rickert

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- Lori and Mark Horne, in memory of George Moore
- Jeffrey Weiss, in memory of Felix Romero

### Special donations

- Louise L. Chu, in honor of Mo Blumenthal
- Elizabeth Boardman, in honor of Marc Soto

We thank the following for donations received or pledged in support of our guide, *Paratransit for Mobility-Impaired Persons in Developing Regions*

- 10,000€ from the Veolia Foundation, France



- \$5,000 from Unwin Safety Systems, United Kingdom



- \$4,000 from BUSWEST Llc (California)



- \$1,000 from Vehicle Technical Consultants (Calif.)
- \$500 from Alex Lodde

This list will be updated in our next newsletter and donors will be acknowledged in the *Guide*.

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# News and Notes From Around the World

## AMERICAS

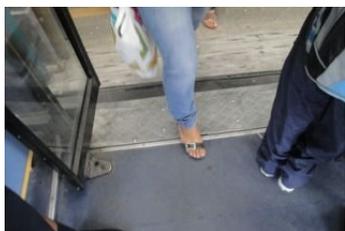
- Argentina: Buenos Aires' new Metrobús BRT system has opened, the first of several planned in the country.

- Brazil: The 2014 World Cup, in twelve host cities, and the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, are stimulating fresh initiatives to create "mobility for all" for Brazil's 190 million citizens, 84% of who live in urban areas. The country boasts 23 bus rapid transit corridors, with major additions coming up in Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, and Belo Horizonte.

- Canada: TransLink, the public transport agency of Metropolitan Vancouver, continues to upgrade its bus stops with "a proper ramp and landing pad, and the corresponding return stop," per an article at [www.burnabynow.com](http://www.burnabynow.com) cited by GAATES. Most stops are fully accessible, and the multimodal TransLink system keeps getting better. . . . To download AEI's publication, "Universal access to Bus Rapid Transit: Design, operation, and working with the community," go to <http://www.vtppi.org/AEI BRT.pdf> at the Victoria Transport Policy Institute.

- Colombia: Go to the April 2012 Newsletter of the ITDP at [www.itdp.org](http://www.itdp.org) for a superb video on Medellín, Colombia's, accessible multimodal transport system, including an elevated Metro, Bus Rapid Transit, accessible cable car lines (Metrocable), and escalators providing access to previously isolated barrios on the hillsides above the city.

- Ecuador: Guayaquil's bus rapid transit system uses boarding bridges for all its passengers (photo), especially benefiting persons with disabilities. And when bus companies fail to fulfill their contractual obligations, the financial penalties help pay for door-to-door accessible van service to enable disabled persons to get to the BRT stations, notes Federico von Buchwald of Guayaquil's Metrovía BRT.



- Mexico: Some agencies in Mexico are highly committed to linking accessibility to sustainability within the growing cities of Latin America. Mexico City's expanding Metrobús BRT system helps lead the way. . . . New Bus Rapid Transit corridors, utilizing features which have already enhanced access within Mexico City, are planned in the surrounding State of Mexico, León, Guadalajara, Monterey, Puebla, Querétaro, and Mérida. . . . More than sixty accessible vehicles have been deployed to agencies in the state of Guanajuato.

- Peru: A US\$2.5 million grant provided by Japan will be administered by the World Bank to improve access for disabled persons on the approaches to Lima's recently opened Metropolitan bus rapid transit system. Work should start soon, with a focus on improving sidewalks and crossings within 500 meters of major BRT stations. (Report from Gerhard Menckhoff)

- USA: Excellent information on universal design is found at the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access in Buffalo, information at <http://www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/>. For example, check out the accessible bus shelter with its aesthetically pleasing design. . . . Also go to Project Action at <http://projectaction.easterseals.com> where you will find many helpful publications at this Washington, DC, based agency. . . . Meanwhile, the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund in California has teamed up with other agencies to produce "Accessible Transit Services for All Populations," researching how to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of door-to-door paratransit service in compliance with the USA's Americans with Disabilities Act. Go to <http://dredf.org> for information. . . . AEI has sent several of its Spanish publications to officials in Cuba, part of our ongoing effort to reach out to a country which may have helpful experience in providing low-cost accessible transport, especially to more rural populations.

## ASIA-PACIFIC/MIDEAST

- Australia: Not all is well in the land down under, according to "A report into inaccessible transport in Australia," researched by Sheila King of Australia For All -- an accessible tourism agency found at [www.australiaforall.com](http://www.australiaforall.com). The report looks at the entire spectrum of transportation, including modes not covered by national legislation. Recent protests in the State of Victoria appear to underline these concerns.

- China: A wheelchair rider visiting Beijing reports that some of the many gains in accessibility at the time of the Olympics there may have been lost. Steps were observed at subway entrances, and some lift-up seats on buses had been soldered down, reports Chris Hart.

- India: Bus Rapid Transit systems, usually with many access features, are moving ahead in Pimpri-Chinchwad, Hubli, Indore, Bangalore, Pune, Delhi, Rajkot, and Vaipur, reports Gerhard Menckhoff. . . . A recent article in *The Hindu*, reported by GAATES, notes that railroad station access remains a severe problem in India. Stations in Chennai came in for special criticism, noting lack of ramps and accessible toilets (or toilets which are "accessible" (continued on page 8)

# News and Notes

(continued from page 7)

but locked). Large gaps between platforms and trains are also a big concern. However, Chennai Metro Rail Limited reported in May that reforms are now on the way in response to suggestions by disability advocates for better signage, tactile guideways and warning strips along with design changes to improve mobility for all patrons including seniors and those with disabilities.

- Indonesia: A blind person, Mr. Jaka Anom Achmad Yousuf, has been added to the Jakarta Transportation Council, a position from which he expects to provide input to improve all modes of public transport, including rail, bus, bus rapid transit, and minivan. (From a report in the *Jakarta Post* cited by GAATES)

- Korea: Only 14% of Korea's buses are accessible, so Korea has a long way to go, according to Yoong-Ho Bae of the Network of Accessible Environment for All in Seoul. In correspondence with AEI, Bae also notes that most local governments are failing to reach a goal of providing one accessible van for every 200 persons with severe disabilities.

## AFRICA

- Ethiopia: An ambitious 200-page *Guide to Accessible Addis Ababa* has been published by the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development and is available at <http://www.ecdd-ethiopia.org>. The ECDD is now following up with a project titled *Promoting Accessibility in Ethiopia*.

- South Africa: The World Bank in South Africa has reaffirmed its position "to support the provision of universal access to public transport for all citizens, irrespective of gender, age, income or physical condition" as a central policy objective. . . . Meanwhile, Cape Town is moving ahead with the expansion of its "MyCiTi" BRT system, including the construction of more than 250 fully accessible feeder bus stops and the purchase of a similar number of low-floor feeder buses to bring passengers to the accessible BRT trunk line service.

## EUROPE

- France: Wheelchair Accessibility to the Subways of Major Cities of the world is available as a poster at <http://accedons.pagesperso-orange.fr/POSTER%20A.pdf>, as prepared by André Fournier of the Fédération Nationale des Plus Grands Invalides de Guerre, of France. The research was based on investigations of subway websites in 2009, but remains relevant today. The poster is available in English and French. . . Todd Litman forwards us two articles from PIARC/The World Road Association based in France, with

information at [www.piarc.org](http://www.piarc.org). The articles describe the severe traffic accident and pollution exposure risks that occur in many lower-income countries as informal commercial and residential districts -- "linear settlements" -- develop along busy roadways. Go to <http://www.vtppi.org/Vollpracht.pdf> for "They call them coffin roads," and for "Roads that serve the neediest users, yet all too often kill them in the process," go to <http://www.vtppi.org/Diallo.pdf>.



- Russia: A new double-articulated tram has a low floor, shown in the photo, that is more easily accessed by passengers. The vehicle is manufactured in Ekaterinburg, and the floor is only 35 cm above the rails. (Item courtesy of Elena Goubenko)

- United Kingdom: Go to [www.motivation.org.uk](http://www.motivation.org.uk) for information on their work around the world on behalf of the training and empowerment of persons with disabilities, along with provision of wheelchairs built for the local environment. . . . Nearly nine out of ten passengers with visual disabilities who took part in a survey have missed their stop because they did not know where they were on a bus ride, states a report from the UK cited by GAATES.

- **European regional news:** The European Commission selected Salzburg, Austria, to receive its Access City award 2012, the European prize for making cities more accessible to persons with disabilities. Other finalists for the award were Krakow, Poland; Marburg, Germany; and Santander, Spain. The previous year's award went to Avila, Spain. We thank Ann Frye for this information. Ann also notes more progress toward accessibility on the part of some cities in central and eastern Europe which are now starting to tackle accessibility from a legacy of old infrastructure and difficult economic conditions. Go to [www.accesscityward.eu](http://www.accesscityward.eu) for more information.

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