

25th Anniversary Issue



Accessible Transportation Around the World

The Newsletter of
Access Exchange International
January 2016

Why school transport?

Why our emphasis on school transport, which is a topic that is seldom mentioned in discussions of urban mobility or sustainable transportation? In the USA, for example, "the little yellow school bus" is cute, taken for granted, and, yes, most kids with disabilities usually do get to school.

But when it comes to *school transport* in developing countries, advocates for children with disabilities are hard to find. Major institutions promote accessible school *buildings* and better trained *teachers* in more inclusive schools. Yet inclusive schools can have ramps everywhere and teachers using the latest methods, but those children will not arrive without transportation to get there.

There isn't much discussion of this topic. Amidst all the talk of the wonders of technology, millions of kids with disabilities are not taught how to read or write and are unable to learn the social skills required for a fuller and more productive life. And that is why we have decided to prepare a guide to promote transportation to school for such children.

So wish us luck! And do consider a donation to this project. To date we have received only a small fraction of the funds normally needed for a



Interns working with Amin Amir Andani in Pakistan discuss transport-to-school issues with the head of a school for children with disabilities in Karachi. Millions of children with disabilities are unable to get to such schools. In our search for solutions, similar on-site visits have taken place in Tanzania, Mexico, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic as a team of international colleagues prepare our new guide, *Bridging the Gap: Your role in transporting children with disabilities to school in developing countries*.

project of this size. Our project team is composed of Amin Amir Andani (Pakistan), Janett Jiménez (Mexico), Gretel Silvestre (Dominican Republic), and Richard Schultze, Susan Rickert, and Tom Rickert in the USA. Already, this international team has:

- Visited multiple schools and government offices in Africa, Asia, and the Americas (pages 2 & 4);
- Held a week of meetings in San Francisco to scope out the content and followup of a guide to promote school transport (page 3); and
- Sent out a survey of school transport, thanks to a unique collaboration between AEI and Prof. Paul Ajuwon of Missouri State University (page 3).

Read on to find out what we are doing to build a bridge between the world of transportation and the world of education for children with disabilities . . .

Also on the inside:

- Page 4: UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Page 5: "Bus in the Classroom"
- Pages 5 & 6: News from Mexico
- Page 6: Cycle Design Challenge in Pakistan
- Page 7: News & Notes from around the world

In some countries: Nowhere to go but up!

The situation is dire in the poorest regions



Susan Rickert interviewed Tanzania officials during a visit in September. From left: Honorati Bayo, District Special Education Needs Coordinator; Christa Williams, accompanying Susan Rickert; Moses Mabula, District Executive Director for the Karatu District Council; and Susan Rickert.

Tanzania: Marching along the (very) long road to education for all

Too often, children with disabilities who attempt to register for school in Tanzania are simply turned away for lack of resources. Susan Rickert (the wife of AEI's Executive Director and a former US Peace Corps teacher in Tanzania) met with education officials in September as part of AEI's project to assess inclusive transportation issues in developing countries.

One Tanzanian correspondent, Eliphias Daudi, sums up the challenges: *"Remoteness in some areas, transport expenses that cannot easily be afforded by parents, (pedestrian paths) which are not modified . . . , a general public which knows very little about the needs of children and people with disabilities, neglect,*



discrimination, and stigmatization in the society." Daudi also comments that *"transportation workers are totally (accustomed) to be unfriendly to persons with disabilities."* Change may be on the way, as Tanzanians hopefully begin to see accessible

features in Dar es Salaam's soon-to-open bus rapid transit system (photo on page 8.)

Meanwhile, special education is starting to spread in Tanzania. A few schools include blind or deaf children (photo bottom left).

Bolivia: Another long road for kids with no way to get to school

Our colleague Richard Schultze has seen it all during his decades as a transportation manager, including the operation of transport for disabled



children in Ohio. Schultze has also volunteered to help Methodist schools serving poor children in Bolivia. He returned in July from the third annual disability conference led by his "Embracing Disabilities in Bolivia" team. Sixty persons attended the event, including this mother of a child with a disability (photo left).

The event was held in Santa Cruz, a city of some two million persons where a local university has set up a training program for special education teachers.

As happens so often, virtually non-existent transportation for disabled children lags behind this new program. There is no transport offered for the 500 children with disabilities who attend a special school in Santa Cruz. Public mini-buses tend to be informal (photo below) and often pass up disabled persons. Our case study on Bolivia will examine these issues and make recommendations concerning this "worst case" situation in the poorest country in South America. Meanwhile, our readers can contact schultze5@aol.com for a PowerPoint with his observations from Santa Cruz.



Project Team holds week of meetings in San Francisco



Clockwise from top left: Team members Janett Jiménez (Mexico); Gretel Silvestre (Dominican Republic); and Richard Schultze, Susan Rickert, and Tom Rickert (USA). Not shown: Team member Amin Amir Andani (Pakistan), whose work we discuss on pages 4 and 6. At right, team members discuss transport issues with Marc Soto (at left), AEI's Vice-President and manager of Transdev, San Francisco's paratransit broker in charge of the city's 800,000 trip per year system.

In the midst of all the favorable news and trends we report twice-yearly in our newsletter, we have identified a huge gap: There is no progress in transporting kids with disabilities to school in many developing countries. Members of our project team met in October for a week of meetings in San Francisco to address this challenge by planning the content and followup of a guide to promote new thinking on transport-to-school issues. We are reaching out to policy makers and implementers ranging from the United Nations and the World Bank to transport professionals, teachers, parents, and students in developing countries around the world. And we hope the reports in [this](#) newsletter will encourage everyone to consider the role of transportation as they champion policies to create more inclusive schools around the world.

AEI and Missouri State University collaborate on transport survey

While everyone agrees that lack of transportation is a major factor in keeping millions of children with disabilities out of school, policy makers often fail to act because the extent of the problem is not quantified. The thinking tends to be, "If you cannot measure it, it doesn't exist."



One solution is to send a standardized electronic survey to put numbers behind the extent of the problem. Fortunately, Prof. Paul Ajuwon (photo left) of Missouri State University contacted AEI to work with us in

preparing and sending out a transportation survey in November to schools in developing

countries. The survey has been sent both to inclusive schools, with some students with disabilities, and to special schools serving only disabled kids. Dr. Ajuwon, a Nigerian-American specializing in education of blind children, plans to publish the results during the coming year in peer-reviewed journals that cover the topic of special education. AEI will incorporate the results into our guide to be published by the end of 2016.

We welcome the newest member of our team: Dr. Gretel Silvestre from the Dominican Republic

Thanks to a grant from the California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church, we were able to fund the transportation of Gretel Silvestre of the Catholic Pontifical University in Santiago, Dominican Republic, to participate in our consultations in San Francisco. She is vice-rector for research at her institution.

A first-look at Pakistan

Lack of transport limits school attendance in and around Karachi



Amin Amir Andani (photo at left) is a key member of our team working on school transport issues for children with disabilities in developing countries. Helped by several student interns, interviews are under way to focus on the impact of transportation as a major component of what is keeping thousands of disabled children from getting to school in Pakistan.

Schooling for children varies enormously in Pakistan. Sindh Province, of which Karachi is a part, has made some progress in this regard and Andani recently surveyed fifteen schools serving nearly one thousand disabled students, with an 8.5:1 student:teacher ratio. 70% of the students were boys and 30% girls. Comments concerning different schools often focused on a lack of transport, or old and ill-maintained vans, such as -

- *There were five school vans but (the) school was closed for one week because none of the vans were in working condition.* (Shaheed Benazirabad District)
- *There are 20 students on a waiting list because of limited transport.* (Jamhoro District)
- *One more van is needed to pick up more students as there are many students on a waiting list.* (Nosheroferoz District)

More in-depth interviews in Karachi itself revealed a sharp difference between transportation issues in government schools as opposed to private schools which may have better funding to address transportation needs. For example, one excellent private school serving 80 students with modern vehicles reported no transport problems.



The condition of vehicles at a private school in Karachi (photo right) was in sharp contrast to the out-of-service vehicle at a government school in Sindh Province (at left) - Photos courtesy of Amin Andani



It was a different story at the Government Special Education Complex in Karachi, with 300 students, most of whom have intellectual disabilities and 80% of whom arrive on one of the school's five 12-year old buses (photo at top). "Transportation is a big problem," noted the Director. "We could accommodate 100 more students if we had an appropriate number of teachers and buses."

That is a 33% increase in daily attendance, which reminds us of the 50% increase in daily attendance that would occur if transportation was adequate at the school in Valle de Bravo, Mexico, that we reported on in our last newsletter.

Transport and education for all are included. . . **New U.N. Sustainable Development Goals**

190 countries recently signed the new United Nations goals for sustainable development for 2015-2030. Goal # 11 is "to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable." Objectives within this goal include -

- *to provide safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all . . . with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons.*
- *to provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons, and persons with disabilities.*

Goal # 4 is "to insure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all." Objectives include -

- *equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities*
- *education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.*

We want to provide tools to colleagues everywhere as they cross the bridge between these transportation and education goals to help students with disabilities to get to school.

***Bus in the Classroom* and *Safe Passage* help kids get to school**

Two low-cost programs in California could help kids with disabilities get to school in many countries.

The *Bus in the Classroom* program has been developed by Pete Meslin, Director of Transportation for the Newport-Mesa Unified School District in southern California. It provides the curriculum and materials to enhance the least restrictive possible bus service for students with disabilities. Bus drivers and office staff work together to teach transportation safety skills with a



Bus driver Hope Nguyen works with an autistic student's storyboard lesson about riding the bus properly (photo courtesy NMUSD).

multi-level curriculum consisting of five 1-hour lessons. This program leads transport staff into more integrated relationships *as educators*. For information, contact pmeslin@nmusd.us.

San Francisco's *Safe Passage* program addresses safer walking to school by recruiting community volunteers to provide an adult presence in the city's notoriously high-crime Tenderloin District. The mere presence of adults, with communications links with police if problems are spotted, helps keep intersections along routes to school safer for everyone including those with disabilities. The photo shows two *Safe Passage* volunteers at an intersection used by school children (photo by Tom Rickert).



Strengthening the San Francisco-Mexico City connection

AEI Vice-President Marc Soto was in Mexico City in September to present San Francisco's accessible transportation services to Mexican colleagues (photo). The event was the Third International Forum on Inclusive Cities, held at Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM). Our colleague Janett Jiménez helped plan his participation. (See photo on page 3 of a return visit by Janett to San Francisco's paratransit services.)



Soto also toured the factory where Mexico City's fleet of ramped taxis is manufactured. These services face a challenge: While more than 300 permits to operate these taxis are available, to date only around 75 well-trained drivers are available to operate them.

Inclusive transport in developing countries AEI's 17th international roundtable set for Washington DC on Jan. 14, 2016

AEI's annual Roundtable is planned for Thursday morning, January 14, in downtown Washington, DC at the new headquarters of APTA – the American Public Transportation Assn. The event includes updates on all modes of accessible transportation. Following up our current emphasis on transport-to-school for children with disabilities, we especially encourage reports on this topic.

We thank APTA for again offering us their facilities free of charge as a public service. This year's roundtable will be at APTA's new headquarters at 1300 I Street in Washington, some four blocks from the White House. Security arrangements in this new building require pre-registration with AEI. What is *not* different is our emphasis on an informal atmosphere and mutual dialogue among colleagues from many countries. But space is limited and pre-registration is "first come, first served." We strongly suggest you contact us at tom@globalride-sf.org, well before our final registration deadline of Friday, January 8.

ACCESSIBLE CYCLE
DESIGN CHALLENGE

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN PAKISTAN

- Outnumber the combined population of Hyderabad, Multan, and Peshawar (*Helping Hands for Relief & Development*)
- Pakistan annually loses 4.9% to 6.3% of GDP due to the exclusion of people with disabilities (*The Economist*)



THE PROBLEM

Immobility leads to economic isolation and the most feasible mobility option for people with lower-limb impairments is Cycle, which is:

- Highly Accident Prone
- Requires High Exertion
- Uncomfortable
- Incompact
- Unsightly



THE SOLUTION

- A 3-month long countrywide Design Challenge that addresses the aforementioned design defects under the production cost of Rs. 10,000
- The prototype of the winning design will be developed through our Design Implementation Partner

Another way to school or work
Accessible Cycle Design Challenge addresses a major need in Pakistan

Tricycles often improve the mobility of persons with disabilities in much of the world. This affordable device is a common sight in Pakistan. To come up with an innovative design of the most accessible cycle, NOWPDP has initiated a National Design Challenge with a March 31, 2016 deadline. This project will undergo three phases including design development, prototype development, and market availability. The Network of Organizations Working with People with Disabilities in Pakistan is organizing this Challenge. NOWPDP has also developed prototypes of auto-rickshaws that can accommodate both driver and passenger with disabilities, as reported in our previous newsletter.

The international advisory panel and jury of the Challenge include Shahid Abdulla, Khayam Husain, David L. Jaffe, Janett Jiménez, Matt McCambridge, Dr. Kit Mitchell, Somnath Ray of the Automobile Corp. of Pakistan, and Tom Rickert of AEI.

Pakistan's Institute of Architects, the Automobile Corporation of Pakistan, and AEI are the strategic partners. Contact amin.andani@nowpdp.org for details.

Mexican university students move ahead on inclusive vehicle design

Students at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM) in Mexico City continue on a multi-year project to design a low-cost light-weight public paratransit vehicle that will be accessible to a passenger remaining in a wheelchair while on board. Under the guidance of Professor Alejandro Ramírez Lozano of the UAM's Design and Sustainability Group, students are considering all aspects of the role of the vehicle, including social, economic, and sustainability issues. The project will require another year as it moves toward completion. Our colleague Janett Jiménez is providing input into the project and she sends us the photo above of a mockup of one of the designs. Tom Rickert of AEI visited the project this past March.



A global survey finds improved access by wheelchair users to subway stations

Seventy percent of the stations in the world's 57 largest subway systems are now barrier-free, according to findings by André Fournier of France. Newer subways often lead the way, with 100% barrier-free access found in cities such as New Delhi, Shanghai, Taipei, Shenzhen, São Paulo, and Washington DC. Cities with older subway systems usually have far less accessibility, including Moscow, St. Petersburg, New York, Buenos Aires, London, and Paris. In terms of overall subway access, China and Japan are ahead of Europe and the Americas. For more information, contact a69fournier@orange.fr.

Please send address changes, news, and photos from your country to

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News & Notes from around the world



ASIA Singapore now has nearly 200 ramp-equipped low-floor buses (photo left). Similar low-floor buses with ramps and other access features in Hong Kong (right) are helping it reach a goal of nearly 100% accessible service by 2017. These exemplary services set a standard for much of Asia. (News from SBS Transit & South China Morning Post.) . . . AEI sends our best wishes to our colleague Yoshito Dobashi in Japan as he focuses his career on the disability and development field after years of service with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

India: Public transport continues to present a chaotic picture, moving slowly toward upgrades to its older inaccessible systems. Mumbai is upgrading 75 railroad stations and dozens of metro stations (Times of India). . . . Meanwhile, the Disability Rights Alliance in Chennai is working with Chennai Metro Rail Limited to make current and new underground and elevated stations accessible (NewIndianExpress). And the Chennai social welfare department plans to introduce an alert system for blind passengers on 75 city bus routes: the unit will beep when the right bus arrives (The Hindu). Sidewalk improvements are also under way. . . . Our colleague Vidhya Ramasubben of KickStart Cabs in Bangalore reports that her accessible cab service is doing well and plans to expand.

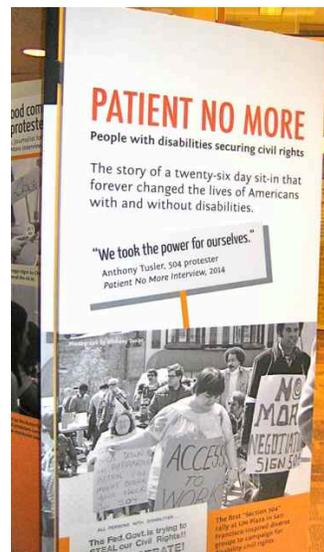
MIDDLE EAST Iran is one of the most urbanized countries in the region and nearly 9 million people live in Tehran, its largest city. But public transportation needs to grow with the city and the municipality of Tehran plans to spend up to \$10 billion on upgrades during the next five years, including doubling the city's metro and adding thousands of buses as well. (Bloomberg). Buses and metros are only part of the solution for persons with disabilities, and access to public space is every bit as important. Ali Isalou sends



us the photos at bottom left from Qom, depicting an interesting device to stop motorcycles from entering public space while permitting persons using wheelchairs to pass right through. The arrows point to a projection which requires a motorcycle to tip to one side while the slanting sides of the device make it impossible for the driver to remain on the motorcycle at the same time. Many types of wheelchairs could pass right through the device. We call this to the attention of planners in high density cities where, in an extreme case, ramped pedestrian underpasses have been closed to wheelchair riders upon putting up barricades required to keep motorcycles out. (Correction: The photo from Ali Isalou in our June newsletter, depicting problems of access to a sidewalk, was also from Qom, not Tehran as we stated.)

United Arab Emirates: Dubai plans to transform itself into an accessible city by 2020. Studies are planned to look at all aspects of transportation, public space, and the built environment.

NORTH AMERICA The USA is celebrating the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the keystone of current law on disability rights in the United States. Less familiar to many is the 26-day "take-over" in 1977 of the federal building in San Francisco by persons with disabilities. Their successful protest paved the way for the ADA by establishing basic rights when the key authority in Washington signed the Rehabilitation Act's "504" provisions. The photo by Tom Rickert of AEI is from a larger exhibit mounted by the Longmore Institute at San Francisco State University. . . . Disabled persons continue to struggle for their full rights. A recent protest in New York by the United Spinal Association called on Uber to stop discriminatory practices against wheelchair users, a finding also made by the National Council on Disabilities in its assessment of the USA's transport situation.



The ADA has had an impact far beyond the USA and can be a valuable resource for planners around the world. A document released in October clarifies the existing ADA regulations with helpful cross-links, examples, and clarifications. Readers may Google "Circular 4710.1 ADA" to download the circular, which includes chapters on transportation facilities, vehicles, fixed-route and demand-responsive transport, paratransit eligibility, and more.

Continued →

News & Notes: Continued

San Francisco: Kudos to the USA's State Department for its well-organized tour this past July for disability leaders from around the world. AEI briefly presented our work at a presentation by Annette Williams of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority, as part of this tour. . . . We welcome Clayton Lane as the new head of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy in *New York*. ITDP has played a helpful role in the design and support of inclusive features on most of the bus rapid transit corridors it has supported around the world. And we also welcome LoriAnn Girvan as the new Executive Director of GAATES in *Ottawa*, promoting access to technology and infrastructure around the world.

AFRICA South Africa: Readers looking for a balanced treatment of the current status of accessible



transport in South Africa should contact Amanda Gibberd for her excellent report on projects there, including bus rapid transit lines in operation in four cities and pilot

service initiated in a fifth. To receive a copy, contact GibberdA@dot.gov.za or ThobelaO@dot.gov.za.

Nigeria: There may be good news coming up for persons with disabilities in *Lagos*. A spectrum of



access features are found on the stations and on the new ramped low-floor buses on a major BRT transit line extension. Go to "Lamata BRT" on

YouTube and then to video S9Ep7. The BBC photo above shows construction now completed and we thank Chukwuma Umolu for calling our attention to this project. . . . Tanzania: Hopes are also high in



Dar es Salaam for the long-delayed opening of its BRT system with the arrival of 138 buses. We'll keep our readers posted. The photo of a completed station

is by Susan Rickert.

EUROPE Portugal: The 14th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled

Persons (TRANSED) was held in July in *Lisbon* with nearly 250 attendees from around the world including major participation from Brazil and Japan as well as the European region. A pre-conference workshop on "Getting Started in Accessibility," sponsored by GAATES and headed up by Ann Frye and Campbell McKee, included representatives from eleven countries. The next TRANSED will be held in *Taipei* in 2018. . . . Turkey: A project using an app to enable vision-impaired passengers to access buses has been initiated in *Ankara* with hopes it will spread to the entire country. (A similar project in Chennai, India, is noted on page 7) . . . Russia: An initial thirty traffic lights in *Moscow* are being outfitted with sound and vibration features to assist pedestrians with vision and hearing disabilities. . . . UK: Alan Rees has notified us that the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance has produced a strategy and action plan. Go to www.scottishaccessibletransport.org.uk for a copy.

LATIN AMERICA Paraguay: Ninety-three more buses with access ramps for passengers with disabilities are being put into service in *Asunción*, notes the Fundación Saraki. . . . Argentina: Thirty accessible vans are now in service for disabled persons in *Rosario*, reports Eduardo Kerszkowski. . . . Colombia: Ing. Gustavo Martínez Cortes in *Bogotá* has sent us a copy of his accessible mobility plan for that city. For a copy, contact him at oeurbana@gmail.com. The illustration below is from his report, projecting his vision of "mobility for all" when it comes to all modes of public transportation.



Mexico: Mayor Miguel Mancera has announced a new Vision Zero policy to improve safety and comfort for pedestrians in *Mexico City*. Started in *Stockholm*, the Vision Zero strategy has focused on better law enforcement, improved road and intersection design, and traffic calming measures to reduce the traffic accidents which kill around one thousand people each year in Mexico City, of which about half are pedestrians. (Report from the ITDP).

Several of the items from Asia and Europe are via the news service of the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES). Readers may subscribe at www.gaates.org.