

Zacatecas, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí take the lead

## Meetings in three Mexican states promote transportation to and from school for children with disabilities



Some of the more than 200 participants in Zacatecas to introduce AEI's guide

# Accessible Transportation Around the World

The Newsletter of  
Access Exchange International  
June 2018



Available at [www.globalride-sf.org](http://www.globalride-sf.org)

### MEXICO: Ceremony in Zacatecas introduces AEI's guide in Spanish

Alejandro Tello Cristerna, Governor of the State of Zacatecas, provided the keynote address at a ceremony in the state capital inaugurating the Spanish version of AEI's guide, "Bridging the Gap: Your role in transporting children with disabilities to school in developing countries." The State of Zacatecas is printing more than one thousand copies of the guide, and a copy of the publication was distributed to each of those present.

The event culminated in a workshop on April 18 led by AEI representatives Janett Jiménez Santos and Pete Meslin. The presentations and discussion brought together education and [To Page 3→](#)

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## Awards announced for pioneering schools in India and Nigeria



The EquallyAble Foundation in collaboration with Access Exchange International has announced its initial two Bridging the Gap Awards to demonstrate how to improve the ability of children with disabilities to walk to school in an urban slum in New Delhi and to transfer between a wheelchair and a vehicle at a school in Jos, Nigeria. A major feature of each grant is a commitment to share the practical results of their work with actors and decision makers in and beyond these two countries.

The Advisory Committee for the awards is composed of Mohammed Yousuf, founder of EquallyAble; Tim Grogan, Executive Director of the Foundation; Tom Rickert, Executive Director of AEI; and Pete Meslin, a member of the team that prepared AEI's guide, "Bridging the Gap: Your role in transporting children with disabilities to school in developing countries."

### INDIA: A grant of US\$17,269 to improve walking (or rolling) to school

ASTHA, a school welcoming low-income children in a slum in New Delhi, will carry out access audits and promote actions to improve several routes to school used by all children and especially needed by children with disabilities.



Mothers sometimes have to carry children to school in urban slums with drainage ditches and other obstacles that make travel by wheelchair impossible. As children like Rakesh grow older, the task of carrying a child may become impossible. (Photo courtesy of ASTHA - Permission on file at ASTHA)

### NIGERIA: A grant of US\$3,832 to aid wheelchair users to get to school

Jos is a city of some two million people in central Nigeria. The Open Doors Special Education Centre in Jos will develop and publicize modifications to wheelchairs to ease the process of transferring between a wheelchair and a vehicle. This will address issues of parents unable to lift their children as they grow older.



Open Doors (photo) serves 90 students with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Dangerous streets and lack of sidewalks force nearly all children to travel from home by vehicle. Transport is by the school's bus, motorized auto-rickshaws, motorbikes, taxis, and private cars.

#### Implications of these awards

Looking ahead, the EquallyAble Foundation hopes that these initial grants will set the stage for future rounds of Bridging the Gap Awards to demonstrate pilot projects and activities to carry out the recommendations of AEI's unique guide. With its thirteen sections on different topics, and its fourteen case studies from around the world, AEI's "Bridging the Gap" guide is the first international guide to seriously analyze the transportation obstacles facing the millions of children with disabilities who currently cannot get to and from any school in developing countries. The guide presents recommendations for governments, educators, transportation workers, parents, and children to work together to address this unmet need. The guide is practical and encourages concrete actions as well as further research. We thank the EquallyAble Foundation for creating the Bridging the Gap Awards to implement recommendations within the guide.

Recipients of this Newsletter are invited to go to our website at [www.globalride-sf.org](http://www.globalride-sf.org), to download the guide in English, Spanish, Hindi, or Japanese. They are also invited to view videos on our home page that illustrate transport issues that confront children with disabilities.



**Governor Tello (center) and other key people at the introduction of the Spanish guide in Zacatecas**

## MEXICO (continued from front page)

transportation officials from ten states to discuss their joint responsibility to address a transportation gap that contributes to millions of children with disabilities in less-wealthy countries never attending school. The transportation crisis also contributes to a growing gap between literacy rates and school completion rates for children with and without disabilities (see article on page 7).



**Photo from left: María de Lourdes Rodarte Díaz, who heads up the institute serving persons with disabilities in Zacatecas; Governor Alejandro Tello; and Pete Meslin of AEI.**

### Workshop creates a template for future use

The workshop in Zacatecas was limited to fifty persons and based on a series of presentations of major sections of the guide supplemented by the videos posted on AEI's website and small group discussions. This sets a pattern for similar workshops in other countries to bring together the different actors needed to think through how to tackle transportation issues. Everyone needs a place at the table: Educators, transport agencies, government ministries, road safety specialists, parents, children, and disability agencies.

**Recipients of this newsletter are encouraged to contact AEI if they desire a workshop in their country. We also encourage individuals as well as businesses and institutional donors to contribute resources to AEI to provide workshops on how to implement school transportation at municipal, state, and national levels. Resources are needed to fund a variety of other projects to carry out the recommendations of our guide. Contact our Executive Director for more information.**

## JAPAN: Go to [www.npo-hop.org](http://www.npo-hop.org) to download our guide in Japanese



AEI thanks the Japanese non-profit organization "NPO Center for Independent Living – HOP," based in Sapporo City in Japan, for taking the initiative to translate our entire guide into Japanese. Like the USA, Japan has good transport for school children with disabilities in urban areas, but problems exist in rural areas and our guide will also assist Japanese practitioners to lend their expertise to nearby countries. We especially thank Mr. Tamotsu Takeda (photo above, with guide) and Mr. Hideki Akamatsu for their good work on behalf of their agency, as well as Mr. Yoshito Dobashi for his contributions to this publication.

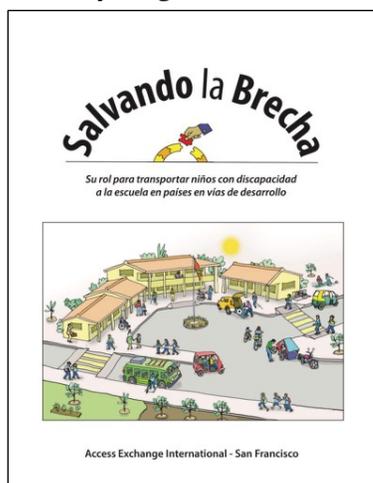
## INDIA: Hindi version of guide is at <https://svayam.wordpress.com/resources/>



We thank Svayam in Delhi for translating our guide and making it available to Hindi-speakers around the world. The photo shows Shri Prakash Javadekar, India's Minister of Human Resource Development, at a ceremony with Sminu Jindal, the founder of Svayam, to introduce the Hindi version of our guide this past October.

# SPANISH AND ENGLISH GUIDES AT WORK AROUND THE WORLD

**MEXICO:** "Salvando la Brecha," the Spanish version of AEI's guide, "Bridging the Gap," has already begun its work in Latin America.



In addition to the events in Zacatecas, AEI representatives Janett Jiménez Santos and Pete Meslin spoke at events in Pachuca, the capital of the State of Hidalgo, including more than thirty teachers and directors of special education programs as well as disability activists. Other

meetings were held in San Luis Potosí at an event sponsored by "DIF," the main government social service agency. Followup meetings with transportation and education staff are planned by DIF. A separate meeting and tour was held at the factory which produces the Ricon wheelchair lifts found in many buses and other vehicles in the USA (photo below)



**ECUADOR:** A workshop organized by UNESCO and the United Nations Development Fund is scheduled for June 18 in Quito, Ecuador. Janett Jiménez will again represent AEI, presenting the Spanish version of our guide as the textbook for the workshop topic, "Transporting Children with Disabilities to School." The workshop will also feature the videos posted on our website.

Ms. Jiménez will participate earlier in June in the 11th annual conference celebrating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held June 11-14 in New York.



**SOUTH AFRICA:** Pete Meslin provided an introduction to AEI's guide at the University of Cape Town in March (photo). Our work on school transport was presented at the invitation of Prof. Marianne Vanderschuren. The university is collaborating with other agencies on a tool kit to promote health and mobility for children in Africa. It is hoped that issues of school children with disabilities will be more fully incorporated into this work as it progresses.



**USA:** Tom Rickert (photo left) and Pete Meslin (at right) participated in the annual Transportation for Students with Disabilities conference held in March in a suburb of Dallas, Texas. They are shown with Joseph Fanene, who operates a school bus for children with disabilities in American Samoa. The conference provided an ideal venue to reach out to the school transportation community in the USA and its territories.



## Bolivia

Our colleague Gerhard Menckhoff, a consultant for the World Bank, sent us this photo and other information on school buses operated by the city of Cochabamba to transport students with disabilities. Increasingly, getting children with disabilities to school is on the agenda for government agencies in Latin America.

## 15th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons



### TRANSED 2018 to be held in Taipei, November 12-15

With the theme of "Mobility for All: Connecting the World with Accessible Transportation," the 15th International Conference on Mobility and Transport is planned for November 12-15, 2018, in Taipei, Taiwan. To register for this major event, go to <http://www.transed2018.com/>. The deadline for early-bird registration is July 20. We urge our readers in eighty countries to consider their role in promoting the conference theme and to attend the TRANSED conference.

Access Exchange International plans to be on hand in Taipei, with a focus on our commitment to promote transportation to school for students with disabilities as part of our larger mission of promoting accessible transportation around the world for persons with disabilities of all ages.

TRANSED 2018 is sponsored by the Eden Social Welfare Foundation in Taiwan and co-sponsored by the USA's Transportation Research Board. Eden has long helped Taipei to become a remarkably accessible city and operates one of Asia's largest accessible paratransit fleets.

#### AEI's guide to be translated into Chinese

AEI thanks the Eden Social Welfare Foundation for their plans to translate our transport-to-school guide into Chinese. With the completion of this translation, our guide will be available in the world's four most-spoken languages.

### AEI Board honors Marc Soto as he steps down after 17 years of service



The Board of Directors of AEI honored Marc Soto for his seventeen years of service to our agency at a meeting held earlier this year. Shown in the

photo from left standing are Richard Weiner, President; Tom Rickert, Executive Director; Peter Straus; Susan Worts, Vice-President; and Ike Nnaji. From left seated are Bruce Oka, Secretary; Cheryl Damico; Marc Soto; and Lucy Crain, Treasurer. Marc has served as both President and Vice President of AEI and we also honor him for his ongoing service as Paratransit Broker with Transdev for San Francisco's Municipal Transportation Agency.

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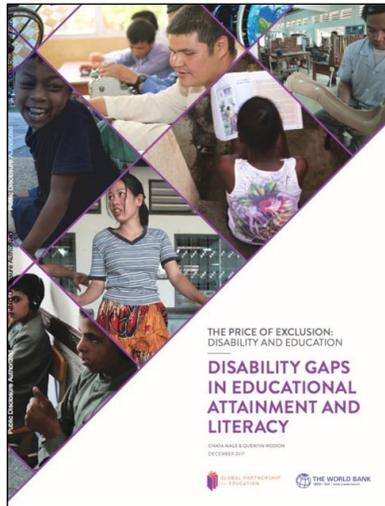
## We are frugal with your donations!

Every \$1 donated to AEI in 2017 was matched by \$1.58 in cost sharing. The great majority of our staff time, the videos posted on our website, our office space and utilities, work to assure our address list is accurate, and much more are donated.

Access Exchange International is a non-profit organization, tax-exempt under Article 501(c)(3) of the USA's Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to our work by USA donors are tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law.

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## **World Bank report on "The price of exclusion" Disability gaps in educational attainment and literacy increase**



A World Bank report released in December 2017 finds that "gaps in education outcomes between children with and without disabilities have been increasing over time."

For example, "the gap in primary (school) completion rates between

children with and without disabilities has increased over time from a few percentage points a few decades ago to 17.6 points for boys and 15.4 points for girls in the latest available census data." The data also indicates that "Among children aged 11, the likelihood of having ever enrolled in school was 13 percentage points lower for children with disabilities" than their peers without disabilities.

Looking at data from Africa south of the Sahara, research by Missouri State University in collaboration with Access Exchange International indicated that 68% of responding schools felt that a lack of transportation prevented them from accepting more students with disabilities and that adequate transportation would result in a 24% increase in attendance by these children.\* The evidence points to the need to take action to address the transportation component of the global issue highlighted by the World Bank. AEI's pioneering guide has taken a first step in this direction. Our own followup efforts need to be joined by others around the world. (\* Readers may refer to our guide on our website for details.)

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### **Our thanks to Tanya Slesnick**

Hailing back to our days working in the then-Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Tanya was the CPA who handled AEI's annual audits and financial reports for twenty years and continues to help us with an array of forms this current year. We cannot thank her enough for all she has done!

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### **19th Annual Roundtable held in Washington DC**

We thank the American Public Transportation Association for once again offering their excellent facilities in downtown Washington to host our 19th consecutive roundtable on accessible transport in developing countries. Held in January, the event was co-sponsored by AEI (USA) and ICASA (Canada) following the annual meetings of the USA's Transportation Research Board. The photo shows some participants after the conclusion of the Roundtable.

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### **A simple app to assess the accessibility of the built environment**



Two colleagues with an idea: Aqeel Qureshi (left, an Indian living in Tokyo) and Andrés Balcazar (recently returned to Mexico from Dubai) became aware of a need for a simple app to make an access audit easy to use for everybody. For information, go to [balcazardelacruz@hotmail.com](mailto:balcazardelacruz@hotmail.com).

### **Swedish NGO announces international newsletter on law and disability rights**

In several countries, civil society organizations such as Sweden's Independent Living Institute complement state agencies in implementing the rights of persons with disabilities. They use established laws as tools for social change. The Institute plans to publish a free international newsletter four times each year to network with disability advocates on legal matters around the world. For information, go to the Institute's website at <https://www.independentliving.org/>

# News & Notes from Around the World

**EUROPE** **France:** Leon has been awarded the 2018 Accessible City Award for its inclusive and universal accessibility. Leon's public buses are 100% accessible according to a report from the European Commission. A well-deserved second



place award was given to Ljubljana, the capital of **Slovenia** (photo above). . . . The **United Kingdom** will soon open a combined subway/elevated rail line with 41 accessible stations between Reading



and Heathrow, expected to serve 200 million passengers every year (photo), reports our colleague Ann Frye. . . . But the situation in the UK when it comes to *school* transportation appears to be in reverse gear: "We are regressing quickly with savage cuts to rural transport services and increasing charges for what little is left of school transport for (students age) 16+ – even for pupils with special needs," states Sian Thornthwaite in the publication, *School Transport Matters*, who can be contacted at [sian.thornthwaite@school-transport.com](mailto:sian.thornthwaite@school-transport.com).

**UNITED NATIONS** Data from 2016 indicates that 10 million persons with disabilities are found among the 65 million persons who were forcibly displaced around the world (Xinhua).

**AFRICA** **South Africa:** Parents of students with disabilities have challenged the Department of Basic Education to remove transportation fees for their children, reports Human Rights Watch, noting that many parents cannot afford such fees.

**ASIA** Abdullah Habibzai, the mayor of Kabul, has launched a project to create a bus rapid transit system in the capital of **Afghanistan**. The first phase of the project is planned to be an 8 km line, with expansion over time to a 111 km system, reports the Khaama Press News Agency. . . **India:** Accessibility to Metro trains and stations in Hyderabad is good, but getting to the stations can be dangerous due to busy roads at some stations, per the *Deccan Chronicle*.

**NORTH AMERICA** **USA:** Portland, Oregon, has run a successful experiment to rent adaptive trikes, hand-operated cycles, and tandem cycles to persons with disabilities. Portland picked up the idea from Eugene, another Oregon city known for its good practices in our field. . . . In another item, from Lloyd Wright of the Asian Development Bank, a light rail station designed for, and by, people with disabilities has opened in Phoenix. . . . Google "Accessible Shared Streets: Notable Practices and Considerations for Accommodating Pedestrians with Vision Disabilities," for information on this complicated topic. We thank Dan Goodman of the USA's Federal Highway Admin. for bringing this to our attention. . . . San Francisco State student Jessi Fry (photo left) accompanied Professor Betsy Blosser to witness the



screening of "A Missing Link: Transporting children with disabilities to school," when it was screened at the United Nations in New York this past December, celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities at the world body. Both were part of a team that filmed this and four other films this past June in Mexico, prepared without charge for use by AEI and found on our website at [www.globalride-sf.org](http://www.globalride-sf.org). **Canada:** Search for "Older Canadians on the Move: The Expert Panel on the Transportation Needs of an Aging Population," for this helpful report from Canada with relevance everywhere.