

Accessible Transportation Around the World



The Newsletter of
Access Exchange International
June 2020



South Africa tests access features in rough terrain **Prototype bus would enhance mobility for school children, others with special needs**

Even prior to the current pandemic, more than half a million children with disabilities were estimated to be out of school in South Africa. Lack of transport to school is a big part of the problem. Walking or cycling is not realistic in much of South Africa, where old apartheid policies created long distances between townships and cities.

Designing more accessible vehicles must be part of any effort to address this situation and the challenge was taken on board by committed staff at South Africa's Dept. of Transport in coordination with equally committed local mechanics who understood the practical issues. While the inaccessible minibus taxis used by around two thirds of South Africans work well on rough roads and in townships with narrow roads, they are unsuited for wheelchair users and others with disabilities. The need was even greater for a vehicle suitable for school transport



- An automatic ramp saves time, for use when there is no curb aligned with the floor of the vehicle. Drivers can remain in vehicles and thus decrease boarding time.

and for use in remote villages. The resulting prototype vehicle, pictured at left, meets a wide range of needs.

The layout includes flip-up seats to eliminate lost seats when not used by passengers in wheelchairs, yet able to take up to four persons in wheelchairs. This is especially a solution for school children with disabilities, but with wider application especially in isolated or rural communities. And, given the very high number of road accidents in Africa, the use of a side-mounted rather than a rear-mounted ramp improves safety whether the vehicle is used in regular service or specialized on-demand service.

South African Dept. of Transport staff requested Access Exchange International to present their work on this prototype at our annual Roundtable in Washington DC this past January. We wish the best to our South African colleagues as they provide further testing and move this vehicle toward production while working on both operational and economic models for an accessible transport system of this nature. In spite of its many problems, South Africa is in the lead in sub-Saharan Africa.

On the inside . . .

Page 2: School transport guide's Chinese version

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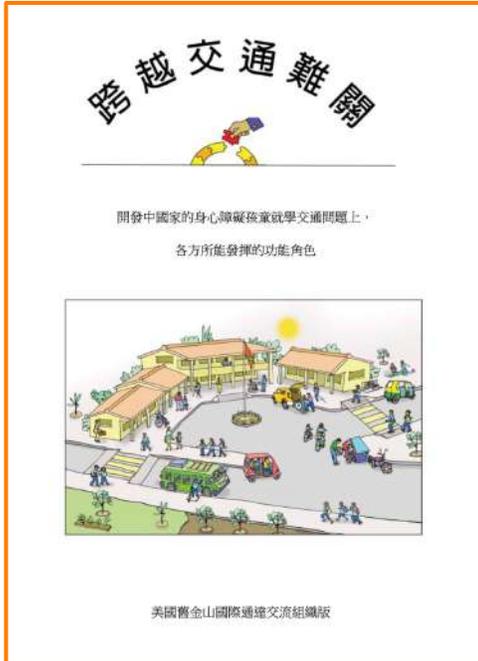


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AEI's *Bridging the Gap* guide published in Chinese by Eden Social Welfare Foundation, a leading provider of school transport for children with disabilities



The Eden Social Welfare Foundation, headquartered in Taiwan, has announced the publication in Chinese of AEI's guide, "Bridging the Gap: Your role in transporting children with disabilities to school in developing countries." (photo at left) The guide is available at <https://eden.international> and will be disseminated in Chinese-speaking regions. Editorial review was carried out by a professor at the Dept. of Social Work of Soochow University in Taipei to assure a high quality Chinese version. Eden is a leading school transport operator in Asia (photo right).



On April 30 the Eden Social Welfare Foundation in Taipei announced the publication of AEI's guide to promote school transport for children with special needs around the world. The Foundation has a long history of meeting social needs in the region and sponsored the "TRANSED" conference on accessible transportation and mobility, co-sponsored by the USA's Transportation Research Board (TRB) in 2018. Personnel from the Foundation are active in the work of TRB's Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility as well as AEI's annual Roundtable held each January in Washington DC.

The guide is now available in the four most-spoken languages in the world: Chinese, English, Hindi, and Spanish, as well as in a Japanese version. The new 140-page Chinese version represents another step forward in AEI's collaboration with colleagues around the world to promote school transport for children with disabilities. The Eden Social Welfare Foundation is well-positioned to include this guide in its outreach to Chinese-speaking communities in the region and beyond.

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Photo from a Board meeting shows (top row) Pete Meslin, guest; Ike Nanji; Tom Rickert, Executive Director; Susan Rickert, staff volunteer; Peter Straus; Susan Worts, Vice-President; Richard Weiner, President; Lucy Crain, Treasurer; and Janett Jiménez Santos, guest. Seated: Bruce Oka, Secretary, and Cheryl Damico.

Donations to AEI are welcomed and needed to help us continue our work

AEI is a non-profit agency, tax exempt under Article 501(c)(3) of the USA's Internal Revenue Code. A list of donors over the past year is found on page 6.

We welcome your donation:

- Go to PayPal at the donation section of our website at www.globalride-sf.org

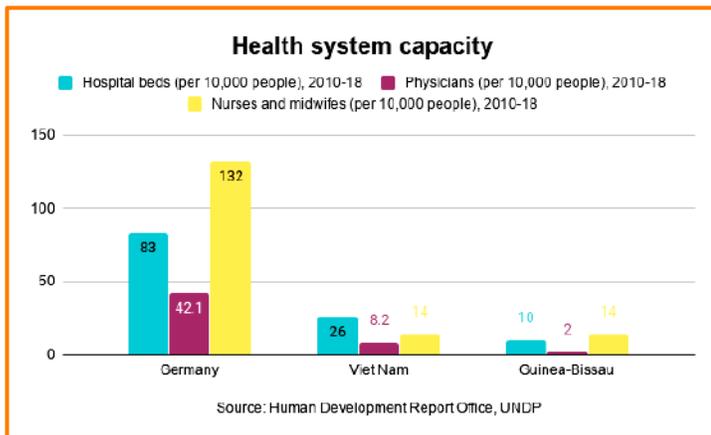
or

- Mail a check to "Access Exchange International"
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Speculating about the "new normal" when it comes to transportation for persons with disabilities: Some knowns and a lot of unknowns

1. LOW INCOME NATIONS ARE NOT PREPARED

Data from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) point to the lack of health system capacity for low-income countries. The UNDP graph below, courtesy of Bruce Curtis, tells a somber story in terms of hospital beds, physicians, and nurses or midwives per ten thou-



sand persons. These data are somber enough for persons without disabilities. For those with disabilities, one key threat is the further reduction of already poor public transportation, threatening persons who could die without access to kidney dialysis, chemotherapy, or other medical needs.

To address this situation, [AEI has prepared a one-page flyer](#), "Suggestions for advocates and for transport personnel," that we have sent to more than one thousand key persons and agencies in more than seventy countries. Go to our website at www.globalride-sf.org to download this practical advice for advocates and for transport personnel.

2. IT IS ESPECIALLY DAUNTING TO PLAN FOR SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION. HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT PLANNERS MAY WISH TO CONSIDER IF STUDENTS WILL REQUIRE SOCIAL DISTANCING.

- Are parents willing to send their children to school, whether or not they have a disability, if they feel their children are at risk?
- If you must split classroom size in order to allow for social distancing, would you opt for different groups of students in (1) the morning and the afternoon; (2) every other week; (3) alternating groups every other day, perhaps three days some weeks and two days on other weeks; (4) two days a week for each group, for example Mondays and Tuesdays for one group, Wednesday for cleaning, and Thursdays and Fridays for a second group; or

(5) alternate on-line resources for some children and classroom instruction for others.

Note that costs for teachers, school lunch service if required, and cleaning and sanitation procedures between groups will vary with *each* scenario. **School transportation requirements and costs will vary significantly between each scenario, especially for students with special needs.**

- Would temporary facilities at some schools enable some children with disabilities, who live at a distance and do not have transportation, to access classroom instruction?
- Have you considered the great need for most children with special needs to socialize with their peers in school? How would socialization between *any* students be handled in the midst of requirements for 2 meters of spacial separation?

These and many other questions – often specific to a given school district – may require consideration.

3. ACCESS EXCHANGE INTERNATIONAL PLANS TO PUBLISH HELPFUL MATERIALS ON SCHOOL TRANSPORT IN COMING MONTHS

- An additional [one-page flyer](#) is in preparation, presenting key issues for consideration by school and student transportation authorities around the world.
- In coming months, we plan to [provide a Toolkit](#) with more than twenty leaflets with helpful advice on how to improve the ability of children to walk or ride to school. Prepared by our colleague Pete Meslin, these one-page lists of actions and tasks will deal with subjects such as travel training for students with disabilities, improving pathways to school, school site selection criteria, and a range of topics on how parents can advocate for the needs of their children with special needs and work together to help them ride or walk to school. This Toolkit will complement and supplement our "Bridging the Gap" guide to promote school transportation, discussed on the previous page.
- We are also using this time to [prepare a report](#) on the opportunities and challenges faced by children with special needs riding or walking to school in a specific geographical area: The four USA states and the six Mexican states that touch upon the USA/Mexican border, with case studies of at least one Mexican city and two USA cities. With a focus on Latino children, who account for the majority of school children in most or all of the states under study, this report will provide recommendations for different stakeholders to consider as they plan for the "new normal" that awaits us.

A lot of progress AEI celebrates thirty years of work



From San Francisco In the summer of 1990, volunteers with disabilities joined staff of the San Francisco Municipal Railway and what is now the Pomeroy Center to test the provision of low-cost access via a portable bridge piece to span the gap between a bus and a ramped platform. The tests were successful and Tom Rickert stepped down from his position as Manager of Accessible Services at the "Muni" in order to found Access Exchange International (AEI). The platforms are now found on San Francisco's main thoroughfare, Market Street, serving the F-line streetcars.

To the world Things looked grim when it came to persons with disabilities getting around in 1990. Policy frameworks promoting "mobility for all" did not even exist in most developing countries. Wheelchair-accessible public transit was mainly found in western Europe and North America. Since that time, AEI has been an important part of the story of burgeoning access to public transportation as well as door-to-door paratransit services, using a spectrum of vehicles ranging from rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) to auto-rickshaws and other small vehicles.

So this is a success story, even though so very much remains to be done without even counting the challenges created by the current pandemic. Part of the story is found in the numbers: AEI staff and volunteers have made presentations in more than 80 cities in 36

countries. Some cities have received multiple visits: 15 visits to Moscow by nine associates in the 1990s, 19 visits to South African cities by five persons during the past twenty-five years, 26 visits to and within Mexico by fifteen persons, 4 visits to India, 13 visits to seven cities in Colombia, and the list goes on.

Then there are the visits by study tours hosted by AEI to inspect accessible public transportation in the USA: including from China, Russia, Japan, Nigeria, Algeria, South Africa, and Mexico.

Meanwhile, AEI has responded to several hundred requests for information or referral from individuals in more than fifty countries. The largest number of requests have come from Mexico, India, Colombia, South Africa, the UK, Iran, Brazil, and Argentina, in that order.

During the past thirty years, AEI has sent out some sixty newsletters with nearly 500 pages of reports ranging from multiple-page features on transport access in South Africa and Colombia and Vietnam or in cities such as Moscow, San Francisco, and Hong Kong, to topics ranging from the potential of accessible auto-rickshaws to the spread of bus rapid transit systems to the challenges of rural transportation.

During the past three decades AEI has compiled or published guides on access to public space and transport, door-to-door paratransit services, and school transportation. AEI staff have worked with the World Bank to compile a guide to driver training plus two guides to bus rapid transit access features. Just about everything we do also is translated into Spanish.

And now to a world with a "new normal" It never stops, does it? It all keeps changing. And for the first time, the whole world is involved in tackling the common problems caused by the current pandemic. So we have taken a moment to celebrate our accomplishments, "our" referring not only to the Board and staff of AEI but to hundreds of individual donors and dozens of volunteer colleagues who have joined our Executive Director, who is also largely a volunteer, in making it all possible.

So enough of celebrating the past. Now the coffee break is over.

Time to get back to work.



A list of the donors who sustained our work during the past year

(We could not have done it without you!)

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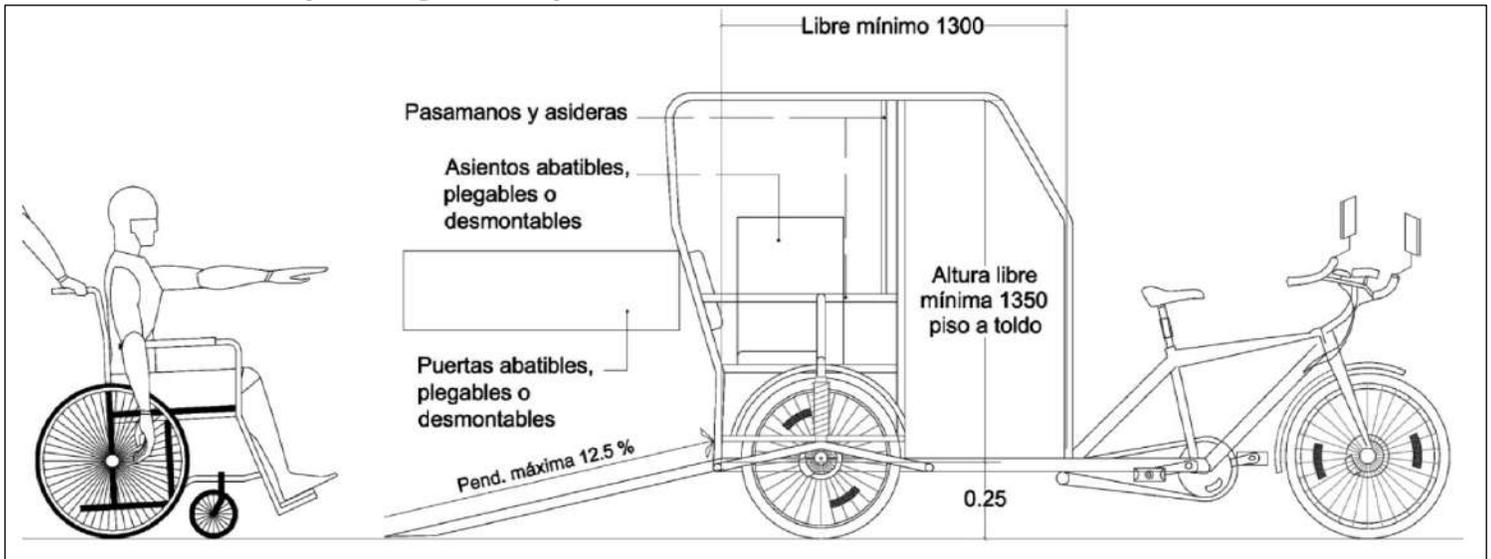
Memorial Gifts Received

This list of donors includes memorial gifts upon the passing of Ed Kopelson, a long-time friend of our work, received from Paul Drago, Gerald Finkel, Sharyn Finkelstein, Gary Gersten, Jane Johnston, Gail Levinson, and Richard Segan.

Grant Received for School Transportation Work

AEI has received a grant from a United Methodist Church agency in San Francisco to assist in our preparation of a report on school transportation concerns impacting Latino children with special needs in USA and Mexican states sharing our common border.

Mexico City design for cyclotaxis is relevant for other small vehicles



The graphic above presents approved minimum technical specifications for an accessible cyclotaxi, with or without electric motor assist, for public use in Mexico City's famous *Centro Histórico*. The design appeared in February in the Official Gazette of Mexico City. Access from the rear of the vehicle must provide at least 700 mm. interior width with a 1350 mm. minimum interior height. The vehicle would feature side-mounted folding and /or removable seats.

AEI's annual Roundtable on inclusive transport held in Washington DC

Co-sponsored by AEI (USA) and ICSA (Canada), some twenty-five participants working in ten countries or regions met together in January to consider how to improve the accessibility of different transportation modes for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Now in its 21st year, the long-running series has served to provide an informal exchange of information among international colleagues with a special interest in inclusive transportation. This year's event included the following topics:

- A new vehicle design for South Africa (see p. 1)
- Walkability and public transport in Cambodia
- Safe design for blind pedestrians crossing bikeways
- Accessible tourist transportation in Mexico
- Equitable mobility in Uganda
- Transport accessibility in India
- An update on World Bank activities
- A report from the U.S. Dept. of Transportation
- Plans for a pilot project in Rio Verde, Brazil
- Global wayfinding guidelines
- Decreasing travel anxiety through accessible infrastructure and services

As always, our thanks to APTA — the American Public Transportation Association — for hosting our meeting as a public service.

A welcome emphasis on universal access for everybody



During our thirty year history, AEI has witnessed increased inclusion of seniors and persons with disabilities in the presentations of international agencies. For example, the design above (snipped from a larger graphic by ITDP-India) illustrates different people of all ages and abilities using different modes of transportation including walking, cycling, and vehicular modes ranging from bus rapid transit to three-wheeled auto-rickshaws.

News and Notes from Around the World

USA: Our colleague Richard Schultze, with a broad background in all aspects of transport for persons with disabilities in Ohio, reports that interruptions in transportation for persons with developmental disabilities can result in a huge increase in anxiety and depression among the disabled population. Daily routines are totally disrupted and basic socialization shrinks, as well as a sense of worth resulting from layoffs at work. "It goes beyond not being able to get to school or the doctor," notes Schultze. . . . The TRANSED conference series on accessible transportation and mobility has been a vital source of information in our field for several decades. The next TRANSED conference is now planned for 2022, under the sponsorship of the USA's Transportation Research Board (TRB). Conference co-chairs are Judy Shanley (USA) and Janett Jiménez Santos (Mexico). The photo shows a breakout group focused on TRANSED planning



at the TRB's Annual Meeting in Washington DC this past January. Clockwise from left: Steve Yaffe, Melissa Gray, Claire Randall of TRB staff, Sean Wang, Roger Mackett, and Peter Cosyn. (Photo by Eileen Lu, Eden Foundation)

Nigeria: This past year, Nigeria's President signed into law the "Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act," following nearly a decade of advocacy. According to a World Health Organization report, at least 25 million Nigerians have a disability. In its transportation section, the law stipulates accessibility features for government transport services as well as audible and visual displays of vehicle destinations. As with many developing countries, a key issue remains that of implementing this law. We request Nigerian readers of this newsletter to keep us informed. (Information from Prof. Paul Ajuwon of Missouri State University.)

Turkey: AEI is part of a "global village" when it comes to information and referral. For example, a European colleague, Ad Van Herk, referred Ayhan Metin, a colleague in Turkey, to us for information on accessibility policies and practices in other countries.

We connected him with colleagues in Mexico, South Africa, Japan, and India. No single agency can "take credit" for this type of international dialogue, in this case involving colleagues in seven countries on four continents.



Japan: One indicator of a bright future for mobility for all around the world is the award of advanced degrees to committed colleagues in our field. One such colleague is Yoshito Dobashi, who was awarded a doctoral degree in Innovation Systems Engineering on March 24 at Utsunomiya University in Japan (photo). Dobashi's dissertation is titled "The Effectiveness of Barrier-Free Railway Projects that Employ Public Involvement from the Planning Stage." Staff and colleagues of AEI acted as resource persons in sharing examples of barrier-free rail transport in their respective countries. Dobashi's background includes several years with JICA, the Japanese government's International Cooperation Agency. Previously, he had provided AEI with a major case study from Japan with analysis of Japan's different programs to address school transport. This case study is available in our "Bridging the Gap" guide promoting school transportation, found on our website in English, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, and Japanese versions.

Israel: Go to www.aisrael.org for information from Access Israel in Hebrew, English, and Arabic. Access Israel reports that 700,000 people in Israel deal with severe disabilities.

Mexico: AEI's research on school transportation in Mexico has been strengthened with the addition of Daniela Briseño Arriaga, who has joined Javier Guerrero Aguirre in work coordinated by our colleague Janett Jiménez Santos in Mexico City.