

Access to door-to-door transit on the agenda in Mexico

120 ramped taxis initiated service in Mexico City in September



Addressing an almost total lack of accessible door-to-door transportation, Mexico City placed 120 ramped taxis into service on September 9, 2014, with hundreds of additional taxis planned in coming months to serve the Federal District of nine million persons. The services are not subsidized, requiring the same fare as regular taxis operating from fixed bases,

and thus may be out of the reach of poorer disabled people. Nevertheless, this is a big step forward, with taxi drivers trained to assist disabled passengers and vehicles offering a range of access features. As with any startup, authorities will be on a steep learning curve based on the results of this initial deployment. It is not yet clear what incentives will be provided to the taxi drivers due to the increased costs of accessible service provision. (Photo from Notimex)

Research begins to improve access to small vehicles



Meet the team at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (serving the Mexico City urban area of 22 million persons), pressing ahead with research on improved door-to-door transportation for persons with limited mobility. Heading up the effort are Professors Alejandro Ramírez Lozano and Sandra Molina Mata, with Janett Jiménez serving as a consultant to the project. AEI looks forward to collaborating with the project and disseminating its results.



Mexican colleagues participate in a USA Paratransit Conference . . .

Two Mexican architects specializing in accessible design – Andrés Balcázar and Janett Jiménez – were hosted by AEI in late October. Balcázar is on the staff of GAATES (the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments) and Jiménez works with Can Lah, SC, in Mexico City. The two participated in an International Paratransit Conference held in Monterey, California, with presentations on paratransit services in the Mexico City metro area. Tom Rickert of AEI provided a plenary address on "Paratransit in Developing Countries," introducing this topic to 150 attendees from North America and Europe. The conference was sponsored by the Transportation Research Board. (Photo top by Tom Rickert: The speaker is Janett Jiménez with session chair Steve Yaffe and Annette Williams.)

. . . and visit San Francisco's Paratransit Services

Prior to the Paratransit Conference, AEI sponsored a tour of mini-bus and taxi services for persons with disabilities in San Francisco. We thank the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, Transdev (the city's Paratransit Broker), Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, and the Mission Creek Adult Day Health Center for assisting in making the study tour a time to learn about and discuss challenges facing paratransit operations in both Mexico City and the USA.





Around twenty staff of the Inter-American Development Bank, hosted by Esteban Diez Roux with Anna Isabel Camilo, joined AEI's Executive Director to discuss issues relating to door-to-door services for persons with disabilities - Photo by T. Rickert

AEI meets with stakeholders at ten Washington DC agencies

The urgency of meeting the transportation needs of persons with disabilities in less-wealthy countries prompted AEI's Executive Director, Tom Rickert, to visit ten stakeholder agencies in Washington DC for meetings held September 29 through October 3.

Helpful discussions or presentations were held with the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, EMBARQ, the Agency for International Development (AID), and the U.S. International Council on Disabilities (USICD). Rickert also met with domestic agencies with a keen interest in international matters, including the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), Easter Seals Project ACTION, the United States Access Board, the AARP, and the USA's Transportation Research Board.



Sixteen World Bank staff participated in a session titled "Accessibility in inclusive urban transport systems," moderated by Marc Juhel, a leader in the Bank's public transport activities (at left in photo above). The session was arranged by Julie Babinard, a senior transport specialist with a focus on the inclusive design of transport.



A meeting with EMBARQ staff included, from left, Robin King, EMBARQ Director Holger Dalkmann, Coby Joseph, and Cathy Baldwin. For an interview with Tom Rickert on EMBARQ's The City Fix, go to <http://bit.ly/1wBFaaJ>. Google "Rickert TheCityFix rickshaws" for Tom's post on making auto-rickshaws more accessible. Tom's meeting with Bob Carlson and CTAA Executive Director Dale Marsico (photo below) "brought it all back home" in terms of relating AEI's work to the growing relevance of paratransit to the needs of disabled persons and others in the USA.





Let's get disabled kids to school!



How it should be is not how it is.

If you Google "can disabled children get to school in developing countries?," what comes back at you is grim. It turns out that the majority of mobility impaired poor children in less-wealthy regions in Latin America, Asia, and Africa simply do not attend school. Ever.

There are exceptions. We want to talk about these exceptions by noting good practices in A NEW GUIDE TO GETTING DISABLED KIDS TO SCHOOL, with case studies from countries where people are "getting it right" in providing low-cost inclusive transportation to school.

And we want to share our own decades of experience in 25 countries promoting accessible and inclusive public transportation, ranging from access to bus rapid transit systems (we have compiled two guides for the World Bank), to training staff and drivers who serve disabled passengers (another guide for the World Bank), to starting up and scaling up door-to-door para-transit systems that serve all mobility-impaired persons. Now we need to go beyond these more general guides to deal with the specific issues facing disabled kids who need to get to school.

We will need at least US\$45,000 to create a basic guide in English and Spanish versions, and to begin to reach out with workshops and consultation with transport and school authorities in selected countries. It is a big order, we are uniquely qualified, and we ask you and all our readers in eighty countries to consider how you can help with a personal donation, with information concerning a grant from an interested agency, or with other resources.

AEI is a non-profit agency, tax-exempt for USA donors under Article 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. Checks may be made out to Access Exchange International and mailed to us at 112 San Pablo Avenue, San Francisco, California 94127, USA. Donations may be made by PayPal on our website at www.globalride-sf.org. Bank account information for fund transfers will be provided on request.

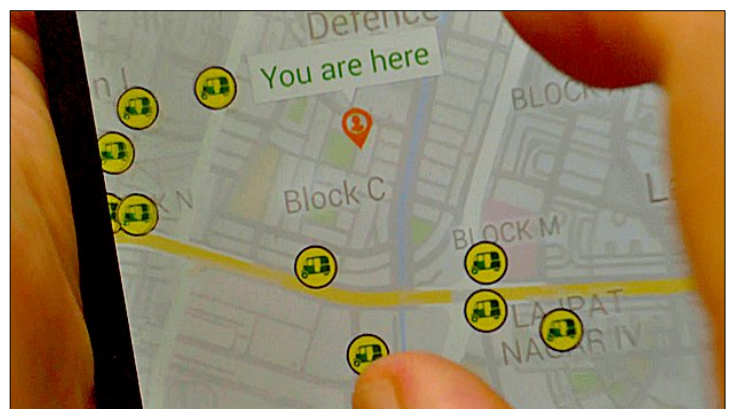


Curitiba, Brazil, gets it right . . .

We have put the spotlight on smaller vehicles to provide affordable transportation, but it is all a matter of "what works." Larger buses have their place for cities that can afford them. Curitiba is a pioneer in providing transport for disabled kids to school, according to reports referred to us by Juan Pineda (see page 8), who took the photo above showing a transfer station serving over one thousand disabled students. Twenty-one buses on 21 lines bring children to this central location where, in turn, they board buses directly to the school most appropriate for them. This saves money, as only one bus is needed per line, and fewer buses are needed to serve each school. Transfer time is no longer than 15 minutes.

. . . and New Delhi gets it right (we hope)

This new app helps people call an auto-rickshaw to their door. A product *(continued on next page)*



New Delhi (continued from previous page)

of the city's transport department, this app, called Pooch-O, has multiple features, but what interests us the most is that it enables persons with disabilities to summon the vehicle directly to where they live: a critically important need if you have a mobility impairment. Helpful apps are being introduced in other cities as well – part of a revolution that can assist cities and private transport providers to provide better service to passengers with disabilities. We'll continue to report on progress in future newsletters. (Photo on page 4 from The Technology of Business, BBC, referred by an auto-rickshaw discussion group we are part of in India.)

. . . while an innovative project moves forward in Pakistan

Our colleague Amin Amir Andani in Karachi is moving full speed ahead with development of an auto-rickshaw that can accommodate a disabled driver by changing foot controlled functions to hands, as well as carrying passengers with disabilities. A crowd-funded prototype by "The Rickshaw Project" is currently under construction for testing, including such features as storage for a folded wheelchair, seat belts for driver and passengers alike, improved seats and better shock absorbers, and a way to better hold a crutch or other mobility device within the passenger cabin. See the illustration below. Go to www.nowpdp.org for information, or contact amin.andani@nowpdp.org. The Rickshaw Project is part of a network of organizations in Pakistan catalyzing the creation of an inclusive society welcoming disabled persons.



A success story in Tanzania

A Bajaj of their own at Banjika



Banjika is a public secondary school with more than 500 students in the remote district of Karatu in Tanzania, east Africa. Susan Rickert, the wife of our Executive Director, helped found Banjika ten years ago. She also raised funds for a dorm at Banjika for sixty girls. But what to do in the middle of the night when a girl falls sick from malaria, which is common in the area? No one at Banjika had a motorized vehicle. Banjika staff told Susan that their greatest need was an inexpensive "Bajaj" – a 3-wheeled auto-rickshaw named for a company that makes them in India. With the Bajaj, they could safely transport students when they need emergency medical care at a hospital many kilometers away. Susan raised funds in the USA and she was on hand to inaugurate the Bajaj in November (photo above) while on one of her visits to tend her projects in Tanzania. Lives may be saved by the little auto-rickshaw that could!

January 15 at APTA

AEI's 16th Annual International Roundtable coming right up in Washington DC

Our 16th Annual Roundtable on accessible transportation in less-wealthy countries will be held on Thursday, January 15, 2015, 9 a.m. to 12 noon at facilities provided pro bono by the American Public Transportation Assn. (APTA) at 1666 "K" Street, NW, in downtown Washington, DC. The Roundtable is co-sponsored by the International Centre for Accessible Transportation (ICAT) of Montreal, Canada. There is no charge for the event. However, space is limited and **we encourage you to contact AEI to pre-register if you wish to participate.**

News and Notes from Around the World

ASIA/PACIFIC

- **Australia:** A report from Victoria state indicates an excellent level of service with accessible taxis. Drivers receive 40 hours of training and the government subsidizes half the fare plus a substantial financial incentive paid the driver for each wheelchair trip. (Richard Bruitzman via AEI Board member Cheryl Damico.)

- **China:** Macao has a pilot accessible taxi project and is building an accessible light rail system. . . . Shenzhen has introduced accessible van and taxi services: go to www.21c168.com. . . Hong Kong has revamped their helpful Access Guide Website at www.accessguide.hk. (Reports from Rex Luk) . . . A 24 km, 37 station full-featured bus rapid transit system will open soon in Yichang. Of special importance, the system will feature platform level boarding and most pedestrian crossings to the center-island stations will be "at-grade," avoiding overhead pedestrian ways that tire all passengers. (ITDP's Sustainable Transport Newsletter)

- **India:** Hyderabad's Metro Rail is planning full access features for passengers with disabilities. . . . A report from Mumbai notes major "connectivity" problems at entrances and exits to their rail system, while commercial construction tends to feature far better accessibility. . . . A 20 car prototype train will have Braille signage on berths, toilets, wash basins, and doors. . . . Meanwhile, in New Delhi, 57 auditory traffic signals at red lights have been put into place for pedestrians who are blind or have low vision. (Above reports cited in GAATES *Global Accessibility News*, respectively from the Times of India, Mid-day, Economic Times, and IANS)

- **Indonesia's** largest taxi operator, Blue Bird Group, has deployed an initial five taxis in Jakarta with power seats that rotate to assist passengers with some



types of disabilities (photo). A Jakarta Post article notes the taxis will be stationed at hospitals and hotels and charge regular fares. Incentives to the company are evidently being considered by the city administration (Via GAATES). . . . Overall, Jakarta provides an improved picture in terms of universal access to its 200 kilometer bus rapid transit system. The *TransJakarta* BRT busways are reported as making a spectrum of improvements to better serve passengers with disabilities. Busways are segregated from

other traffic, typically accessed by overhead bridges



with ramps for pedestrians, but often exhibiting an overly wide bus-to-platform gap. (The BRT platform photo in Jakarta at left was taken by Betsy

Blosser of San Francisco State University.) Sidewalks are often in good condition, and often have tactile guideways. They are often free of the parked motorcycles found in some Asian cities, due to strict enforcement of regulations. However, they lack curb



ramps to assist wheelchair-riders and others. Blind persons may have special problems getting around the crowded city, as illustrated by the photo by Eleonora Bergita at left from Prakarsa, the Journal of the Indonesia Infrastructure Initiative. (We thank our colleague, Gerhard Menckhoff, for background used in this article.)

- **Malaysia:** The 5th International Conference on Accessible Tourism is being held in December in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, organized by the Beautiful Gate Foundation for the Disabled.

- **Pacific Islands:** A project is moving forward to evaluate barriers to transport for persons with disabilities in six Pacific Islands (Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu). Seven development agencies are partners in the project. AEI was pleased to assist with recommendations for a consultant in the Asia-Pacific region to carry it out.

- **Singapore:** SBS transit has ordered 665 low-floor accessible buses, to arrive between mid-2015 and 2017, by which time nearly the entire fleet will be accessible to wheelchair users (photo by SBS Transit, via GAATES).



EUROPE & AFRICA



• **Scotland:** A "Ferries Accessibility Fund" has been announced to enhance safety and staff training in the use of ferries by passengers with disabilities. The goal is to go beyond current standards beginning in 2015. (STV photo, above). . . . "Place to place," available at www.scottishaccessibletransport.org.uk is a model guide to transport resources at a national level. (Report from Alan Rees)

• **Portugal:** The 14th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons will be held in Lisbon, Portugal, July 28-31, 2015. The event is under the auspices of the Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), a school of Engineering, Science and Technology of the Universidade de Lisboa. Prof. Rosário Macário of the IST is the conference Chair, and Prof. Anabela Simões serves as Vice Chair. The previous TRANSED was held in New Delhi, India, in 2012. Work is proceeding to select a host agency for TRANSED 2018. The TRANSED series is co-sponsored by the USA's Transportation Research Board. Registration and all other conference information is available at the website at <http://tranned2015.com>.

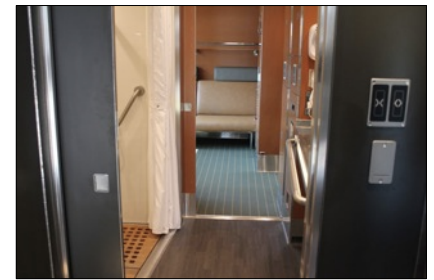
• **Turkey:** EMBARQ in Turkey is working with the Istanbul city government to improve access to streets and sidewalks and AEI has referred workers to resources in the field. Evidently Turkey has fallen behind in implementing its universal access goals, according to the Ministry of Family and Social Policies.



help to elderly or disabled persons, and to everybody!

• **South Africa:** Colleagues at the *Rea Vaya* BRT system in Johannesburg have sent us the photo at left, showing in detail the bridge plate which eliminates the platform-to-bus gap on their newest buses, a

• **Canada's** VIA Rail system is upgrading their trains with an accessible cabin for passengers who are disabled. Go to www.viarail.ca for information. (FTN News photo)



• **USA:** New York: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reached a major milestone when it was ratified by the 150th country in September. The USA and Suriname remain the only countries in North, Central, or South America yet to ratify the Convention. . . . Washington: Google the "US Access Board online guide to ADA standards" for animated diagrams that clarify the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. The Access Board is a federal agency leading in the development of accessibility guidelines. The Board is about to issue updated bus guidelines, a rail guidelines update is moving forward, and a final rule on public

rights-of-way is expected from the Board in 2015. . . . Washington: The World Bank has appointed Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo its new Disability Advisor. She comes to this position having completed major responsibilities in South Africa and with UNICEF and USAID. Inset: Ms. Nhlapo during a visit by AEI's Tom Rickert in September. . . . Go to www.projectaction.org to download their "Seizure Disorder Awareness Guide," "Incentives for Accessible Taxicabs," and other recent publications.



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LATIN AMERICA



Photo courtesy of Juan Pineda, from *Vivir en el Poblado*

• **Colombia:** Celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, citizens of Medellín, Colombia, have good reason to be proud of their advocacy in spite of many challenges going forward. Juan Pineda, a leading advocate for accessible transportation in Latin America, notes that Medellín's *Metroplús* bus rapid transit system is fully accessible. Also, 300 feeder buses serving the two BRT corridors either have lifts or, if they actually enter the corridors, include lifts on the side used in feeder service while having level boarding at the BRT stations. Pineda literally went "the extra mile" by travelling to Curitiba, Brazil, to inspect their pioneering accessible BRT system in 2009, following up in 2010 with a conference in Medellín to interpret the gains in Curitiba to local stakeholders. Still to do: Addressing thousands of other local buses that remain without access features. But with two accessible BRT corridors, two inclusive elevated Metro lines, and universal access to three gondola lift systems, Medellín is clearly a pioneering system.

• **Bolivia:** Following the example of Medellín, La Paz, Bolivia has proceeded with three gondola lift systems called *Teleférico La Paz*. Aerial cable-propelled systems make sense when they have to climb to more than 4,000 meters (13-14,000 feet) to the La Paz suburb of El Alto, making it the highest major city in the world. An inclusive bus rapid transit system is planned for La Paz, but must sort out conflicts with a local association of some 20,000 mini-buses: In many regions relations with the "informal sector" are a major challenge confronting BRT projects. In our January 2014 newsletter we reported on 61 full-sized lift-equipped buses going into service in La Paz and have since received positive reports about their use by disabled passengers.

• **Argentina:** Six NGOs in Santa Rosa, the capital of La Pampa Province in central Argentina, have taken legal action to assure that the city and its local bus service provide full access to disabled passengers. (Report from Iván Poggio)

• **Brazil:** Rio de Janeiro successfully launched its *TransCarioca* bus rapid transit system early in 2014 and is now planning to enhance accessibility by promoting better sidewalks and crosswalks. (Report from the ITDP) Meanwhile, four authors introduced a relevant study in Portuguese this past July that analyzes the different tools to assess urban accessibility, with a focus on Rio de Janeiro's downtown area. This report comes from one of the study's authors, Regina Cohen, an architect with a long history of advocating access for all. Contact arquitetareginacohen@gmail.com for information.

• **Chile:** Colleagues in San Francisco and elsewhere have sent materials at the request of Chile's Ministry of Urban Planning to input into their major program to improve bike paths while addressing accessibility issues for persons with disabilities, including methods to assure that bike paths on streets can be available for passengers getting on and off paratransit vehicles.

• **Dominican Republic:** Santo Domingo's Metro is by far the city's most accessible transport mode, with level boarding to the subway cars, but its modern elevators (photo at right) sometimes do not work, according to disability leaders. Maintenance of accessibility features is a major concern in all countries and universal access is a *process* that includes an ongoing commitment by transit authorities. (Photo from *Diario Libre*)



• **Mexico:** The Institute for Transportation Development and Policy (ITDP) has proposed 29 new BRT routes for Mexico City and its environs. . . . The State of Queretaro has adopted norms for accessible design, reports our colleague Janett Jiménez.

• **Paraguay:** The National Transport Ministry has established a goal of making 15% of public transport vehicles accessible for persons with disabilities by the end of 2016, as reported by Noelia Errecarte of the Fundación Saraki.

New resources at AEI: We have updated the more than 100 annotated links in our Resources section at www.globalride-sf.org. We invite you to download our publications in English or Spanish and visit sections on advocacy, training, universal access to different transit modes, inclusive design of public space, and more!