

25 ADA AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT 1990-2015

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

PROVIDING ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES LEADING TO FREEDOM, CHOICE AND INDEPENDENCE FOR ALL



Celebrating 25 Years of Access and Mobility



Honoring ADA's Legacy, Building for its Future

BY MICHAEL P. MELANIPHY
APTA President & CEO

The history of public transportation is the story of American progress. Over decades of technological and social change, our industry has helped open frontiers, grow local economies and improve the lives of millions.

This month's silver anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a reminder of how mobility can change attitudes and break down barriers, both real and perceived.

When Congress in 1990 guaranteed equal opportunity for persons with disabilities, seminal changes were already writing the prelude for a new century focused on freedom and equity. It was the year that Nelson Mandela was released from a South African prison. East and West Germany were united. Tim Berners-Lee gave us the World Wide Web.

None of us could have foreseen what would emerge 25 years later, but we knew ADA would change the way our nation and our industry thought about access to public transportation.

It's been said that without struggle there can be no progress, and the early days of implementing this new law were challenging. The country had just entered a recession and many cash-strapped public transit agencies were politically and fiscally encumbered.

As a young general manager in Hamilton, Ohio, at the time, a dearth of resources for ADA compliance forced me to think differently about what equal access could mean for our community. We established a systemwide point deviation plan and introduced braille and tactile bus stop signs—both firsts in the nation that became models for other public transit organizations. The experience marked the beginning of a new personal passion to provide equal access to all.

To design practical solutions, we needed to gain a true understanding of the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities. While sitting in wheelchairs, our drivers, supervisors and I learned firsthand what it was like to navigate high floor buses and ride when incor-

rectly secured in a paratransit vehicle. We donned blackened goggles to experience a bus trip without visual clues to our location, and we discovered that ADA-mandated curb cuts didn't necessarily mean a sidewalk would take us to a desired destination once we left the bus. All of this helped us become better problem solvers, better thought leaders and better citizens.

Today the public transportation sector can take pride in how far we have come. Aspiration has replaced apprehension. From 1993 to 2013, the portion of accessible buses nearly doubled (from 51 percent to 99.8 percent), accessible light rail and street-car fleets more than doubled (from 41 percent to 88 percent) and accessible commuter and hybrid rail fleets almost tripled (from 32 percent to 87 percent). Additionally, all of America's heavy rail and trolleybus fleets are 100 percent ADA compliant. Such advances in fixed route access have allowed tens of millions of people with disabilities to participate more fully in their communities.

For individuals who are unable to use these modes of public transit, our systems provided more than 230 million demand-response trips in 2013—from a starting point of 68 million in 1990, the year ADA was enacted.



During his career, Melaniphy was general manager of The Bus Company in Hamilton, OH. In 1993, the agency became the first system in the country with 100 percent braille/tactile bus stop signs.

Photo by Mitchell Wood

The achievements of the past quarter century should encourage us to address any remaining challenges. Our industry must continue to build productive partnerships with the ADA community. Both physical and financial barriers persist for some legacy rail systems. And we need to find new, more cost-efficient ways to reach more people, especially through our fixed-route services.

In this 25th-anniversary year, there is good reason to be enthusiastic. Unlike 1990, today's technological innovations appear almost monthly, offering fresh ways to increase access and choice while reducing fear and complexity for new riders.

Still, an industry is made great not just by its newest machines, but by how it lives its values and meets its customers' greatest needs. Our work is about more than getting people to and from a workplace or doctor's office; it's about giving *everyone* the freedom, independence and access to achieve their greatest potential.

ADA has taught our industry that progress is impossible without change. Our commitment to fulfilling the law's spirit has become a core tenet of who we are and what we do. Like so many of the people whose stories are told—and who are pictured—in this special publication, I am proud to have played a role in ADA's foundational years.

Thanks to ADA and the efforts of public transportation leaders, we move closer every day to a world with equal access for everyone, everywhere and at all times. It's a legacy that deserves to be celebrated.

An industry is made great not just by its newest machines, but by how it lives its values and meets its customers' greatest needs.

APTA THANKS ITS MANY MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS that contributed photos, expertise and other resources to this special publication.

Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit), Oakland, CA, shared a video of the members of its Service Review Advisory, Transit Accessibility Advisory and BART Accessibility Task Force committees and granted APTA permission to transcribe the video vignettes for "The Rider's Voice" articles found throughout this publication. In addition, the following agencies and partners shared photos:

Alexandria Transit Company (DASH), Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (TheRide), Broward County Transit, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro), Centre Area Transportation Authority, Charlotte Area Transit System, Chatham Area Transit, Cincinnati Metro, Community Transit, Easter Seals Project Action Consulting, Flint Mass Transportation Authority, Foothill Transit, Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T), FTA, Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation (IndyGo), King County Metro Transit, Laketrans, Lee County Transit (LeeTran), Los Angeles Metro, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (The T), Monterey-Salinas Transit, New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA New York City Transit, MTA Long Island Rail Road, MTA Metro-North Railroad), Palm Tran, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (OmniRide), Salem-Keizer Transit (Cherriots), San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (Muni), Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (Tri-Rail), Utah Transit Authority, Valley Metro and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

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ADA, in Words and Pictures

Welcome to this special publication, which pays tribute to the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

It features comments from FTA Acting Administrator Therese McMillan, who shares her thoughts about the federal role in ADA and mobility; showcases insights and advocacy from ADA experts; explores critical innovations in design and manufacturing; offers a look at how some technological and social media trends are strengthening public transportation's engagement with passengers with disabilities; and reports on the special challenges legacy agencies face as they balance greater access with century-old infrastructure.

A consistent theme emerged in these articles, namely ADA's positive influence on strengthening mobility and access for *all* public transit riders—level-boarding platforms and sidewalk cutaways, audio announcements to supplement text signs, rumble strips to signal the edge of platforms, software that tracks real-time arrivals, a focus on mobility management ... the list of industrywide enhancements is considerable.

Just as important, however, this publication strives to tell ADA's story by honoring the people the law most affects: those who rely on public transportation to enrich their lives. Consequently, these pages feature the voices of riders with disabilities, represented in short vignettes, and they portray dozens of passengers as they navigate paratransit and fixed-route services.

Their journeys, individually and as a group, embody one of public transportation's greatest aspirations: to expand and strengthen access to opportunity for everyone.

FTA's McMillan: 'We Have Progressed Considerably, But Improvements Need to Be Made'



Passenger Transport recently had the opportunity to pose several questions to FTA Acting Administrator Therese McMillan related to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Her comments range from the definition of "reasonable modification" to cost and benefits to riders' requests for modifications, triennial reviews, mobility management and what's ahead for ADA. They follow:

Passenger Transport: ADA has had a significant impact on public transportation in some obvious ways—the operations of public transit systems, the engineering and construction of vehicles and the growth of paratransit services, just to name a few. It has also helped change the industry in more subtle ways—an increasing emphasis on individual

mobility options, customer service and as a means to enhance the quality of life for riders—not just to get people from Point A to Point B. Can you comment on ADA's impact on the industry in these more subtle ways?

Therese McMillan: I think the biggest, but perhaps least-recognized impact of ADA over the past 25 years has been a shift in outlook from both the industry and the disability community. The industry has shifted from "how can we serve people with disabilities" to "how can we *better serve all of our customers*, including people with disabilities." It's a more integrated approach to planning for and providing service to the community as a whole. The hope is that people with disabilities can stop asking "Can I get to where I need to go?" and start looking at *how* they can get to where they want to go. We have progressed considerably down that path, but improvements still need to be made.

These are not all paratransit trips, either. A recent study by the Transportation Research Board concluded that ridership on fixed-route transit systems by people with disabilities overall appears to be equal to or greater than ridership on ADA paratransit services—and that at many of the transit agencies studied, ridership on fixed-route

McMILLAN Q&A CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Stops Along the Way

THE FOLLOWING BRIEF TIMELINE tracks a few milestones that mark ADA's recent history, from the bill signing in 1990 to today. The backdrop for the timeline is a stylized map of a bus route.



7 JULY 26, 2015: 25th Anniversary of ADA.

6 SEPT. 15, 2010: The Department of Justice issued *Guidance on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design*, which compiles guidance on Title II (related to state and local government) and Title III (related to public accommodations).



5 SEPT. 25, 2008: President George W. Bush signed into law the ADA Amendments Act, which expanded the legal definition of "disability."

4 JULY 21, 2000: Celebrating the 10th anniversary of ADA are, from left, then-DOT Sec. Rodney Slater and DOT Deputy Sec. Mortimer Downey; Elizabeth Dole, DOT secretary in the Reagan Administration, and former Sen. Bob Dole (R-KS) as an interpreter signs remarks.



3 JAN. 26, 1992: Public accommodations and public transportation provisions of ADA went into effect.

2 SEPT. 6, 1991: DOT published regulations implementing ADA provisions.



1 JULY 26, 1990: President George H.W. Bush signed ADA into law. It sought to provide equal access for people with disabilities to employment, public accommodations, transportation, telecommunications and state and local governments.



McMILLAN Q&A CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

transit services by people with disabilities was two to six times higher than ADA paratransit ridership.

PT: Please share the federal government’s definition of “reasonable modification” and talk about what that means for public transportation providers.

McMillan: The “reasonable modification” concept is a basic tenet of disability nondiscrimination laws. While DOT’s reasonable modification final rule, effective March 13, 2015, may feel new to some transit providers, the concept has long been in place in the Department of Justice’s ADA rule that applies to public and private entities and at DOT in the Air Carrier Access Act, which covers the nation’s airlines. Other entities have been handling reasonable modification, in some cases, for decades.

Reasonable modification means that transit providers must modify their local policies and practices, if reasonable, to ensure that people with disabilities can use their services. It is a concept best illustrated by examples.

Let’s take a classic one: If you have a policy of only stopping your buses at designated bus stops and a stop is blocked by a parked car one day, the operator would modify his/her route by a short distance from the stop to deploy the ramp for a wheelchair user.

The industry has been making reasonable modifications all along, but perhaps not using the phrase. I’m sure many operators out there are already repositioning their buses away from obstacles to deploy a wheelchair ramp. The industry deserves credit for already being proactive in this regard.

PT: Obviously, not every rider’s request is “reasonable,” to cite ADA language. Please share a few examples of such accommodations.

McMillan: “Reasonable” is the key word concerning this new rule. Not every request a rider makes to a transit agency to modify a policy or practice can be granted. What is somewhat unique about this rule is that a big part of it is an appendix that provides 27 examples of requests that should be granted. It’s not an exhaustive list, but it does help define what a reasonable modification looks like.

From the examples, you should note that the intent for transit agencies is not to circumvent the existing regulatory requirements or create hazardous situations. A request from a paratransit rider to be picked up outside the agency’s three-quarter-mile paratransit service area may be declined because it would “fundamentally alter” the nature of the service. Vehicles would not need to reverse down a narrow alley upon request if it would threaten the safety of other riders.



The idea is to take a common sense approach. If a transit agency has a no-eating/drinking policy on the bus or train, it would want to modify the policy for someone having a low-sugar event due to diabetes. If there is a policy that operators do not handle fare media but a rider doesn’t have the arm strength to swipe a transit card on the farebox, the operator would assist him/her. Again, many transit employees are often already providing this assistance, but perhaps the transit industry hasn’t framed it as a “reasonable modification”—it is just what transit professionals often do in the interest of providing good customer service.

PT: Please share your thoughts about compliance among public transportation modes—especially in new light rail and streetcar systems—in terms of their construction and

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Most cost discussions concern ADA complementary paratransit ... the ultimate goal of ADA, however, is to provide accessible fixed-route systems.



McMillan attended the August 2014 opening of the Greater Cleveland RTA’s Cedar-University Rapid Station along with members of the authority’s riders’ advisory group.

Photo courtesy of FTA

functionality, how they should accommodate people with all kinds of disabilities, i.e., physical, visual, hearing, cognitive and so on.

McMillan: FTA conducts triennial reviews to examine urban transit agency performance and adherence to federal requirements and policies. Mandated by Congress in 1982, the triennial review occurs once every three years with recipients of Urbanized Area Formula Program funds. Findings provide an opportunity for FTA to provide technical assistance to ensure agencies stay in compliance with federal procedures and policies. The review examines 17 areas, including ADA compliance.

Findings from 2012-2014 triennial reviews found 440 findings of deficiency from 600 reviews. We’ve found that ADA is the second most common triennial review finding type after procurement, which had 1,065 findings over the same period.

Among the findings were deficiencies in complementary paratransit service and violations of procedures to ensure maintenance of accessible features.

PT: One challenge APTA public transit agency members have is to operationalize DOT’s reasonable modification final rule, which some say is open to interpretation. What guidance do you have for transit agencies as they move forward on this issue?

McMillan: The sense that the rule is “open to interpretation” may reflect the fact that the rule is largely to be implemented locally. The preamble clearly states that DOT “intends decisions on individual requests for modification to be addressed at the local level.” So it is up to transit agencies to determine what requests are reasonable on a case-by-case basis.

The rule requires local agencies to have a process for handling reasonable modification requests without spelling out exactly what that process must look like. In most cases, agencies are already handling reasonable modification through their existing complaint process, paratransit eligibility process, customer service, etc. That’s fine; no new separate track for reasonable modification specifically is needed. We would recommend continuing to assess the effectiveness of transit agencies’ existing mechanisms for interacting with riders.

The FTA Office of Civil Rights is hosting a series of webinars on reasonable modification. After holding the first two webinars, staff tailored our reasonable modification training program based on industry questions. (View a recorded webinar session at FTA’s “Civil Rights Training Materials” web page.) The office is also compiling a list of Q&As that we plan to make available on the same page.

A weak link in ADA continues to be the often-inaccessible pedestrian network.



I would also encourage *Passenger Transport* readers to submit any ongoing questions about reasonable modification through our “Contact Us” web tool. There is a link to the tool at the bottom of every FTA web page; just select the option “Civil Rights & Accessibility” from the drop-down menu when posing your question.

PT: The number of riders who require easy access to fixed-route transit or on-demand service is continuing to increase. What are your thoughts regarding the federal role in providing additional funding to keep pace with this specific growing demand?

McMillan: The Obama Administration has reintroduced GROW AMERICA, a six-year surface transportation reauthorization proposal that invests in modernizing our infrastructure and bringing new services to fast-growing cities. GROW AMERICA would increase investment to meet growing demand for improved transportation systems, including transit.

To that end, the GROW AMERICA bill increases commitment to transit by 76 percent over six years. Recognizing that mobility for all Americans is paramount, particularly as our population continues to grow, we are advocating long-term dedicated funding to make the investments in public transportation that the nation needs.



PT: Let’s talk about cost. Some critics say that accommodating customers with disabilities costs too much. Please share your thoughts about balancing cost to agencies and businesses with benefits for riders.

McMillan: The industry has come a long way in 25 years and recognizes that people with disabilities, who make up one of the most transit-dependent groups, are valued customers. Most cost discussions concern ADA complementary paratransit, which is a vital safety net for people who cannot take fixed-route systems due to their disability or barriers in the environment. For many, paratransit is a lifeline to jobs, health care and social opportunities.

The ultimate goal of ADA, however, is to provide accessible fixed-route systems. Fixed-route use offers cost savings for the transit provider, but also gives people with disabilities the ability to travel spontaneously, in an integrated setting, and often at a lower fare than paratransit.

I encourage the industry to review Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 163: “Strategy Guide to Enable and Promote the Use of Fixed-Route Transit by People with Disabilities” linked on FTA’s website.

The biggest challenge—and also the biggest opportunity—on the horizon is integrating transit into the fabric of the communities it serves.

The report promotes the benefits of fixed-route transportation and offers several strategies for ensuring that people with disabilities can use it.

A weak link in ADA continues to be the often-inaccessible pedestrian network. We are close to having a 100 percent accessible bus fleet nationwide, but we continue to fail when people can’t get to their bus stops because of missing curb cuts, inaccessible pedestrian crossings and other environmental barriers. Sec. Foxx’s Mayors’ Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets recognizes the

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importance of including the needs of people with mobility issues in the Complete Streets initiative.

And locally, it’s important for transit agencies to work with their local public works department and other city departments that control public rights-of-way to try to get these stops and connections accessible. That would go a long way toward reducing reliance on paratransit.



PT: You’re a strong advocate of the National Center for Mobility Management and its role in advancing health, economic vitality and self-sufficiency for all. Please share your views about the connections among ADA, access to public transportation and the broader concept of mobility management.

McMillan: The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) facilitates the adoption of transportation strategies and mobility options that advance health, economic vitality and self-sufficiency. The concept of mobility management is integral to meeting the transportation needs of people with disabilities, older adults and people with limited incomes who are often underserved and depend upon public transportation.

Ensuring that transportation services are accessible and meet the requirements of ADA is part of a robust mobility management program. Mobility managers help meet the transportation needs of residents, partly by filling gaps with solutions that emphasize coordination and collaboration. A strong mobility management program drives greater access to services such as health appointments, education programs and jobs.

FTA’s new Rides to Wellness initiative is centered around the importance of access to public transportation for health and wellness. FTA convened a summit last March to examine these issues and FTA and the NCMM recently announced 16 grant awards to develop solutions to address patient challenges in accessing primary and preventive care, dialysis treatment, behavioral health and post-hospitalization appointments.

PT: As ADA approaches its 25th anniversary, the industry can mark this important occasion by tracking some important milestones. What’s ahead for the public transportation industry related to accessibility?

McMillan: The biggest challenge—and also the biggest opportunity—on the horizon related to accessibility is integrating transit into the fabric of the communities it serves. By this, I mean addressing the often-missing link in the ability of transit riders—with and without disabilities—to actually complete their trips: the lack of an accessible pedestrian infrastructure to connect the transit system with the places people want to go.

As I mentioned previously, too often bus stops are located on inaccessible stretches of sidewalk where curb ramps have not yet been installed, or on the grassy shoulder of a suburban road where no sidewalks exist. Except for station-area planning in conjunction with a New Starts project, transit is often overlooked in community planning activities. This is where initiatives such as Complete Streets provide an opportunity for transit systems to partner with community planners, road and highway departments and others to become a more integrated part of the community they serve.

PT: Thank you, Acting Administrator McMillan.

Editor’s Note: This Q&A includes photos of McMillan speaking at recent APTA conferences.



Upward Mobility Marking ADA's Legacy

*Six experts share their thoughts about
ADA's purpose and promise.*



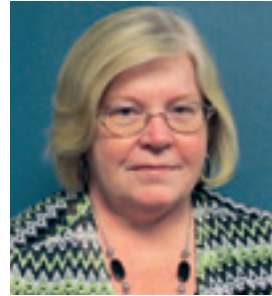
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Member, Access Committee



Crystal Lyons
President/CEO
Crystal Fortune Lyons, LLC
Corpus Christi, TX
Member, Mobility
Management Committee



Ron L. Brooks
Manager of Accessible Transit
Services
Valley Metro
Phoenix
Vice Chair, Access Committee

What is your personal connection to the principles of ADA as it impacts public transportation?

McNamee: As a person with a disability, I use and have benefited from ADA transportation daily.

Skiver: My career in transit was largely focused in the delivery of paratransit service and premium services for older adults and people with disabilities. I have always understood the importance of reliable services for those who cannot access fixed-routes services by immersing myself in the community and instituting programs that increase access and transportation options.

It is important to understand that the key principle in ADA is to provide "equal access" and that includes improving access to fixed-route modes for all customers.

Barker: My connection to ADA dates to its passage when I was engaged in the process of developing guidelines and procedures for the law's implementation. Before passage of the law, I was involved with Project ACTION, which formed before ADA was adopted, as a place for the public transportation and disability communities to come together to address the multi-faceted issues of transportation for people with disabilities.

This was at a time when public transit professionals were concerned about declining ridership and here we had a group of people fighting to get on transit. Yet, at the beginning, we ended up at odds, often in a contentious way, when we could have been incredibly strong allies. While tremendous progress has been made, we need to fully advance and build the strongest relationships possible between the transit industry and the disability communities for the good of everyone.

"While tremendous progress has been made, we need to fully advance and build the strongest relationships possible between the transit industry and the disability communities."

— J. Barry Barker

Hitch: My career in transit started 20 years ago. A couple of years into my career I became responsible for a paratransit reservations call center. As I delved into my responsibilities, I kept coming across references to ADA. I asked the question "Who is our expert?" and was handed a copy of our Paratransit Plan that had been approved by FTA. Our CEO around that time was [the late] Raymond C. Miller, who is well known throughout the transit industry. He had a philosophy of "you touch it, you own it." I have gladly "owned" ADA ever since.

It not only became a part of my job at Delaware Transit/DART, it has become my passion.

Lyons: As the mother of a young adult son who uses a wheelchair for mobility, I see first hand many of the positive impacts ADA has had on public transportation. Independence and mobility are key to quality of life for any person, with or without a disability.

Brooks: At Valley Metro, I am responsible for working with other staff and contractors to ensure that our programs and services are accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. I also directly oversee our ADA paratransit system, several other alternative transportation programs we have for people with disabilities as well as paratransit eligibility, travel training and our federally mandated reduced fare program. I also have a disability and depend on public transit for my own mobility.

I have spent almost 25 years in the accessible transit field, and I am passionate about the critical role that transit plays in the lives of people with disabilities. Simply put, we cannot live independently and with dignity unless we have viable and accessible transportation services we can use to connect with work, school, recreation, places of worship and other places within the communities where we live.

MARKING ADA'S LEGACY CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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AND GIVES THE
PASSENGER A
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MARKING ADA'S LEGACY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Please share your view of ADA as an influencer of change across the industry. How has ADA improved the public transit experience for all riders?

McNamee: Technologically, tremendous advances in the past 25 years have helped public transit providers manage their systems more cost-effectively.

Customer service has also been positively impacted and continues to evolve as systems' management recognize that while the ADA passenger may not be a "choice" rider, they must be treated with the same level of customer service as the "able-bodied" population.

Increasingly, people with disabilities are seeking greater freedom, choice, mobility, independence and spontaneity in their daily lives, represented in the public transit world by their desire to be able to use all of a system's modes, not just paratransit.

Consequently, marketing efforts are also becoming more targeted to reach out to passengers of different abilities to encourage their ability to use all modes offered. A great example is travel training. Often a joint collaboration between operations and marketing, travel training helps ensure that passengers of varying abilities, who have the wish to do so, can successfully navigate a multimodal system.

Skiver: ADA has raised awareness for both users and service providers on the attributes needed to develop and deliver public transit to people with disabilities. It has also created a regulatory responsibility to ensure these practices are protected and continued even in uncertain economic times.

Barker: I think ADA has influenced us to be a more considerate, caring and customer-oriented service. ADA was a key factor in shifting the focus from just running buses to also serving customers.

Changes in bus design features were required or prompted by ADA and benefited all of us. We shifted away from high floor buses to eliminate the need for a lift and discovered we could reduce boarding times by not requiring everyone to climb three steps, which was the norm for decades. With accessible public transportation, we enabled new generations of people with disabilities to access what life has to offer.

"The industry needs to work together to find the balance between cost and benefit to society."

— Crystal Lyons

Hitch: I believe ADA is causing the transit industry to rethink how we provide fixed-route and paratransit services. Using low floor buses with ramps ensures easy access by wheelchair on fixed route, but also provides easy access for the aging population.

By making sidewalks accessible, we encourage pedestrian activity and help to provide connectivity between neighborhoods. Curb cuts are not only essential for individuals using wheelchairs, they are

convenient for individuals using shopping carts or parents pushing strollers. By making services for people with disabilities accessible, there is greater access for everyone. Accessibility and connectivity lead to a higher quality of life for everyone.

Brooks: Prior to ADA, most transit agencies did not provide accessible fixed-route transit service, and paratransit systems were very limited. These services were often limited by capacity, and they often did not operate in the same areas or at the same times as other public transit services operated. As a result, people with disabilities could not count on them at all.

ADA changed all that by requiring equal access for people with disabilities to the same service—in the same areas, at the same times and without capacity constraints. True accessibility has come more slowly, but the mere fact that transportation is as much a right for me as for any other transit user has helped to level the playing field. I can pursue school or work or civic participation in the same way as any other transit user. It's not perfect, but it's a vast improvement over what existed before.

How has ADA helped fuel the concept of "mobility management" in the industry?

McNamee: ADA literally opened the doors of public buses to people with disabilities. However, gaining access to public transportation proved to be only the first step as it gave the disability community legal access to opportunities long afforded to nondisabled Americans: education, employment, shopping, recreation and medical care. ADA soon gave rise to the broader understanding that access to health and human service trips were and continue to be vitally important to many consumers who require service to receive healthcare.

Conversely, health and human service providers recognized the health of a community improved as access to their programs and services increased. As the ADA's ridership base evolved, public and private transportation entities, funders and health and human service providers acknowledged the need for improved coordination of services, funding and vehicles. As our population ages—with a tsunami of baby boom seniors coming like a high-speed train—the necessity for health and human service trips is garnering fresh attention. FTA's Rides to Wellness, spearheaded by Acting Administrator Therese McMillan, is evidence of a growing concern how the U.S. will be able to meet the necessity for the transportation component of health and human service programs.

Skiver: ADA was always intended to be the catalyst for inclusion, not on a secondary system like paratransit, but to provide services and environments where all riders could access service equally. We all understand that there are ADA-qualified riders who could never use traditional fixed-route services, but many can and would if the same convenience, access and usage factors were present for people with disabilities as there are for people without disabilities.

Mobility management has become the next stage of the ADA by connecting the most appropriate ride between the customer and the destination. It has taken a system largely developed using paratransit and expanded transportation options for both riders and providers.

"ADA is civil rights legislation, period. It is not an 'unfunded mandate' as many naysayers would have us believe."

— Donna McNamee

MARKING ADA'S LEGACY CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

THE RIDER'S VOICE

I'm Able to Do Things

"I didn't know 20 years ago that I was part of an administration with AC Transit that paratransit got started. I didn't know when I helped get on board that I would be one of the first people to use it. And I know if it had not been for paratransit, I would just be a paralyzed person stuck at home. But along with paratransit and using it, I'm able to just be not independent, but I'm able to go and do things that I would like to do, that normally I would be stuck at home doing nothing."






— Robert Kearney
COURTESY OF AC TRANSIT



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gateway to opportunities

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-  Go about life feeling: "I can do this!"



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MARKING ADA'S LEGACY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Barker: “Mobility management” is about focusing on the needs of customers instead of just a specific mode of transportation. As a solution, paratransit is an expensive proposition. Through partnerships, it is possible to facilitate other, more cost-effective solutions while providing better service.

As an example, we provide nonprofit agencies with vehicle maintenance assistance to help them afford to provide transportation services. By sharing one of our areas of expertise, we have enhanced their ability to continue to provide hands-on mobility to customers in a more cost-effective way. People are becoming more and more interested in autonomous self-driving vehicles. The impact on paratransit demand and operations will be interesting to watch.

Hitch: Coordinating transportation efforts plays a significant role in providing transportation in a time when budgets remain static even though demand increases. In Delaware, we have begun to coordinate with nonprofits and senior centers to assist in transporting their own clients. These trips occur during peak times so seats become available on our paratransit vehicles for needed ADA trips.

As greater emphasis is given to healthcare issues, it will become more important than ever to focus on coordinating transportation efforts to ensure all demand is met and people with disabilities receive the healthcare services they need.

Lyons: Even after over two decades of accessible public transportation, one of the greatest barriers identified by people with disabilities is the lack of affordable, available and accessible transportation.

Mobility management is about moving people instead of vehicles and can be a great tool for filling gaps and getting people where they need to go when they need to get there.

Brooks: At its core, ADA represents a powerful argument for integration. For example, ADA did not mandate paratransit for people with disabilities to the exclusion of any other service. First and foremost, ADA required transit agencies to do all within their power to make their fixed-route systems accessible and then to provide paratransit to fill in those gaps created either by a particular person's disabilities or by the fixed-route system's inability to provide accessibility in a given instance.

As a result, my first transit industry job was not running paratransit. Rather, it was working on the San Francisco BART's ADA Key Station Plan, whose sole purpose was to ensure that BART rail service was accessible to the extent possible. Nowadays, ADA's intent to integrate is not the only force moving us toward active mobility management. The rising cost of paratransit service, coupled with the growing demand for these services, is forcing us all to look for new ways to do more with less. One of the strengths of mobility management is its focus on looking for the most cost-effective alternatives for accomplishing a particular task.

Early critics of ADA said it would prove too costly to implement and enforce, yet the benefits to riders are significant. How would you answer those critics today?

McNamee: Actually, those critics remain today, and I am thankful ADA passed Congress when it did. It's doubtful in the current negative environment in the U.S. Congress and state legislatures that legislation even remotely similar to ADA could be passed.

It would be an uphill battle to say the least and, of course, we would use all the examples and stats we could muster, including the fact that services for people with disabilities also benefit the growing number of aging baby boomers who will comprise 20 percent of the U.S. population by 2030, according to AARP. That's significant. The reality is there's a cost to everything, including ignoring the fundamental problem that exists—something many legislators do not even consider!

Skiver: The provision of ADA service is costly. It continues to be a controversial topic for advocates, transit providers and community leaders. It has taken the industry

many years to embrace the spirit of the law and to move forward with not just delivering to the letter of the law, but to innovate beyond the law. We have made huge strides with the help of the disability community and transit providers who are willing to work together to create better access and services.

Barker: A continuing across-the-board issue with public transportation, not just ADA, is that the benefits derived from public transportation do not show up on our ledgers. The costs certainly do but the benefits do not. We provide folks with access to jobs, school, medical needs and fun. We provide them with transportation to access what they need to not only succeed, but to thrive. We transform people from tax users to taxpayers. We facilitate success.

Hitch: Some things do not have a price tag ... the self-esteem a person with a disability now has because he or she goes to work and help support his or her family; the improvement in the health of the person with a disability who is now receiving much-needed healthcare services; the individuals with disabilities who no longer suffer from social isolation because they are able to go shopping, to church, to a movie or out on a date.

Many individuals with disabilities are able to remain in their homes with their families rather than living out their lives in a nursing home (which, by the way, is a cost savings to taxpayers). It's all about equality and the right to have a quality of life.

“Mobility management has become the next stage of ADA by connecting the most appropriate ride between the customer and the destination.”

— Lauren Skiver

Lyons: There is no doubt ADA is costly to implement and enforce, and many public transit agencies are taking steps to manage costs. However, the demand will continue to grow for at least the next 15 years.

Accessible transportation across all modes not only benefits riders significantly but families and communities as well. The industry needs to work together to find the balance between cost and benefit to society. Accessible public transportation across all modes is a lifeline for many today and should be continually improving so that it is available when any of us may need it in the future.

Brooks: ADA paratransit is a costly service and given this fact, we all have a duty to manage those costs as best we can through smart investments in fixed-route accessibility and in business models, technologies and tools that ensure that ADA paratransit is operated as cost-effectively as possible.

However, in addition to spending our money wisely, we need to recognize that society faces other costs when we do *not* offer a truly meaningful and viable transportation system that works for all customers.

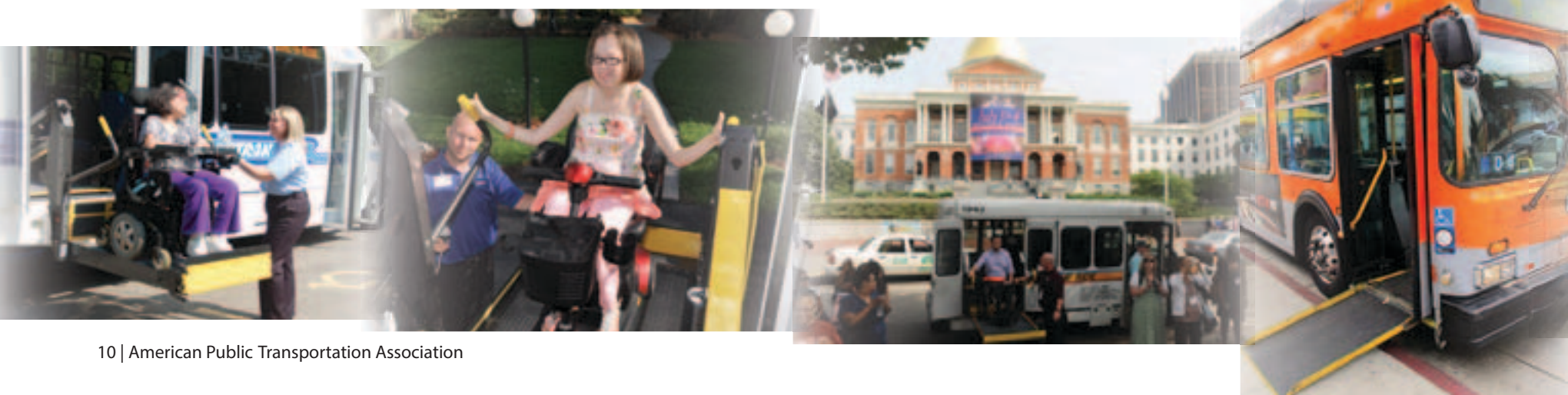
Just as in the rest of the population, the inability to move about freely means higher unemployment, higher underemployment and worse health outcomes for people with disabilities. All of these outcomes translate into societal costs, which are much higher than the cost of investing in a good transportation system.

Can you share a few thoughts about some intangible benefits of the ADA—like greater visibility for people with disabilities, a better understanding of their contributions to society, their enhanced political clout and so on?

McNamee: ADA is civil rights legislation, period. It is not an “unfunded mandate” as many naysayers would have us believe. I personally find it disheartening that in the 21st century, we are still working piecemeal to recognize and establish full civil rights for all our people.

People with disabilities want only to be able to live our lives to the best of our abilities and contribute to the world around us. While many of us have succeeded, we still have a long way to go to break down the remaining barriers to full inclusion.

ADA gave the disability community the most significant boost in terms of access to public transportation and the removal of architectural barriers. Without ADA we would still be languishing, unable to get where we need to go—work, school, church, shop, medical care and so on. Or, when we arrived at our destination, being told a restaurant would not seat us, saying that all seating is “up there” and pointing to a flight of



stairs, or in a theater, being relegated to the back row, separated from friends and families because we were deemed a “fire hazard!” The U.S. becomes a better, stronger society every time such barriers come down.

Skiver: Anyone who has not worked directly with the disability community has missed an opportunity to share a passion for helping others. So many of us take independence, work, having a family and many other things for granted. ADA has brought forth the requirement for people with disabilities to be treated as independent individuals who have a voice in their access to public places and services.

Like any group in our history who was not given equal rights, the struggles of people with disabilities have been highlighted by the law and many aspects of everyday life have been improved. Permanent change takes time and sometimes regulation to accomplish. ADA is an example where regulation lifted the voice of part of our society that has much to contribute, but needed transportation to participate equally.

Barker: We have all benefitted from ADA. Please take a trip anywhere and tell me you didn’t benefit by using the curb cuts for your roller bags.

But certainly the disability community has benefited from ADA. The process of passing ADA made most of the country understand there was a minority that was no longer going to remain silent. More progress is needed in gaining access to the job market and educational opportunities but the ability and the right to transportation is now well established.

Hitch: Because people with disabilities have more mobility due to the availability of transportation, they are now seamlessly integrating into all aspects of everyday life. They go to work, they pay taxes, they send their children off to college and they run for political office. They are passionate advocates for civil rights. They can frequently be seen in the halls (and offices) of the lawmakers, assisting in writing legislation and fighting for the rights of those who are unable to fight themselves. They have a strong voice and politicians listen.

Lyons: The four overarching goals of ADA, as stated by Congress, are to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities.

Everyone working in public transportation should be very proud of the role accessible transportation plays in providing progress towards those goals.

Brooks: ADA has erased barriers to transportation, education, employment and participation in society for millions of Americans. This means that people with disabilities are doing more and being seen more often. It means that people with disabilities have better opportunities to employment, to education, to social participation and to economic prosperity. As people with disabilities are beginning to enjoy more success within society, society’s perceptions about people with disabilities are undoubtedly changing as well, and they are changing for the better.

Another side benefit of ADA is the increasing level of diversity within society. Nowadays it is commonplace to see a person with a disability riding transit, going to work, to school or out on the town. The more our society sees these positive images,

“Accessibility and connectivity lead to a higher quality of life for everyone.”

— Bonnie Hitch

the more it will accept them and the more open it will be regarding the capabilities of people with disabilities.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 49 million people in the U.S. fall under ADA provisions. Additionally, AARP says that by 2030, one of five people in the U.S. will be 65 or older. This demographic may need reasonable accommodations to access transit as they age. What role do you think the ADA will play in responding to this rising demand?

McNamee: We are in the early stages of seeing it. On March 6, DOT released rules specifically to require transportation entities make reasonable modifications to policies, practices and procedures to avoid discrimination and ensure accessibility to individuals with disabilities. This rule became effective July 13, and one thing is certain: It will impact every transit provider in the nation.

I well understand transit systems’ concern, if not downright fear, of potential costs to an already expensive service, especially in an environment where the industry is challenged to convince Congress to pass long-term reauthorization legislation and the uncertainties this creates in a system’s day-to-day and long-term management.

However, as a person with a significant disability who daily depends upon safe, reliable and affordable public transportation to live my life as self-sufficiently as possible, it’s frightening that my lifeline—public transportation—to a relatively normal life has become so politically charged. I am concerned that failure to take care of and fund the nation’s infrastructure, an issue once considered by the majority of Congress a fundamental, nonpartisan issue, could so negatively impact my basic civil rights.

It’s not so much that ADA legislation will play a role in the rising demand. Rather, it’s that public transportation advocates who represent people with disabilities, seniors and low income populations—all of whom could be protected by ADA—will soon realize it’s time to get back to our roots and fight for public transportation as if our lives depend upon it, because they do!

The reality is this: Inasmuch as ADA has helped the disability and senior communities the past 25 years, we need more advocacy to re-educate the public and a new breed of legislators at the federal, state and local levels about the benefits of public transportation from a human perspective and the costly impact on society of not funding the essential infrastructure necessary.

Skiver: Though we are not ready for the silver tsunami, we are better off today than 20 years ago. Transit understands that we must develop more flexible options to accommodate the demand that is to follow our aging demographic.

The question is where funding will come from. These are very uncertain times for public transit with delays in authorizations and real questions about the investments already made. ADA is the foundation of requirements for accommodation of people with disabilities; it does not address, however, the transportation options needed for older adults who may not have disabilities. Many transit agencies are already seeking to institute innovative programs that are geared to older adults, but time is slipping away to institute robust programs to meet the increases we face in older adult mobility needs.

Barker: ADA has already played a role in highlighting awareness that the world should not be designed for a narrowing brand of people deemed to be physically and mentally nondisabled. ADA has provided us with the beginning of a blueprint on universal design.

Accessible design should be mainstream design. ADA has provided us with the tools, methodologies and practices needed to create an environment that accommodates all of us. It may not be perfect, but the blueprint is there. Pick it up and use it.

Hitch: People are living longer and many are working longer. They are staying active longer. However, sooner or later, the aging population will reach a point of no longer driving, either by choice or due to declining health. As individuals age they do not always recognize that they might have a disability. We receive applications for ADA complementary paratransit for individuals age 80-plus that do not really provide

MARKING ADA’S LEGACY CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

THE RIDER’S VOICE

I’ve Found it Greatly Helpful

“I’m a paratransit rider, and ADA has had a definite impact. Since I lost my vision and a good part of my hearing I wasn’t able to use the regular transportation, and taxi fares are a little bit expensive for low-income people. And I’ve found it greatly helpful getting to medical appointments, other classes and other things.”

— Don Queen
COURTESY OF AC TRANSIT



MARKING ADA'S LEGACY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

information that would qualify them for paratransit by the strictest standards.

I think we will need to look beyond what is in writing and recognize that as someone ages, they can become frail. It's no longer safe for them to be on the roads driving and it is a time in their life when they probably need healthcare services more than ever and need transit to access those services.

Lyons: "Aging in place" for many adults now means remaining in the workforce many more years than planned due to loss of retirement funds. The baby boom generation is a very mobile generation that will be creating greater demands on public transportation.

The transit industry can expect to experience a major shift in rider needs and demands much like the airlines and airports are now experiencing.

Brooks: ADA has forced transit agencies and other public and private entities to recognize the critical responsibility we share for building a more accessible and accommodating environment.

This increased level of accessibility is benefiting people with disabilities, but it

"A top goal for the future will be to develop alternatives to meet the changing needs of people with disabilities."

— Ron Brooks

is also benefiting present and future seniors, both because the accommodations that benefit people with disabilities are often the ones that benefit seniors, and by virtue of the fact that we are all gaining a great deal more experience in recognizing that we all have unique needs and frailties, and we need each other and society to provide accessibility and accommodations so we can thrive regardless of the challenges any one of us may face.

ADA has promoted and supported a great deal of change in the industry. What's left to do in the short term and what's a top goal for the future?

McNamee: In the near term, the industry needs critical funding to bring systems into a state of good repair, without which we cannot effectively move forward.

The most far-reaching long-term goal is "universal design," often called "human-centered design," which is the design of

places, things, information communication and policy to be usable by the widest range of people in the widest range of situations. From cradle to grave, all people would be able to access the same things, without special accommodations or modi-

fications. With ADA's call to remove architectural barriers, one can see the successful results daily: the young mother with babies and children in tow who opts for automatic doors and larger restrooms to care for her young, and seniors who use ramps and elevators because they can no longer climb stairs, just to name a few.

Additional universal design concepts spark the imagination. Applied to transit systems, housing, buildings and so forth, it would positively impact the daily experience of people living with a variety of abilities. I'm often asked what it will take to get there. I point to the "first step" from the World Health Organization toward a new international classification system which, like ADA itself, emphasizes functional status over medical diagnoses. The new system is not just about people with traditionally acknowledged disabilities diagnostically categorized, but all people.

Universal design may not become universal in our lifetime, but I believe it will occur and positively impact everyone.

Skiver: Sometimes we forget what we accomplished and why. It is important to reflect on what ADA represents and why it was instituted. I have seen some repeat failures by our industry to fund and deliver ADA services.

To move forward, we cannot lose ground. I stand by the need for options for riders and I do believe in the mobility management principle, though I also think it is a complex project to put in place. Traditional paratransit service—which typically must be reserved the night before, offers no flexibility and is overburdened—does not meet

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Grand Designs

OEMs, Suppliers Transforming ADA 'Accommodations' to a 'Way of Life'

BY CHUCK McCUTCHEON

When public transportation industry manufacturers, suppliers, engineers and architects first learned about ADA, the response was, "What's this involve for me?" Over time, though, that approach has become "What's this involve for everyone?"

Bus, rail and other vehicle makers, along with station designers and companies making seats, wheelchair restraints and electronic notification technologies, say increased thinking about—and collaboration with—other entities about how to meet the needs of riders with disabilities has helped them meet the requirements of the landmark law (while striving to exceed them) and prompted innovations that have strengthened the public transit experience for all riders.

"The natural reflex as manufacturers was to try to understand what [ADA] means to you as a manufacturer," said Andre Thibault, head of vehicle platform design for the Americas for Bombardier Transportation in Quebec. "Now, it's become more about what it means as a whole transit system. There's more effort to coordinate what is done on the vehicles ... instead of just saying, 'Here's the requirement for the vehicles and somebody else does it.' There's more collaboration and better integration of the rolling stock with its environment."

Rick Simonetta, former APTA chair and CEO of five major public transit systems, agreed that thinking comprehensively and collaboratively about the needs of riders with disabilities has become "a way of life now" for manufacturers and others involved in the industry.

"I just think our whole mindset has changed," said Simonetta, now senior manager for The Burns Group construction and engineering firm in Powell, OH. "We don't really look at what to do separately to serve people who have disabilities. It's sort of now incorporated into the thinking of buying buses, of incorporating light rail—it's matter of fact. I don't know that the disabled community has asked for anything that we haven't been able to deliver."

Perhaps the most noticeable change in public transit since ADA became law has been the explosion in technologies that can assist passengers with disabilities. RouteMatch Software of Atlanta, founded in 2000, has developed software, hardware and a wireless platform that transit agencies can adapt for their operations.

That includes technologies to determine rider eligibility, tracking vehicles and clients and notification tools to let friends or relatives of passengers know when they arrive at a destination.

Daisy Wall, RouteMatch's vice president for marketing, said such technologies are an important part of ensuring that people with disabilities receive the same level of support as other passengers.

"Really, the core intent of ADA is for Americans with disabilities to have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in mainstream American life," Wall said. "That really forces technology companies to look at the rider. And not to say, 'Oh, this rider has a disability, so you need a special van just for that rider.' For some people that may work very well, but within the whole spectrum, others will say, 'I don't want to be confined to that. I want to travel with dignity. I want to board a fixed-route bus the same way my neighbor would.'"

Wall said her company is getting an opportunity to use its technologies in a comprehensive fashion in Toronto at this summer's Pan Am Games and Parapan Am Games, a multisport event held every four years. With many people with disabilities expected to attend the Parapan Am Games in particular, she said, her company has worked with York Transit to schedule and coordinate transportation for spectators that includes establishing a special call center.

"They can report on what events are the most popular and where the trips are originating from," she said. "It's an example of how our technology can be used beyond typical paratransit."

Another technology company, Clever Devices Ltd., of Woodbury, N.Y., got its start in transportation because of ADA. The company had started by providing digital audio systems for amusement parks but saw that MTA Long Island Bus was drawing complaints from visually-impaired riders for not making audio stop announcements. Clever Devices responded by developing computers to automatically transmit route, destination and stop information to riders through recordings of a natural voice and on an electronic screen for the hearing impaired.

The system has since been deployed on more than 25,000 transit buses in the U.S. and Canada. And it has led to a close relationship with the Long Island Council for

the Blind that Francis "Buddy" Coleman, Clever Devices' executive vice president, said has remained in place.

"It has been a great partnership for the last 25 years," said Coleman, who received an award from the council in 2013 for his company's contributions.

Within the last decade, the firm also has responded to ADA by unveiling an automatic vehicle monitor that can track use of wheelchair lifts.

"It used to be what was happening was that [public transit] agencies would do preventive maintenance based on the mileage schedule—every 3,000 or 5,000 or 10,000 miles," Coleman said. "But a bus could be running a route with a lot of hospitals and nursing homes and be running those ramps more often. So this subsystem will allow them to do preventive maintenance based on duty cycles."

Seat manufacturers also have been heavily involved in innovating to better meet the needs of passengers with disabilities. 4ONE, a joint venture between USSC Group and Freedman Seating Company, recently unveiled a newly

redesigned version of its Q'POD securement system for buses based on requests for an adjustable shoulder belt.

"I just think our whole mindset has changed. We don't really look at what to do separately."

— Rick Simonetta, senior manager, The Burns Group

MANUFACTURERS' INNOVATIONS CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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MANUFACTURERS' INNOVATIONS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

The redesigned Q'POD has a height-adjustable shoulder belt and seatbelt sliding mechanisms that give wheelchair occupants three inches of up-and-down movement. The goal is to provide more flexibility to passengers of different heights, as well as users of different types of wheelchairs.

"We never accept our current product as the best alternative; we're always trying to innovate something new," said Raymond Melleady, managing director/North America for USSC Group in Exton, PA. "To do that, you have to be in touch with the folks who use our products ... You talk to drivers, you talk to mechanics, you talk to road supervisors and customers who ride the system, to risk management and safety people and get a cross-pollination of ideas."

Q'Straint in Fort Lauderdale, FL, also helped develop the Q'POD. It recently brought to market another innovation developed in response to talks with groups representing the disabled community and others: Quantum, an automatic rear-facing wheelchair securement station. It cuts the securement process from as long as six minutes to less than 30 seconds and does not require the driver to leave his or her seat.

Another development will be the increased attention paid to level boarding interiors so passengers do not have to climb steps and those in wheelchairs can board easily.

Patrick Girardin, Q'Straint's director of products and marketing, said the rear-facing concept is popular throughout Europe and Canada but is a new concept in the U.S. "It's something the U.S. has to get used to," he said.

But, he said, based on discussions with disability advocacy groups, the company is confident it will be accepted. Girardin added that he's been impressed with the extent to which companies and public transit systems are reaching out to such groups.

"Now it's integrated into what they do," he said. "I don't get so much of, 'Uh ... we've got to worry about this wheelchair passenger?'"

American Seating Co. of Grand Rapids, MI, developed the Advanced Restraint Module (ARM)—a patented securement system for wheelchairs—in the mid-1990s in response to ADA requirements. More recently, it came up with the Reliant, an ADA-compliant, three-point mobility aid securement system.

David McLaughlin, the company's vice president and sales manager, said one challenge for seat designers and manufacturers going forward will be to ensure that their products don't occupy too much space. "As aids and systems to secure passengers get more elaborate, it starts to chew up aisle width," McLaughlin said.

Vehicle manufacturers face similar challenges, particularly as they anticipate greater public transit use in the future. New Flyer, one of North America's leading manufacturers of heavy-duty buses, tried to keep in mind how much maneuvering

Share of Trips Compared with Cost

HOW DO DEMAND-RESPONSE vehicles compare with other modes in terms of percent of overall service provided and cost, given that the size and capacity of vehicles vary substantially?

APTA's 2014 *Transportation Fact Book* offers some insight: Demand-response services account for 2 percent of passenger trips, buses account for 51 percent and rail and other modes provide 47 percent of all trips.

As for operating cost, the demand-response mode uses 12 percent of overall public transit operating expenditures, bus service uses 50 percent and rail and other modes 38 percent.

See the data at www.apta.com/resources and search on 2014 fact book.

room was inside its buses before introducing its Xcelsior model in 2008. "Quite honestly, we found it very, very challenging," said Paul Smith, New Flyer's executive vice president for sales and marketing.

But, he said, the demand was there. "So we continuously tweaked the structure and found opportunities to open 'throats' of the front entrances so people could much more easily manipulate a wheelchair," he said, adding that people with disabilities—and other passengers—want as smooth a boarding as possible. "We were very cognizant of that." More open entrances make buses more accessible for everyone.

Another manufacturer, ARBOC Specialty Vehicles of Middlebury, IN, sees an extremely bright future in low floor buses. The company moved into low floor, small cutaway buses after noticing that, even as large public transit systems were going to that option, no one was doing so for smaller vehicles, said Don Roberts, president.

That eventually meant developing a system that could move wheelchair users into the front as well as the backs of buses.

"What we wanted to do was bring this to a more equal foundation, where people could sit up front versus having to be on power lifts and coming three or four feet off the ground and being scared to death, and so that instead they could enter at their own speed and do it themselves," Roberts said.

ARBOC has been working on a number of new products, including a larger low floor bus with no steps over the rear axle as well as a rural transit bus. "We invented this market, so we might as well as try and expand it," Roberts said.

Bombardier's Thibault predicted that the proliferation of low floor vehicles will make more of a public transit line's individual buses and railcars available to passengers with disabilities. That, combined with advances in technology, will spur companies to design vehicles that notify through audio recordings as well as with visual signage the particular cars that are available while also providing operators with a better way to ensure that all passengers are riding comfortably and safely.

"I can imagine quite easily you'll have visual and audio communication, not necessarily two-way but at least one-way, so that the respondent can see what is the actual need of the passenger," he said, regardless of the person's ability.

Another future development will be the increased attention paid to level boarding interiors with station platforms so passengers do not have to climb steps and those in wheelchairs can board quickly and easily. A 2011 DOT rule requires full-length level boarding platforms in new and substantially reconstructed commuter rail and Amtrak stations.

"One of the things we have been grappling with when incorporating recommended practices into bus rapid transit is: How do you achieve level boarding, particularly for bus rapid transit that can behave like rail when it has its own dedicated running way, and in areas outside of the dedicated running way where it operates like a fixed-route transit service? How do you design services around that?" said Cliff Henke, assistant vice president and senior analyst at Parsons

Many in the industry agreed that if Congress can pass a comprehensive multiyear surface transportation bill, that will greatly help in planning ADA-related endeavors.

THE RIDER'S VOICE

I Have Ridden Transit My Whole Life

“I'm the chair of the Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee for AC Transit. And ADA means a lot to me personally and to the community I live in, and it's really important to me that everyone, regardless of their ability or disability, is able to have the ideal ride that they need to get to work, school, to buy their groceries, to get to the doctor's office. I have ridden transit my whole life. When ADA went into effect . . . people like myself who were disabled and who were previously unable to ride the bus now had much closer to equal footing.”

— **Scott Blanks**
COURTESY OF AC TRANSIT

MANUFACTURERS' INNOVATIONS CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



MANUFACTURERS' INNOVATIONS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Brinckerhoff in Los Angeles. "It's really kind of a work in progress."

An additional challenge for public transit is that high-level platforms can create a physical conflict with wide-load freight movements in areas where freight and passenger rail operate over the same right-of-way, said Edward La Guardia, chief engineer for rail and transit at Michael Baker Inc. in Philadelphia.

"You wind up with a lot of interest for level boarding based on ADA regulations," La Guardia said. "When you have that interest and you don't own the right-of-way, it sure is more enticing for the freights that own the right-of-way to have you out of the way when they come through."

La Guardia's firm has been studying the issue as it seeks to design and construct a new rail station in Coatesville, PA, west of Philadelphia. "The need and interest in this is definitely acute," he said. "It's very heightened, and the shared-corridor environment is very extensive, and so we're trying to come up with a solution acceptable to

both environments."

Many in the industry agreed that if Congress eventually can pass a comprehensive multiyear surface transportation bill, that will greatly help in planning ADA-related endeavors.

"One of the challenges over here has been on the month-to-month extension of our authorization legislation for years that has taken its toll in the R&D area," Henke said. "Properties and private companies alike can't arrange budgets, and it's been difficult for them to plan advanced technologies if they also are challenged by budgets that could be interrupted. That's the biggest challenge, whether it's level boarding or a variety of other technologies."

Chuck McCutcheon is a Washington, DC-based freelance journalist who specializes in transportation, among other topics.

MARKING ADA'S LEGACY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

all the needs of people with disabilities. What's more, it's not cost-effective for transit providers. We have clear examples of what people want in the transportation network—companies that have successfully transitioned the taxi marketplace—and some of the same attributes can be incorporated into transit.

Barker: The disability community and the public transportation industry need to continue the development of a sense of trust. We need to become allies and not adversaries. ADA is about civil rights. It provides us with a standard to which we can aspire, as with all civil rights legislation. As civil rights legislation, the ADA also provides a guide for making our culture stronger—stronger by building on diversity, not ignoring it.

Hitch: It is essential that the short-term focus be on sidewalks, curb cuts and bus stop accessibility. Across the nation, most fixed-route bus fleets have achieved accessibility. But to a person with a disability, when pathways are not accessible, the system is not accessible.

More and more people with disabilities are looking for transportation beyond paratransit that can offer flexibility and is more affordable. Transit agencies will be challenged to think beyond fixed-route and paratransit. A top goal for the future will be to develop alternatives to meet the changing needs of people with disabilities. Accessible transit options beyond paratransit will be a long-term need and systems being designed to meet those needs will need to be sustainable long term.

Lyons: The best way for the transit industry to understand the impacts of public transportation on people living with disabilities is to hire more people with disabilities.

Private sector and public sector organizations will benefit from the experiences of people with disabilities.

Get Involved with Accessibility

TWO APTA COMMITTEES focus on accessibility issues and ADA.

The **Access Committee** promotes successful implementation of the public transportation provisions of ADA and other related federal legislation or regulations.

The committee reviews and responds to legislative and/or regulatory issues pertaining to access and the implementation of ADA and related federal legislation; facilitates information sharing on topics of interest to the membership (such as special technical or policy-related issues); communicates to the membership through the Legislative and Executive committees; makes recommendations to improve the status of providing accessible public transportation and monitors and reports to members on the status of pending litigation involving the implementation of ADA that affects the public transit industry.

To learn more, contact Pam Boswell at pboswell@apta.com.

The **Mobility Management Committee** promotes mobility management as an industry and concept. Mobility management is a strategic approach to service coordination and customer service that relies on existing transportation resources and the creation of inter-agency partnerships to provide customized service to residents and communities.

To learn more, contact Rich Weaver at rweaver@apta.com.

Brooks: There are lots of areas where work remains to be done, and opinions on what is most urgent vary widely.

However, two areas needing a great deal of focus are these: First, we need to improve the accessibility of information—ranging from printed materials to online documents, websites and mobile phone apps. These tools are critical for anyone who wants to access the richness of the modern transportation arena and, if they are not accessible, people with disabilities will be left behind.

Second, we need to continue building an accessible infrastructure. Transit can have the best technology, the most accessible buses and the largest and richest paratransit system imaginable, but it will all be for naught if we do not build an infrastructure that allows people with disabilities to move about freely. This means accessible sidewalks and curb cuts, audible pedestrian signals, intuitively simple connections to and among transit services and neighborhoods and communities where pedestrians have the same access to the built environment as do people in single-occupancy vehicles.

Smithsonian Institution Honors ADA

ADA'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY is a truly American celebration, acknowledging a major piece of civil rights legislation with such historic significance that the Smithsonian Institution is hosting an exhibit and a series of special events in July.

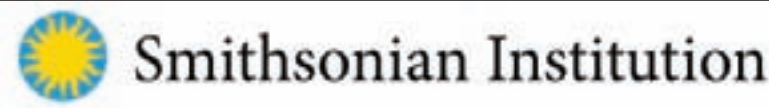
DOT is playing a major role in the museum's celebration, which debuted July 24, and has coordinated activities with APTA, Easter Seals and other transportation organizations.

The celebratory events feature the Washington, DC, arrival of the ADA 25 Legacy Bus, which has been traveling across the nation, and a wide range of activities, demonstrations, blogs, displays of artworks and film documentaries created by artists and filmmakers with disabilities.

In addition, the celebration showcases objects that exemplify ADA's importance to American life, with a particular focus on the stories of individuals whose lives were changed by the law. For example, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority contributed two vehicles to the exhibit.

APTA is participating in the special events along with other advocates and stakeholders from a wide range of businesses, organizations and government agencies.

Learn more about the Smithsonian's ADA celebration at www.si.edu.



Opening Doors

Tech, Social Media Trends Changing ADA's Landscape

BY KATHERINE LEWIS

When the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) needed new railcars, social media played an important role in gathering input from riders, including those with disabilities.

"We've hosted several Twitter townhalls or online townhalls," said BART spokeswoman Alicia Trost. "At every single event we've had, we've had at least one question about what are we doing to improve access for those with disabilities."

One disputed issue in the new railcar design: a floor-to-ceiling pole that could help those with mobility challenges stand with less risk of falling. But riders in wheelchairs expressed concern about navigating around the poles. Advocates for each side posted on Facebook and other social media, views that helped supplement the formal survey process BART used to guide its design for the new railcars.

Similarly, riders used social media to give feedback on a proposal to include armrests on seats, alert each other to upcoming board meetings and post selfies when they attended public transit events. "The conversation was taking place in the boardroom and on our cell phones," Trost said.

In the end, BART reached a compromise. The two doors on either end of the car would open to a pole for riders who need to hang on. But the middle door would include extra room for wheelchairs and no pole. "Those who are in wheelchairs can line up at the middle door. Bikes are going to the end. It was a great agreement," Trost said.

"These are the trains we'll be living with for the next four decades."

This episode is just one example of how innovations in technology are influencing the public transit experience for all riders, including people with disabilities. Whether it's feedback through social media, apps for ride planning and real-time location information, assistive technology for the visually or hearing impaired or advances in automated driving, many technologies now being piloted and tested hold the promise of providing greater accessibility in the years and decades to come.

Just a quarter-century after ADA gave riders with disabilities

the legal right to access public transit, these developments are creating and supporting a seamless web of services that the law's drafters never could have imagined.

"It's really interesting to see how much technology can contribute to individuals' independence," said Bryan Luellen, director of marketing and customer information for Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation (IndyGo). "We're in this self-service age where people are using staff less and less and interacting more with technology to get the services they need. It helps us as an agency but it's also great for customers who don't want to wait until the call center is open at 7 a.m."

Social Media Interactions

Many public transit agencies now routinely post service updates and outages on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms. But while these initiatives are vital to

reaching customers through the media they use, they cannot entirely replace printed materials, traditional phone lines and websites.

"It comes down to the question of understanding how your customers—regardless of their abilities or disabilities—want to communicate with you as the service provider and finding that channel and being fully present within that channel," said Morgan Lyons, assistant vice president, communications & community engagement, for Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART).

For instance, a Twitter handle DART created just for paratransit garnered very little interest or activity and is now dormant. The lesson? Public transit systems should aim to reach and serve *all* riders with the tools that work for them, not necessarily cover the entire landscape or create multiple special channels. The DART website offers a variety of trip planners from which passengers can choose based on their needs and preferences.

IndyGo uses social media frequently for a number of communications, Luellen said. But agency officials are cognizant that many populations among its ridership don't have smartphones or routine access to the Internet.

"Just like any kind of outreach or communication, there's no one silver bullet," he said. "It's got to be a comprehensive effort. There are definitely significant populations that don't have access. More and more, those segments are shrinking as technology is becoming cheaper and pervasive. The methods will continue to evolve."

Uber, Lyft and Paratransit

Possibly the most disruptive innovation for transportation in recent years is the advent of Uber and its competitors, like Lyft, for on-demand car service. As the cost of ADA paratransit and other demand-response transportation services continues to rise, these app-enabled companies present intriguing possibilities to public transit systems across the country.

"The mobile app they use takes control of the trip away from the dispatcher and puts it in the hands of the rider. There's a real sense of empowerment that comes with that, which I think is great," said Shelly Verrinder, executive director for Access Services, which administers paratransit services across Los Angeles County for 170,000 eligible riders.

However, for Uber, Lyft or other companies to participate in the federally funded public transit system, they must overcome several challenges. First, regulations require that paratransit drivers be trained and subject to drug testing, carry sufficient insurance and possess the infrastructure to verify riders' eligibility for paratransit rides.

Take the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District's (MTD) half-fare cab program in Illinois. Taxi drivers must verify that riders are eligible and have not gone over their \$720 annual allotment of fare subsidies, and then submit receipts for reimbursement on a monthly basis. But the service is more challenging to deliver than it might first appear. Three of the six taxicab companies have backed out of providing paratransit services. "As far as they're concerned, they don't want to deal with the challenges," said Amy Snyder, MTD customer service manager.

The agency supports Uber's recent entry to the Champaign-Urbana market because of the benefit to the many college students in the city. But Uber's service is more likely to overlap with traditional fixed-route service rather than paratransit. "These services cannot be as accommodating as our ADA drivers who are trained to care for this population, the community of people with disabilities who have special needs," Snyder said.

The training for paratransit drivers includes not only helping passengers with

The most disruptive innovation for transportation is the advent of Uber and its competitors, like Lyft, for on-demand car service.



The Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, which serves Prince William, Stafford and Spotsylvania counties and the cities of Manassas, Manassas Park and Fredericksburg outside Washington, DC, offers riders the option of listening to text on its web pages. See more at www.prtctransit.org and search on ReadSpeaker.



disabilities to their front door and navigating obstacles like snowy sidewalks, but also sensitivity training and specific instructions on making ride pickups.

Transdev North America is responding to the market pressure from Uber and other transportation network companies by introducing new options, said Ryan Larsen, president of the management firm's IntelliRide division. "We want to connect real-time with all passengers who are paratransit customers, providing them updates on where the vehicle is and when it is arriving," he said. "You can't implement the best that 1999 has to offer and expect 2015 results. ... What's hit the market from a technology standpoint is staggering. We've got to stay abreast of those things."

In Omaha, NE, IntelliRide's software package allows riders to book their paratransit trips online. In Lancaster, CA, the company has placed Android tablets in the vehicles for its dial-a-ride program, which enables the system to keep tabs on a driver's location and anticipated arrival at the next stop.

To accommodate sites where a large number of paratransit customers are picked up or dropped off—such as senior centers or dialysis units—public transit agencies can create a web portal specifically for those locations where riders can book trips. They also have the ability to reschedule easily—such as when a dialysis session lasts longer than expected, for example—or to communicate special needs such as a person with developmental disabilities who has grown accustomed to the same driver and passengers.

"When you throw in changes to that process, they need to plan in advance and be aware of that and they can coach the individuals that there are going to be a few different people on the vehicle," Larsen said.

Assistive Technologies

Public transit agencies also are experimenting with a wide array of new assistive technologies.

Assistive technology—also called adaptive technology—refers to any "product, device or equipment, whether acquired commercially, modified or customized, that is used to maintain, increase or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities," according to the U.S. Assistive Technology Act of 1998.

Common computer-related assistive technology products include screen magnifiers, large-key keyboards, alternative input devices such as touch screen displays, oversized trackballs and joysticks, speech recognition programs and text readers.

As for public transit, BART is testing a hearing loop, a copper wire that runs around a station and plugs into the public transit system's messaging system. Hearing-impaired riders can plug into the loop and receive messages on the same frequency as their hearing aid, thus blocking out background noise, said Bob Franklin, department manager of customer access. All audio announcements are duplicated by text message so both hearing- and visually-impaired riders can access them.

The agency is also testing a speaker activated by motion or Bluetooth technology to provide audio guidance when a visually-impaired passenger is entering a stairway or other area where the typical path of travel is disrupted.

"This will allow a simple set of instructions [such as] 'if this is closed, go here'," Franklin said. BART also is in the process of rolling out a new system that will beep to signal that a farecard has been accepted at the gate so visually-impaired passengers whose farecards are empty will avoid having a gate close upon them unexpectedly.

Also on the menu of possibilities: a beacon system and improved navigation to help visually-impaired passengers and those who have mobility limitations. "Sometimes you have to travel between two elevators, and if you can't walk very well, you need to know how far it is," he said. "Even though it's intended for blind people, those with mobility impairments will also be able to benefit from it."

All federally funded agencies' websites must comply with ADA accessibility guidelines that, for instance, allow visually-impaired users to zoom in or use a screen reader.

The U.S. Access Board, a federal agency that promotes equality for people with disabilities through accessible design, guidelines and standards for the built environment, is responsible for developing and updating these guidelines, which both the Department of Justice (DOJ) and DOT use. According to the Access Board's website, DOJ's ADA standards apply to all facilities except public transportation facilities, which are subject to DOT's ADA standards. Find details at www.access-board.gov.

In Ann Arbor, MI, TheRide launched a new website that includes alt-tags, text alternatives for images or objects on a web page that can be read by screen readers and other readers as an alternative to the image itself. Alt-tags ensure that a website's content is accessible to everyone, including visually-impaired riders.

"We made videos for all the common tips we have for riding the bus and [we made] MP3 files," said Don Kline, integrated marketing coordinator. "We made sure as many pages as we could worked with the JAWS screen reading program." JAWS (job access with speech) enables visually-impaired users access a computer screen through either a refreshable braille display or text-to-speech output.

In planning the website, designers consulted the Center for Independent Living, a private nonprofit organization that helps people with disabilities live independently, and held focus groups to ensure the site would be accessible. The center also tested the site after launch and suggested improvements in the alt text that TheRide was able to fix.

"We'll continue to do that because that really taps into the community," Kline said. "We've gotten a lot of good reviews from it based on the responsive design, the color palette, how fast it works and how the information is presented."

Agencies should avoid just "checking the box" and implementing by rote the accessibility guidelines ADA requires, Kline said, and instead consult people who have disabilities to make sure they're getting the information and access they need. "Experimentation can be very good. It's low-cost and helps people," he said.

IndyGo recently installed an interactive voice response system that lets riders contact the agency through an automatic system (separate from its call center) and confirm or cancel paratransit reservations. "It's helping us with operational efficiencies and decreasing the amount of calls," Luellen said. "The system will call when the vehicle is 10 minutes away, so it's almost like real time."

Autonomous Vehicles

There are few innovations more futuristic in public transportation—or more potentially transformational to people with disabilities—than self-driving cars. Jerome Lutin, retired senior director with New Jersey Transit Corporation, sees the day when they become commonplace.

"In recent years, a corner has been turned in terms of vehicle automation," Lutin said, adding that the technology is coming quickly.

As for its impact on people with disabilities, Lutin said Google is retrofitting Prius and Lexus cars with autonomous gear, testing these cars and creating a fleet of low-speed two-passenger automated vehicles.

"There's a video that Google put on the web showing a driver who is 95 percent blind behind the wheel of one of their Toyota Priuses being transported to ordinary errands: going to a fast food restaurant, getting his dry cleaning. These [cars] can be a life-changing experience for people with disabilities," he said.

"There's a huge opportunity here for the transit industry as automated vehicles become more prevalent," Lutin predicted. "Within the next decade, we're going to be able to provide several different kinds of autonomous vehicle services, not just for disabled passengers, but for everybody."

Katherine Lewis is a Washington, DC-based freelance journalist who specializes in transportation, among other topics.



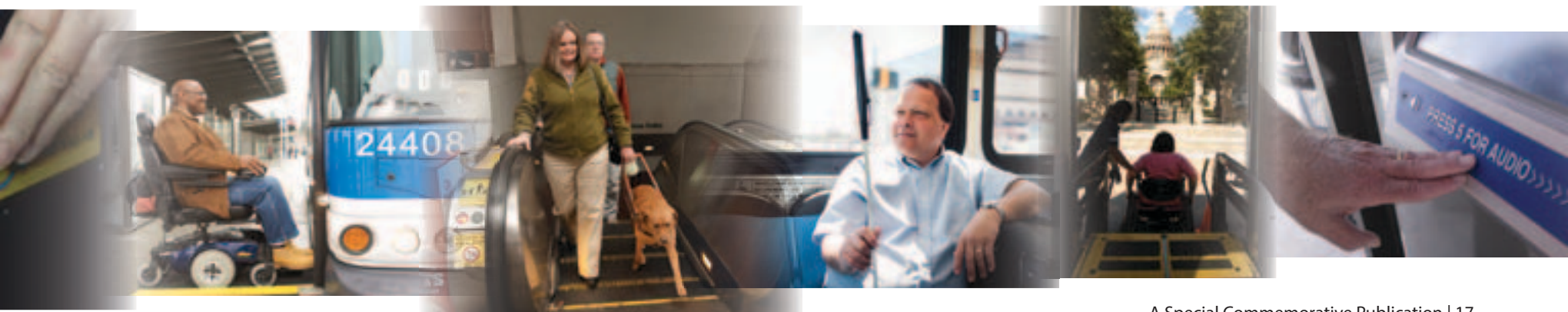
The Ride's A-Ride service page provides up-to-date information on its paratransit services. For details, go to www.theride.org and click on Accessible Services.

THE RIDER'S VOICE

I've Been Able to Go to Work

"ADA has given me the freedom to go around the Bay Area on the bus and the BART with little obstacles in my way. It's improved over the years. Now there's big, giant signs when the BART comes and the arrivals and it's much more legible, and things are much more accessible for the blind and visually impaired. And I appreciate what ADA has done for my life personally because I've been able to go to work every day because of that and also go to school."

— Letitia Tumaneng
COURTESY OF AC TRANSIT



Construction Works



Building Accessibility Into Legacy Systems

said Aaron Donovan, deputy director for external communications-railroad operations, New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, “and have committed \$561 million in the next capital plan for accessibility. We have also completed work at 21 non-key stations and have allocated \$100 million in the next plan for additional non-key stations.”

However, Donovan continued, “Given the configuration of certain stations and the age of the system, it is simply impossible or cost-prohibitive to make every station accessible. Focusing on the key stations allows us to focus precious resources on stations that will have the most impact—stations with higher ridership and/or that serve as key transfer points. As a reminder, every single one of our 5,700 buses is accessible.”

Kevin Ortiz, deputy director, MTA external communications, and director of media relations, NYC Transit, also pointed to the configuration of certain stations, as well as the age, as barriers to accessible accommodations. He cited the platform of the Wall Street Station in Lower

Manhattan as too narrow to allow room for an elevator.

The term “key station,” as defined by federal regulations, refers to the highest-impact stations in the subway system, the major transfer points where numerous lines meet. For example, the Times Square-42nd Street Station is accessible for seven of the eight lines it serves, while the adjacent 42nd Street-Port Authority Bus Terminal Station has elevators to provide full accessibility.

Ortiz emphasized that station accessibility means more than simply installing station elevators and ramps. The system is in the process of installing such equipment as handrails, large print and tactile braille signs, audio and visual information systems, accessible farecard machines and entry gates, platform edge warning strips and text telephones.

SEPTA, Philadelphia

“Throughout the years, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) has faced many challenges and implemented several initiatives to make its multimodal system more accessible,” said Joseph Casey, general manager of the authority. The system’s numerous rail lines include some track and stations that date back more than a century.

Casey said SEPTA has made more than 100 stations accessible, with work almost complete at two more transit hubs and is about to begin at four other stations.

“Successfully transforming pre-ADA infrastructure throughout SEPTA’s system into compliant, modern transit facilities requires a tremendous amount of collaboration,” he emphasized. “SEPTA works closely with municipalities and involves key stakeholders and adjacent property owners early on in the process to balance often conflicting needs.”

Casey specifically noted the role of the SEPTA Advisory Committee for Accessible Transportation (SAC), an independent, citizen-run community advisory committee of customers with disabilities and disability advocates representing individual riders and approximately 50 different disability service organizations throughout SEPTA’s five-county service area. Founded in 1973, SAC is the oldest such organization in North America. SEPTA also works with community groups and historic organizations on its preservation and accessibility efforts.

“On SEPTA’s subway/elevated system, which in part dates back to the early 1900s, the authority has limited real estate, narrow sidewalks and a complex, condensed underground infrastructure in a dense urban environment. ADA projects at older stations require extensive amounts of infrastructure upgrades and replacement, which bring the challenges of meeting current building codes,” he said. Many historic stations also remain in use throughout the authority’s regional rail system, some dating from the mid to late 1800s.

BY SUSAN BERLIN
Senior Editor

Recently built public transportation systems can incorporate accessibility into their facilities from the beginning, but what about the cities—such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago—with infrastructure dating back decades or, in some cases, more than a century?

MTA New York City Transit

The subway system operated by MTA New York City Transit (NYC Transit) has the largest footprint of any U.S. public transportation agency, with 468 stations on 22 lines. The first stations entered service in 1904, long before accessibility became an issue.

“We have 85 fully accessible stations in the subway system and are well on our way toward the mandated goal of 100 by 2020 as part of our Key Stations program,”

THE RIDER’S VOICE

I’m Not Housebound

“What paratransit means to me is, since I have mobility issues, even though you don’t [have mobility issues]—you don’t have to give up your freedom just because you have some issues getting around. But it does ensure that no matter what, I’m not housebound. I can get out. And through ADA there are all means and modes of transportation and people work very hard with us to accommodate us and make sure that we are comfortable and feel safe getting out of our homes when we otherwise could not.”

— Harriet Saunders
COURTESY OF AC TRANSIT



SEPTA uses prefabricated components in a program of accelerated rail station construction to ease the process of adding accessible features to regional rail stations. The agency's "work blitz" program coordinates station project outages with other right-of-way and infrastructure work, allowing SEPTA to complete multiple tasks simultaneously with minimal service disruptions. Historic stations that cannot be directly accommodated into the ADA design due to site or alignment constraints are renovated and repurposed, Casey noted.

The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia presented its Preservation Achievement Award to SEPTA for its improvements to the Chestnut Hill West Regional Rail Line's Allen Lane Station, built in 1885. This \$7.6 million construction project maintained the station's 19th-century character while making it fully accessible with amenities including an audio-visual public address system and ADA accessible ramps and platforms.

MBTA, Boston

In Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has to balance accessibility issues with both legacy infrastructure—its subway line, the oldest in the U.S., opened in 1897—and sensitivity in working around historic sites.

"While the vast majority of the stations within our core rapid transit network are accessible, or under design to be made accessible, the fact remains we have 65-plus commuter rail stations and street-level light rail stops that are not accessible," said Laura Brelsford, MBTA assistant general manager for system-wide accessibility.

She noted that each mode and, at times, each individual station has its own accessibility challenges, but that the primary issue facing MBTA is "identifying adequate financial resources for a steady, continuous expansion of accessibility." She continued, "At \$15 million to \$30 million per platform, installing 800-foot full-high level platforms at commuter rail stations is a significant undertaking. And while platform upgrades at street-level stops involve less infrastructure, many platforms are narrow and located along busy city streets, making accessibility upgrades impossible without lane shifting or elimination."

Brelsford spoke about MBTA's upcoming Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure, which will include community stakeholders in the process of developing a shared set of criteria for identifying accessibility priorities such as ridership, station location and other state of good repair needs at each station. MBTA also will survey all of its stations and bus stops to identify and catalogue meaningful barriers to access. "From there, we will map out our multi-year plan for achieving system-wide accessibility," she added.

Regarding the challenge of balancing historic-site preservation with modern infrastructure, she said, "The MBTA is fortunate to be located in a region where local landmark commissions and other historic preservation stakeholders recognize and support the fact that change can be necessary if it allows for improved access. As a result, we have not had to compromise on accessibility for the sake of historical

significance at any of our facilities. In fact, within the past five years, we have successfully constructed two new elevators with glass headhouses on two of Boston's most famous landmarks—the Boston Common and the Arlington Street Church."

CTA, Chicago

Brian Steele, vice president of communications and marketing at the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), concurs.

"Like legacy transit systems across the country, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) has faced a wide range of challenges and opportunities related to making our bus and rail systems accessible to customers with disabilities," Steele noted. He credited CTA leadership and support from Chicago's disability community with making "significant strides toward improving system accessibility across the city and suburbs."

"When Mayor [Rahm] Emanuel took office [in 2011], 94 out of CTA's 143 rail stations (66 percent) were accessible to people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids. At the end of his second term, 105 stations will be accessible, with several others in the process of receiving accessibility improvements," he said, adding that CTA's entire 1,800-bus fleet is fully accessible.

Steele points to "the physical constraints posed by our rail infrastructure" as the major challenge facing CTA in its accessibility efforts. "Some of the elevated system—including five of the seven rail lines serving downtown Chicago—dates back to the turn of the 19th century, while our two subways (serving our two busiest rail lines) date to the 1940s and 1950s. As such, the stations and track structures were built on limited footprints and in close proximity—in some cases just a few feet—to existing buildings and other structures. Those constraints make expansion to accommodate elevators very difficult and costly in many cases."

CTA has found ways to build in accessible elements as part of recent larger reconstruction projects, he said, noting that the rebuild of three stations on the Red Line South incorporated elevators as part of a \$425 million complete reconstruction of 10 miles of the agency's busiest rail line. Steele explained that the rail line's right-of-way sits in the median of a highway, allowing space for CTA to reconfigure platform and station space to make room for the new elevators.

As for historic preservation, Steele said, "Maintaining the historical integrity of century-old stations with the modern-day requirements of accessibility is both a challenge and an opportunity, which the CTA has faced on several recent projects."

For example, he said, CTA is preparing to overhaul the Quincy Station in the Loop, which opened in 1897 and is one of the few surviving original 'L' stations. "It received an historic renovation in the mid-1980s and, starting in 2016, will receive two elevators as part of a \$20 million accessibility-improvement project. CTA and its preservation architect, along with members of Chicago's disability community, are working closely to ensure the elevator project fits within the station footprint while maintaining as much of the historic elements and designs as possible."

More Access to Accessibility Info

FIND MORE ADA AND ACCESS-RELATED resources online at the following websites:

- www.apta.com
- www.projectaction.org/
- www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0175
- www.ada.gov/index.html
- www.adata.org
- www.trb.org

THE RIDER'S VOICE

I Am Eternally Grateful

"I'm a member of the AC Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee, and I'm also a member of the El Cerrito City Council. ADA has made a tremendous difference in my life. I do remember before ADA I wanted to go to a meeting where they were talking about ADA, and it would've cost about \$100 to get a special van that could take me there, otherwise I couldn't go. And the world has changed since then with ADA, and now I can get pretty much everywhere I want to go, and I am eternally grateful."

— Janet Abelson
COURTESY OF AC TRANSIT

New APTF Scholarship Honors ADA

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FOUNDATION

(APTF) has established a scholarship to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the passage of ADA, which will be awarded for the first time at the 2015 APTA Annual Meeting in San Francisco, Oct. 3-7.

The scholarship was established to support a student in an undergraduate or graduate academic discipline who expresses an interest in working to enhance accessible public transportation.

Current APTF Chair Huelon A. Harrison, with the input of a task force, named a steering committee of longtime industry leaders to take the lead on soliciting donations, including Shirley DeLibero, Kim Green, William Millar, Jerome Premo, Robert Prince Jr., Michael Scanlon, Beverly Scott, Paul Skoutelas, Charles Wochele, Ron Brooks and accessibility advocate Christopher Hart.

For details, go to www.aptf.org or contact Pam Boswell at pboswell@apta.com.





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ASSOCIATION