

## **Transportation and Society Committee Triennial Strategic Plan (TSP)**

**Committee Name and Number:** AME50, Accessible Transportation and Mobility

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**TSP Three-Year Period:** 2022 - 2024

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### **BACKGROUND AND OUTLOOK**

#### *Current Committee Scope*

- To study factors that limit people’s mobility, especially those with limited transport options (including people with disabilities, older adults, children, and the economically disadvantaged);
- To analyze ways in which various modes of transportation and mobility options could best meet their needs, particularly those incorporating the principles of universal and inclusive design;
- To encourage innovative and equitable techniques approaches to improve mobility across the lifespan and to evaluate the impact of mobility improvement programs; and
- To learn from and to disseminate notable practices for accessibility and mobility worldwide, with particular emphasis on the effectiveness and benefits of identified practices, and on user behavior.

#### *Guiding Principles*

Since 1995, the focus of the TRB Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility has changed significantly from that of the original Committee on Specialized Transportation. Accessibility has become a feature of mainstream public transportation as opposed to a separate specialized activity. There is increasing awareness of and commitment to incorporating access into transportation system design, pedestrian infrastructure, and the provision of transportation services.

Accessible transportation through universal and inclusive design is one of the most important areas of focus for the committee, with an emphasis on research and practice related to seamless accessible transportation for all stages of an individual’s journey: access to and from one’s home, as a pedestrian, boarding vehicles and enjoying safe transport, navigating multimodal transfer points and intermodal facilities, and making use of information systems to allow for guided or independent travel planning. Critical issues include understanding the demographic changes that impact transit investment needs; transportation services that are developing through emerging technologies; and opportunities for connected vehicles, aircraft, ferry, and rail transportation to address demands of people with limited mobility options.

The Committee’s mandate is to facilitate informed debate and provide technical leadership on research, policy, practice, and information exchange relating to the mobility needs of

individuals and groups with limited transport options. With a diverse membership, the Committee brings together specialists on people with mobility needs, sensory and cognitive disabilities, older adults, and those without private transportation.

Global trends point to an aging population in most countries. The Committee's role is particularly valuable for ensuring information is shared about strategies and policy approaches that will allow transportation services to meet a growing population of people likely to have mobility needs, and to find transportation services that are both affordable, adaptable, acceptable, and sustainable to allow older adults to participate fully and effectively in society. The Committee's international experience is useful for sharing approaches that have been successful across the globe, especially in countries where the proportional population of older adults already surpasses that in the US.

Because accessibility is central to making transportation easier and more appealing for everyone to use, the activities of the Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility touch on the activities of all transportation providers and on the provision of safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure. We co-sponsor the Paratransit Subcommittee and have collaborated with the Pedestrian Committee (ACH10), Innovative Public Transport and Technologies (AP020), and Committee on Rural, Intercity Bus, and Specialized Transportation (AP055). We see this kind of cooperation working with other committees increasing, and we see a need to develop a closer working relationship with committees that address environmental sustainability, energy supply, and livable communities.

As the committee expands its international efforts and focuses on developing areas of the world, there is also a necessity to emphasize affordable and appropriate methods and means for enhancing equity in access. Working relationships need to be strengthened with organizations that address international issues, such as the World Bank, EMBARQ, PANAMSTER, and the Institute for Transportation Development and Policy.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Committee's mission is to *facilitate education and engagement on the issues and gaps related to mobility needs for people with limited transportation options: people with mobility, sensory, and cognitive disabilities; older adults; individuals without private transportation; and populations that are economically disadvantaged.*

The Committee is dedicated to ensuring accessibility and affordability globally through the provision of accessible transportation that enables all individuals to participate fully in an active community life. Accessibility through universal and inclusive design is one of the key messages the Committee communicates to various groups involved in providing seamless, accessible transportation.

### **FACTORS AND INFLUENCES**

The committee's mission and approaches to address its goals is influenced by a number of factors:

- a) **Historic legislation.** Before the 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the US, researchers and practitioners were seeking solutions to meet the needs of people with disabilities. In 1978, many committee members participated in the first TRANSED conference, Mobility for the Elderly and Handicapped, in the United Kingdom. The ADA provided a domestic platform to assess discrimination against individuals with disabilities in transportation and provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities in transportation accommodation. Other countries have also developed laws and standards to ensure and qualify transportation accessibility. These laws, regulations, and policies represent an important set of tools in advancing accessibility in transportation investments, facilities, and service globally. Legislative accomplishments are a key objective for many of the researchers and practitioners who participate on the committee.
- b) **International policy and practice.** In places where accessible transportation is not necessarily the law, the committee supports ongoing research and practice to make accessibility improvements. A primary tool has been the series of TRANSED conferences – milestone events in the field of accessible transportation, attracting researchers, policymakers, transport operators, consumers, and other specialists from around the world to share innovations and best practices to make transportation and mobility accessible to everyone. Many countries where conferences have been hosted have seen considerable interest and investment in accessibility following the conference.
- c) **Advancements in technology.** Newer ridesharing services, automated wayfinding tools, wheelchair-accommodating vehicles, mapping platforms, and communications devices have substantially increased the variety of options available to improve accessible and mobility for older adults, people with disabilities, and other transportation-disenfranchised populations. Providing a forum for sharing these advancements in technology among researchers and practitioners and encouraging new investments in accessible technologies is at the heart of the committee's work. AME50 will continue to share technology tools, effective research techniques, and best practices for integrating accessibility features into emerging technologies.
- d) **Community advocacy.** The successful passage, and ongoing enforcement, of the Americans with Disabilities Act in the US and globally, the leadership of the United Nations in its Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has come about, in large part, due to the vocal participation of advocates for people with disabilities in not only improving visibility, but also in policymaking. Advocates for people with disabilities, older adults, and economically disenfranchised populations have been instrumental in implementing practices that improve lives. The committee embraces advocacy approaches in advancing research and fast-tracking best practices in meeting the needs of these communities.
- e) **Research on disability, gerontology, health, safety, and socialization.** As a research committee, we draw on a diverse array of transportation research efforts and endeavor to promote additional research on a wide range of topics that reflect the interests and

experiences of committee members. Although TRB offers an exhaustive menu of transportation research opportunities, research outside of the transportation industry is also important for AME50, because the lives and experiences of people with disabilities, as well as health and demographic trends have direct impacts on the work of the committee. AME50 continues to seek partnerships outside of the transportation industry to support a holistic set of practices to improve the lives of people with disabilities, older adults, and others.

- f) **Equity.** Accessibility and inclusion are important components of AME50's focus. The committee believes it is critical to integrate our work with all facets of planning and programming for transportation services and reflect all modes of transportation to ensure that people with disabilities, older adults, and economically disenfranchised populations have full access to transportation services and can fully and effectively participate in society.

## RESEARCH ISSUES

A review of the literature, and possible new research is needed in the following areas:

- a) **Improving accessibility and mobility on all transportation modes (auto, transit, aviation, rail, water transport, for pedestrians, etc.).**
- *Defining disability.* Committee members have been working to reset the public's understanding of disability to include people with chronic illnesses, low energy, sensory, etc. Because these impairments are often not apparent or visible to others, they often may be misunderstood. It is important that people with these challenges can travel with dignity and in comfort.
  - *Older adults.* The transportation needs of an aging population, and approaches for meeting these needs through sustainable approaches is required. Topics include those related to in-home assistance, delivery of goods and services, and emerging technologies.
  - *Economically disadvantaged individuals.* For many people, choice and use of transportation is determined by economic position. It is important to find ways to serve these groups adequately, especially for job access and employment training.
  - *People with physical disabilities who are unable to travel independently including those with temporary disabilities.* Tools to facilitate travel including new technologies, assistance provided by transportation providers, and policies related to personal attendants. An emphasis on youth with disabilities is critical in terms of access to school, particularly in developing countries and research on temporary supports for individuals with short-term mobility needs is needed.
  - *Connecting multi-modes of transportation to support access for all.* Advances of interconnected systems across modality types and regions creates an important research focus. For instance, the US DOT ITS4US program funds projects that promote data sharing, mobility networks, and connectivity across service types.
- a) **Universal pedestrian infrastructure.** To meet the needs of an aging population, and to provide independent mobility to persons with disabilities, a barrier-free pedestrian

environment is desirable. Additional research on ways to make the pedestrian environment accessible, safe, and convenient, as well as the inclusion of appropriate amenities is needed. This is of particular importance in relation to roundabouts/traffic circles, transfer facilities, airports, and roadways; for example, as “complete streets” are established in developed and developing countries, there are sometimes conflicting needs of people with various types of disabilities.

- b) **Sharing of practices and policies; reciprocity.** Innovation is critical, and successful approaches in one community may also be replicated elsewhere. Identifying the key elements of good access solutions is necessary in relation to how to transfer strategies to other areas, countries, and continents – and particularly developing countries. Likewise, opportunities exist for coordination among communities/states/nations to participate in programs that afford reciprocal recognition of transit accessibility certification or accessible parking badges, and to make information about coordinated efforts/reciprocity widely available. Other tools include international human rights policies and declarations, which may also be further considered.
- c) **Education for existing and future professionals in transportation and urban planning.** Understanding promising and notable practices and recommended approaches for educating students and practitioners on transportation for people with disabilities and older adults and promoting this area of study has been an important concern of this Committee.
- d) **Resiliency.** Climate change, natural disasters, and acts of war disproportionately impact vulnerable populations worldwide, especially for economically disadvantaged communities and people with disabilities. Approaches to mitigate and/or prepare for disasters, respond to a disaster that occurs, and recover from them in ways that serve people with disabilities and individuals without transportation options is critical.
- e) **Emerging mobility solutions.** Emerging mobility approaches appear to offer greater flexibility and more options for the public. However, the impacts on people with disabilities or people without access to certain types of technologies suggest these new modes may not be universally accessible after all. It is important to research approaches to ensure ride-hailing services, autonomous vehicles, on-demand transit services and other modes are accessible and easy to use for all potential user markets. Ongoing research must demonstrate the role of Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS), advanced fare payment systems, boarding and alighting technologies, crowd-sourced accessibility information, and self-driving vehicles.
- f) **Understanding demographic trends.** Societies are changing globally as populations age. Population research allows for planning and forecasting and quantifying the economic and social benefits of enabling people with disabilities and other disadvantaged people to lead independent and economically active lives. It is important to examine the common aspects of land use developments and transportation systems that provide independent mobility for older adults and people with disabilities and that are environmentally sustainable. Topics include problems and solutions in modal accessibility, challenges and solutions in multi-modal networks and service delivery, poverty traps in accessible transportation, and limitations of inclusive transportation.

- g) **The role of information and public participation.** Information and navigation tools in appropriate formats are necessary to provide travel guidance for people with different abilities to access information. Ensuring the accessibility of information about transportation is accessible is important, as is ensuring that people with disabilities, older adults, and economically disadvantaged individuals have opportunities to fully participate in the transportation planning process and the development of the information tools. Understanding notable practices for soliciting feedback and sharing information is a topic that is becoming increasingly important.
- h) **Global practices.** Through international participation in TRB and US activities, the Committee intends to identify international examples of promising practice for wider dissemination. In particular, the Committee continues to support the triennial TRANSED conferences as the principal showcase of accessible transportation worldwide.

## **GOALS**

The Committee on Accessible Transportation and Mobility has organized strategies supporting the scope of work around the following goals:

- a) To foster and contribute to the development of emerging accessible transportation technologies and innovative practices internationally.
- b) To encourage diverse partnerships across TRB and external professional organizations, strengthening TRB's activities in accessible transportation and mobility.
- c) To advance professional knowledge and the application of good practice worldwide in the fields of accessible transportation and mobility.
- d) To build a diverse committee membership.

## **STRATEGIES**

Strategies were developed with input from more than 100 members and friends of AME50 via an interactive workshop discussion at the 2021 TRB Annual Meeting. They were refined by committee leaders and are described below.

### *2022-2025 Activities*

The following activities will be carried out over the next three years:

- a) Propose at least one TCRP Synthesis Topic per year and at least one TCRP/ACRP/NCHRP Research Statement per year.
- b) Support the development of a special issue on disability topics for TRR.
- c) Continue Committee and Subcommittee meetings and sponsor at least two sessions at Annual Meetings. Sponsor at least one joint session at Annual Meetings in collaboration with other committees.
- d) Encourage members to serve on TCRP, NCHRP, and ACHRP Research Panels. The committee co-chairs should nominate at least one member to serve on a panel as desired by TCRP.
- e) Publish research papers in Transportation Research Records.
- f) Continue to maintain the website at [www.trbaccessmobility.org](http://www.trbaccessmobility.org).
- g) Designate our members to serve as liaisons to other committees

- h) Set up a Teams (or other) environment where we can share information more easily
- i) Take time at scheduled meetings to allow for informal discussions and information sharing.
- j) Conduct an annual mid-year meeting, either virtually or in person. If in-person, in coordination with other TRB committees, and with the consideration of the hybrid option, as an equitable way to deliver our messages and encourage involvement in the committee's activities in the long-term.
- k) Convene at least one annual webinar on a topic of interest to help keep the TRB community informed of accessibility issues.
- l) Lead or co-lead at least one workshop at the TRB Annual Meeting.
- m) Conduct a survey every three years to survey members and friends to solicit ideas on Committee-building.
- n) Continue to administer the William Bell Award in recognition of members with significant contribution in the field.
- o) Lead the planning of a Conference on Mobility and Transportation for Older Adults and People with Disabilities (TRANSED) every three years.

### *Awareness*

In addition to the specific activities listed above, a key focus on the committee is to raise the awareness of accessibility for all in TRB activities.

- a) Disseminate information throughout TRB that accessibility is no longer a specialized topic, but a mainstream part of the planning, design and operation of all passenger transport services.
  - Bring awareness about difficulties in various travel modes
  - Promote dissemination of research on accessibility
  - Educate professionals on achieving inclusion in transportation
  - Promote multimodal transportation as good for people with disabilities
  - Link transportation access with other social, built, and human infrastructure to enable social inclusion
  - Ensure people with disabilities are engaged and considered in the initial developments of new technology
  - Promote Public Right-of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) adoption
- b) Participate in diversity-and inclusion-related programming and planning efforts within TRB to ensure that accessibility is considered. Suggest ways for TRB to better promote concepts of accessibility in programs, on websites, and in meeting planning.
- c) Partner with other TRB committees to take account of accessibility in their planning efforts. Increase liaison and co-operative activities with related TRB standing committees, including Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation, Equity in Transportation, Innovative Public Transportation Services and Technologies, Transportation in Developing Countries, Transportation and Public Health, Pedestrian Committee, and others to exchange ideas and information.

- d) Perform ongoing guidance on accessibility of TRB meeting facilities and information material, including accessible rooms, video conferencing facilities, sign language interpretation, travel scholarships for disabled delegates, accessible TRB web page, telecommunications devices for the Deaf (TTD), etc.
- e) Encourage members to contribute papers and presentations to journals, conferences and other meetings on accessible transportation and mobility. Encourage members to provide peer review to non-TRB journals.
- f) Provide ongoing support for the Paratransit Subcommittee
- g) Collaborate with the National Center for Mobility Management, National Aging and Disability Transportation Center, the APTA Access Committee, select state and international accessibility-focused organizations (e.g., Minnesota Council on Transportation Access, Svayam).
- h) Ensure that stakeholders as well as agency employees and NGO employees are involved in framing research topics

### *Membership*

The committee has widened its membership in the following categories, and will continue to strengthen and broaden its membership base:

- a) Professionals with disabilities: These professionals can help foster the understanding of existing mobility problems, from the user's perspective.
- b) Manufacturers and suppliers: This group can help to implement practical and practicable accessible technologies and to disseminate research results.
- c) Young professionals: Active involvement of young professionals working in the transportation field will ensure new ideas, vitality, commitment and continuity into the future.
- d) Government: Government involvement is important for funding, promoting and monitoring accessible transportation at all levels (local, regional, state/provincial, and national). It also provides resources for researchers.
- e) Diversity: Consideration to be given to attract members in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, ability, LGBTQI+ status, race, professional background, and geographical representation, both nationally and internationally.
- f) Linkage to other TRB Committees: Accessibility is a horizontal concern to many modal committees. Members drawn from committees such as transportation data, tribal transportation, non-motorized transportation, international issues, etc. enables sharing of ideas and concerted action.
- g) Linkage to other organizations: Maintain working relationships, through membership or member contacts, with development banks and specialized agencies promoting sustainable, livable cities.