

Future of Transed – some considerations

The series of International Conferences on Transport for Disabled and Older People, now known as TRANSED, has been an outstanding success in fostering awareness of the needs of disabled and older travellers, and also in sharing research and experience across the international community.

With more than a quarter of a century of Transeds behind us, and about to hold our third Transed in Asia, it may be timely to consider whether it may be improved.

There are constant threads running through the themes of the conferences over the years, but also there are changes of emphasis through both the passage of time and the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation, and also the growing number of developing countries participating in Transeds, who are now starting from the position that North America and Europe were at, in the 1970s/1980s.

Themes presented at the last two Transeds (Montreal and Hong Kong) included:

- Recognition that there are some 600 – 650 million disabled people worldwide, which will increase with a rapidly ageing population
- The emergence of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
- Increasing attention to the needs of people with sensory and cognitive impairments
- The Total Transport Chain, including information and training
- International co-operation on accessible air and maritime travel
- The economics of accessibility, particularly the cost of NOT doing so
- The economic benefits of accessible tourism and major sporting events
- The need for practical solutions, not more research
- Universal Design
- Involvement of disabled people from the start
- The imbalance between developed and developing countries
- While recent Transeds have attracted delegates from up to 50 countries, this means that some 150 countries are not represented.
- The need for solutions to be culturally relevant to the country or region
- Lack of use of the internet
- The need for benchmarking, evaluation, and access audits, to inform progress

What is noticeable is that issues raised at one Transed are not necessarily pursued at the next. There is a major opportunity to improve the continuity of the Transed series, by using the three years between more constructively.

One idea is for Transed to be thought of as a single conference, which is adjourned as it leaves one host nation for the next. And for that conference to have a rolling agenda, which continues from specific event to the next, with each conference being, in effect, a Triennial Report on Progress towards a fully accessible society.

Such an approach would in turn suggest a Permanent Standing International Transed Committee, whose role would be to maintain the momentum of the Transed series, and maintain the rolling agenda, but also to seek other ways to promulgate the results of each Transed.

Beyond the strategic organisational level, it is also important to recognise the different role that Transeds have, in contrast to the TRB Annual Meeting. The emphasis of Transed must continue to be on practical solutions rather than academic research, fully international rather than partially so, and respectful of the wide cultural and economic divisions across the world. Perhaps a Transed Charter would be useful !