



BETWEEN.....THE LINES

Winter 2005

COLORADO DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

Living Life in the Community: The Role of Transportation in Inclusion

By Alan Abeson

"Same time, same place, every day: 6:45 a.m., the 90 bus from Damascus to Shady Grove Metro. For six months, my son has been volunteering in the Health and Human Services mailroom in hopes of a permanent position. This job could enrich his life in unfathomable ways. Jay is developmentally disabled. Last week he was informed he has a full-time position. He tells a fellow rider on the way home. The next morning as he boards, everyone on the bus applauds him. I know that it takes more than a village for Jay. It takes a bus, too."(Joan Kenealy, August 1, 2004, The Washington Post)

Individuals with developmental and other disabilities should be able to live their lives as fully as possible in typical neighborhoods in usual communities. Fundamental to this belief is that with appropriate supports participation will occur, benefits will be derived, and contributions will be made as a result of the involvement of these citizens in the array of activities that occur in all communities. It is this expectation of community participation that is the driving force guiding the extensive system of human service programs provided for children and adults with developmental and other disabilities. Regardless of whether it is functional or transition skills taught by educators, job counseling or training provided by vocational rehabilitation specialists,

on-the-job training by job coaches or independent living skills from independent living centers, the goal for individuals remains the same: living life in the community!

Too often, the expectation of living in the community for people with developmental and other disabilities stresses only housing and employment. But just as is true for all other people, there is much more. To be able to fulfill civic responsibilities, serve as a volunteer, go shopping, enjoy a park, join a club, and spend time with friends are also virtues of community life. Being able to realize these and all of the other opportunities of community living is dependent on various external factors beyond the well-intentioned and thorough work and support provided by service providers and families. Among the most important is the knowledge, skills, and opportunity to use community transportation. People simply have to get where they need to go! And

without transportation, virtually all of the dedicated effort to support people with developmental and other disabilities to live in the community may be wasted. Some even say that without the availability of transportation and the training to use it, it is pointless to invest time, energy, and money in preparing people for life experiences that will forever be inaccessible.

The Need for Access

As awareness of the importance of mobility for people with developmental and other disabilities has increased, the shortage of accessible transportation in the United States has been well documented. The 2003 National Transportation Availability and Use Survey (Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2003) found that to travel outside their homes about one in four people with a disability needed help from another person and or an assistive device. Also discovered was that out of about 6 million people with disabilities, one in eight lived where public transportation was limited or nonexistent. Additionally, out of a total of 3.5 million people who never left their homes, nearly 2 million had disabilities. Five hundred and sixty thousand of these people with disabilities stated that the reason for being homebound was difficulty with transportation.

In part because of the past lack of accessible transportation, many people



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to access all else in the community. Transportation must not be an after-thought in educational and transition planning, but a basic.

Getting Familiar with Public Transportation

Unfortunately, in the minds of many, public transportation has a negative stereotype that may lead to resistance to its use by people with developmen-



tal and other disabilities, their families, and those who work with them. While generally unfounded, if such stereotypes are held by teachers, employment counselors, rehabilitation counselors, and family members, they must be suspended. The best way to do so is to actually be a passenger and become familiar with the opportunities offered. In addition to eradicating stereotypes, such familiarity will significantly enhance the delivery of travel familiarization, travel training, and all other forms of transportation education. Regardless of the discipline or agency involved in designing and/or delivering instruction regarding the use of transportation, addressing the following questions will be helpful (United We Ride, 2005):

- ❖ Do staff know how to travel across town on the community bus system?
- ❖ Can staff arrange for daily transportation to and from work for someone with a significant disability who may or may not use a mobility device?
- ❖ Do staff know what transportation services are available in the community?
- ❖ Are staff and the people they support familiar with the transportation services that operate during business and non-business hours?

Conclusion

As the nation moves steadily forward in enabling people with developmental and other disabilities to become full-fledged participants in communities everywhere, significant progress

continues to be made in increasing the availability of accessible transportation. The transportation industry has worked to reduce physical barriers on vehicles, provide driver sensitivity and customer service training, improve signage in transportation centers, increase the availability of paratransit services, and establish relationships with schools and other human service agencies to provide training and support for future passengers. Increasingly, community public works departments, working in concert with transportation providers, are identifying and eliminating barriers in the environments at and near bus stops and pedestrian intersections that hinder the use of public transportation. Taking advantage of these advances and opportunities to enable people with developmental and other disabilities to live and enjoy mobility in the community and all that comes with it is now the obligation of all those who work on behalf of these citizens.

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EACH Update



The EACH (Education and Advocacy Cash) fund has been discontinued. It has been difficult for many individuals and families to spend the money up front and then wait for reimbursement through EACH. Also, it is not cost-effective to process the reimbursement of small amounts to a number of EACH recipients each month.

In place of EACH, we are now funding nine groups who will grant scholarships to individuals. The groups will be reimbursed for the scholarships following the event or conference. The following groups currently function within the Council's Five-Year Plan as well as dovetail with our values and mission. Please contact these groups if you are interested in receiving a scholarship to attend their events:

- ❖ APSE—The Network on Employment, annual conference in September, contact Gayann Brandenburg (303) 636-5600. [Website: www.denveroptions.org](http://www.denveroptions.org)
- ❖ Inclusion Conference—annual conference on inclusive education in January, contact PEAK Parent Center, 1-800-284-0251. [Website: www.peakparent.org](http://www.peakparent.org)
- ❖ EMPOWER/CO.—group meetings statewide for families impacted by mental health issues, contact Lorri Park (303) 691-9339. [Website: www.cpc.org](http://www.cpc.org)
- ❖ Assistive Technology Conference—annual conference on assistive technology in April, contact Kathy Bodine or Julia Beems (303) 315-1280. [Website: www.uchsc.edu/atp](http://www.uchsc.edu/atp)
- ❖ ADAPT/Atlantis—Civil disobedience actions around the country regarding institutionalization and MiCASSA legislation, contact Babs Johnson (303) 733-9324. [Website: www.adapt.org](http://www.adapt.org)
- ❖ Training for Transition—ongoing training for families/students ages 14 and up, contact Lynn Robinson at Colorado Easter Seals (303) 233-1666. [Website: co.easterseals.com](http://co.easterseals.com)
- ❖ Colorado Mobility Coalition—ongoing efforts to advocate for accessible transportation and to provide materials on public transportation legislation, contact Margie Ness (303) 444-8721. [Website: www.comobility.org](http://www.comobility.org)
- ❖ El Grupo Vida—Annual conference for Spanish speaking families in October, contact El Grupo Vida 303-904-6073.
- ❖ Self-Advocacy: to be determined.

Book Review

Playing Favorites: Gifted Education and the Disruption of Community

by Mara Sapon-Shevin is a thought inducing book that forces the reader to question commonly held views on education, specifically education for students labeled as gifted and talented (GATs) or highly academically talented (HATs). Sapon-Shevin sees the existence of such classrooms as a disruption of school communities serving students who have been portrayed as underserved and over-deserving by advocates of such programs.

The existence for such programs began during the late 1950's following the successful Russian Sputnik orbit. Policymakers in the U.S. immediately began to notice the gap between the two countries, particularly in the areas of science and math. The "New Math" programs came out of this era as well as programs for students who tested a certain way on IQ tests. Much of the curriculum was to have been experiential as well as math and science based.

The stated goals of such programs by the founders of such indicate that the first purpose is to 1) maximize opportunities for self-fulfillment in areas in which the student may have a specific interest and to 2) increase society's supply of persons who will help solve problems of contemporary society by becoming producers of knowledge and art rather than mere consumers of existing information (page 184). One may ask following this revelation, "And what is regular education supposed to be doing?" There are clear egalitarian issues relative to such segregated programs that hold different standards for some students based on IQ. Sound familiar to any



readers experienced in special education?

If you think there may be parallels, you may want to visit a school with both programs and see just who is being included only in art, PE, music, and lunch, as well as who is riding the short bus or special

transportation to get to their school/ program.

Sapon-Shevin is thorough in her exploration of the many aspects of gifted education via interviews and quotes from parents, researchers, and educators themselves. Topics explored include the screening process and who gets chosen for such a program as well as the impact on the feelings of students who experience being chosen. For those of you who may have experienced being tracked in the turtles reading group rather than the galloping horses, this is a must read.

The following quote can be found in the book in a section about meritocracy. "A parent goes to an informational meeting for parents whose children have been invited to join the gifted program. The gifted teacher explains that the second-grade gifted students will be doing a special unit on birds. They will learn birdcalls, go bird watching, and learn to draw birds, study bird anatomy, and write poetry about birds. The parent asks, 'What will the regular second graders be doing?' The teacher responds, 'Oh, they will be doing worksheets on birds.'" (Page 181).

Feel free to borrow this new library addition or visit your neighborhood library for an interesting and thought-provoking read.

by Marcia Tewell

Minority Disabled and Public Transportation by Ruth Neal

People without cars and people with limited access to cars are disproportionately low-income people of color, low-income women, the elderly and disabled. Inadequate access to affordable, dependable public transportation limits their access to jobs, medical services, food stores, churches, and other basic necessities of life.

The disabled are at particular risk in securing public transportation services to meet their needs. Mobility impaired persons are frequently left to wait by the side of the road because wheelchair lifts are not in working order, or because drivers simply don't want to stop to pick them up. Blind persons are left lost and in a daze because drivers fail to announce stops. Paratransit riders are subjected to excessively long delays and trip lengths to reach their destinations.



Minority disabled are disproportionately disadvantaged due to their double minority status. The government report, Disability Among Racial and Ethnic Groups, www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR/ shows clear disparities among various racial and ethnic groups. Minorities are subjected to prejudice and discrimination based on their race when the oldest and most dilapidated, pollution-generating buses are routed through their communities, and they experience the discourtesies of transportation officials due to the devaluation of their race. The minority disabled are also subjected to prejudice and discrimination based on their disability when buses routed through their communities have inoperable or malfunctioning accessibility features and when they encounter the negative attitudes and behaviors of public transit providers due to their special needs.

According to 1991 and 1992 census data collected in its Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), African Americans and other minorities are over represented among the disabled. The rate is highest among Native Americans (21.9%), followed closely by African Americans (20%).

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Census data further revealed that the rate of severe disability is highest among African Americans (12.2%), followed by Native Americans (9.8%). Data also revealed a higher level of disability among women, with minority women, Native Americans (21.8%) and African Americans (21.7%) leading the pack.

Race and gender also place some disabled at special risk. Eddie Glenn, author of *African American Women with Disabilities: An Overview*, www.4woman.org/wwd/index.htm, notes that African American women with disabilities are victims of the impact of “triple jeopardy” syndrome: race, gender, and disability. Glenn’s research addresses the issue of the multiple jeopardy in which most African American women with disabilities find themselves, and points to the dire need for research, which focuses on the status, needs and aspirations of African American women with disabilities.

The Howard University Research and Training Center (HURTC) www.law.howard.edu/HURTC/HURTC.html is working to fill the void in research involving minorities with disabilities. The HURTC conducts research that focuses on the delivery of services to persons with disabilities representing diverse cultural populations. Sylvia Walker, Director of HURTC, points out that while racial and ethnic minorities who are disabled face the same challenges as other individuals with disabilities, they experience unique problems due to socioeconomic, health, cultural and other factors. High on that list is prejudice, discrimination, and economic barriers that continue to exclude minorities from full participation in our society. Dr. Walker notes that relatively little research has been conducted to examine ethnicity, disability and health status, income, education, geographic location, employment and marital status. In exploring the status of African Americans with Disabilities, Dr. Walker cites the following statistics:

- ❖ Of the estimated 13.4 million working-age adults with a disability, approximately 2.5 million, or 18% are African American
- ❖ Approximately 24.2% or 18 million, of the working-age population with a severe disability are African Americans
- ❖ African Americans with a severe disability account for 71.8% of all African Americans with disabilities
- ❖ African Americans account for 22% of persons with a disability who are unemployed
- ❖ African Americans are underrepresented among persons with a disability who participate in the labor force, accounting for only 12.9 % of individuals with a disability who are working
- ❖ 41% of African Americans with a disability live on or below-poverty income

Sylvia Walker, et al, *An examination of the Impact of Federally Supported Community Services and Educational Systems on Underserved People with Disabilities from Diverse Cultural Populations*. Howard University Research and Training Center for Access to Rehabilitation & Economic Opportunity (1996). In December 1999, the National Council on Disability (NCD) issued *Lift Every Voice: Modernizing Disability Policies and Programs to Serve a Diverse Nation*, www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/lift_report.html, that challenged the nation to address issues affecting people with disabilities from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. The report pointed out the continued disparity in employment and educational outcomes between people with disabilities and the non-disabled in the United States, which is a pronounced disparity for racial and ethnic minority disabled groups.



The report highlighted problems that the minority disabled groups encounter with public transportation, which contribute to these continued disparities. The primary issue that emerged from testimony that the NCD heard from minority disabled persons in compiling data for the report was that public transit personnel are unwilling to implement existing laws and policies to accommodate minority individuals with disabilities, unwilling to assure that the blind and mobility impaired have priority seating, to assure that stops are announced for the blind, and that the minority disabled receive common courtesies and are assisted with accessibility features of the buses.

The NCD made the following recommendations to address the problems faced by the minority disabled in the public transportation arena:

- ❖ U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and/or Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation of the extent to which local compliance with ADA transportation requirements is influenced by race, ethnicity, and culture.
- ❖ Congressional action to ensure that transportation civil rights enforcement agencies have adequate financial and staffing resources to maintain an adequate presence with covered transportation entities to ensure compliance.
- ❖ DOT funding for local transportation providers to furnish on-going diversity and disability awareness training for all public transportation personnel, as well as specific training on public transportation provisions of the ADA.
- ❖ DOT creation of incentives for local transportation providers to increase efforts to hire bilingual public transportation personnel in service areas with high concentrations of non-English speakers.



Some groups have not waited for government to act but have taken action on their own to force local transit agencies to level the playing field for the disabled. In Los Angeles, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sued the local Metropolitan Transit Authority. In August 2000, the ACLU announced a landmark settlement, www.aclu.org/news/2000/n081000b.html, with Los Angeles County transit officials for mobility impaired bus passengers in Los Angeles, which guarantees access for passengers who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices.

Los Angeles’ disabled transit riders are not unique. In November 2000, disabled transit riders challenged the quality and quantity of services provided in metropolitan Atlanta. The group filed an administrative complaint with the Federal Transit Administration charging the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Authority (MARTA) with discrimination against its minority disabled customers through service disparities such as overcrowded bus lines, dirty, dilapidated, pollution-generating buses, inoperable and malfunctioning accessibility features, inadequate paratransit service, and disrespect and discourtesy on the part of MARTA’s personnel in its delivery of services to minority disabled patrons.

MARTA reports that in the year 2000 12,939 disabled patrons utilized MARTA’s regular route service. MARTA serves roughly 30,000 customers who use MARTA’s regular



Disabled Gospel

Giving you a little taste Of this Disabled Gospel.

I know that common people
Look at me differently,
Knowing that it's not their fault,
It's just their stupidity
For not seeing my abilities
And just staring at my disability
Makes me feel so alone
On this struggle for equality
Oh how can this be

When I'm just trying to survive This Disabled Gospel?

As I close my eyes
To pray for the future
I wish that the young Crips
Wouldn't have to
Go the same way as me
Wondering where is the equality
As they try to make their way
In this land of sweet liberty?

If our ways were always
Black and white,
I guess everything
Would always turn out alright
And the sun would
Always shine so bright,
But the reality is
We're not living in show biz
Because if we were
The old system would start to fizz.

Please let me pray for a time
Wishing I could hit the rewind
And start this game over
Taking what I learned from books
Then turning on the real crooks
With their higher education
To help this system
With its complication

Pointing at their name tags
As if they were their gang rags
While looking at me
Like I'm a felon
Makes me want to close my eyes
And wish for a boat trip
Like Magellan
But before I start to shove off,
I open my eyes to start ripping
And fighting for my rights
To stay afloat
While I'm clinging on to my hopes
Without dangling from a rope,
I wanna get out of
This Disabled Gospel.

Can you hear my wheels rolling
As I go swiftly down the street
Knowing my face cannot show defeat
Even though my ass might
Feel redder than a beet,
Trying to be stoic
Seeming as if I could care less
While I know my best struggles
Are yet to come
I don't care where they're from,
I'll beat them all one by one
In order to overcome
This Disabled Gospel.

So many of us Crips
Wait for the first of the month
As if were the second coming of Messiah
When we get our government checks
From just sitting at home
Not worrying about getting hired,
This system lights my fire
Knowing I should shoot higher
To get my thoughts out of this rut
When I know in my gut
There is nothing going
To help me from getting cut.

I see the scars from these cuts
While there are glitches in my mind
From too many blows to the brain

I gotta stay sane
On my way to the top
Before I get popped
And lose this game
Like so many of us do
When we live
This Disabled Gospel.

Isolation must be some sick creation
That the suits created

For the Crips who can't see To the Crips like me And all in between

When we bleed in silence
Even though there isn't any violence
But the knowledge we share
Is that we are different
From the people who are out there
Driving around town
Acting like we're not even there
When they pull into the crosswalk
Without any cares,
It's no wonder
We want to stay at home
And live our Disabled Gospel.

Please have mercy on me Lord please,
Straight riding and plowing my way through
Is all I know how to do
And if I gotta become an outlaw

To get your message out And get rid of this Disabled Gospel

While paving a way
For the ones coming up behind me
Then this is how its gotta be,
I'll just rest with you
For all eternity
Knowing I overcame
The world's Disabled Gospel.

Please show me the way To survive this Disabled Gospel.

*Chris Luby is a Council member
who lives in Grand Junction*

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route service and pay the one-half senior/disabled fare. MARTA further reports that there are 2,800 paratransit-eligible customers in MARTA's servicing area. MARTA serves 600 paratransit riders per day, 78.8% of which are African American. African Americans who form the core of MARTA's regular route service as well as those utilizing MARTA's paratransit service are therefore disproportionately burdened by MARTA's noncompliance with ADA requirements for public transit providers.

Resources available to metropolitan Atlanta disabled can be accessed on the Southeast DBTAC web site, www.sedbttac.org/se_region/se_regionTemplate.cfm?st=GA. The Southeast Disability & Business Technical Assistance Center (Southeast DBTAC) provides a listing of metropolitan Atlanta collaborating groups and individuals representing the disability, business, and government entities dedicated to informing their constituents, people with disabilities, and the public about the ADA.

For a comprehensive listing of ADA resources nationally, see the Disability Rights Activist web site, www.disrights.org/dr-dis-rights.html. This site provides links to disability rights organizations, individuals and agencies across the nation.

For articles, reports, books, and other resource materials on accessible transportation, lift buses, paratransit and the debate over approaches to accessibility, see Michael Vickers, Gerald H. Parker, and David Pfeiffer "A Bibliography on Accessible Public Transportation" at www.beyond-ability.com/transbib3.html. Ruth Neal serves as Staff Attorney to the Environmental Justice Resource Center. She formerly worked with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights handling ADA and Title VI race discrimination complaints.

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Portion of the fifteen languages in which the Census Bureau ran ads in November 1999 that were Asian: 2/3

(U.S. Bureau of the Census)

Number of African languages added to the Census Bureau Language Program since 1990: 5

(U.S. Bureau of the Census) (January 2000)

Amount of money granted by the Rehabilitative Services Administration (US Department of Education) for a demonstration project on the effectiveness of a voucher model to provide transportation for people with disabilities living in rural areas: \$1,494,218 over a five-year period (2001–2006)

Number of states included in the demonstration project: 10

(Alaska, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Utah)

www.april-rural.org/docs/transreportyear3.html

Number of New Orleans bars visited in the Spring of 2005 by an undercover team investigating racial discrimination : 40

Percentage of the bars that charged black customers more than white customers: 40

(Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center)

Number of passengers with disabilities in 2004 who filed complaints against US airlines with the US Department of Transportation: 10,193

Number of these passengers who used wheelchairs: 6,727

yahoo.usatoday.com/money/biztravel/2005-11-27-disability-air-usat_x.htm?csp=N008

Average percentage of students in New York State's majority-white school districts who graduate in four years : 79

Average percentage who do so in districts where a majority of students are black or Latino: 40

(The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University)



Colorado Developmental
Disabilities Council
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