

TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES TO INCLUSIVE BUS RAPID TRANSIT

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Purpose of presentation:

“The rapid spread of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems presents an historic opportunity to create models of accessible transport for passengers with disabilities and for older passengers, often in cities with little previous experience in this field. BRT trunk line corridors and their feeder lines can enable new categories of passengers, including more women and children, to benefit from an improved level of safe, accessible, and reliable public transport. Such systems can also serve as models of good practice to encourage transit and pedestrian improvements far from BRT lines. Bus Rapid Transit systems . . . can thus help incorporate new groups of passengers into the larger movement toward sustainable and livable cities.”¹

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss issues of accessible design and operation of Bus Rapid Transit systems and remaining obstacles to efforts to further improve accessibility for persons with disabilities and other beneficiaries of universal design.

Approach and methodology

The World Bank published *Bus Rapid Transit Accessibility Guidelines*, compiled by the author, in 2007, followed up in 2010 by the author’s *Technical and operational challenges to inclusive Bus Rapid Transit: A guide for practitioners* in order to further explore some of the more troubling technical obstacles to accessible BRT service. The author is also involved in ongoing efforts by major institutions to improve BRT accessibility as new and expanded BRT construction occurs around the world. The field research and reports that went into these studies, updated with more current information, will form the basis for the presentation.

Results

The accessibility of BRT lines to persons with disabilities and seniors varies from region to region, and from city to city within regions. While, in theory, BRT features lend themselves to inclusive design, actual experience presents a more sobering picture. Many BRT systems are highly accessible, others exhibit mixed and varied accessibility and some are virtually inaccessible to wheelchair users as well as to many passengers with a range of mobility, sensory, or cognitive disabilities. The

¹ Rickert, *Technical and operational challenges to inclusive Bus Rapid Transit: A guide for practitioners*, World Bank, 2010.

causes of these concerns vary, including lack of input from the user community, lack of safe access to feeder line buses, lack of access to pedestrian infrastructure leading to BRT stations, inaccessible stairways to mid-island stations, excessive bus-to-platform gaps at stations, tradeoffs between using high-floor or low-floor buses on BRT trunk lines, and other concerns.

Solutions to these concerns also vary as practitioners around the world learn from past experience and explore a range of designs and practices to address each issue, often finding that what benefits persons with disabilities also increases comfort and convenience for all passengers.

Conclusions

The presentation will examine these issues and will discuss and prioritize solutions in terms of their enhancement of accessibility, inclusive design, and usage by passengers who especially benefit from universal design. The presentation will be designed to stimulate discussion by BRT stakeholders including the user community as well as practitioners planning and operating BRT systems.

Topic Code E: Accessible Bus Rapid Transit