Wheelchair access on transit buses and paratransit is getting more complicated every year. Service providers are faced with accommodating more passengers with an ever-increasing diversity of mobility aids. Some of the problems facing transit systems and customers are:

- Larger and less maneuverable wheelchairs
- Securement is often time consuming, physically challenging, and intrusive to passengers
- It is increasingly common for wheelchairs to be difficult to tie down because of new design features

A common problem for transit personnel is not being able to identify where to attach tie-down straps on many wheelchairs and scooters. Some transit systems and disability organizations offer wheelchair marking and/or tether strap programs for wheelchair users. The first component of these programs is markings for appropriate attachment points on customers’ chairs with color-coded tape, stickers, wire ties, or some other identifier. If there is no good place for attachment of belts or hooks, a fabric webbing “tether strap” can be installed on the mobility aid. This approach, while not as good as having proper mechanical tie-down points built in or attached to wheelchairs, serves to make “best efforts” to keep wheelchairs in the securement area, as encouraged by the ADA regulations.

In the library, a shopping mall, movie or restaurant – wherever life takes them, people with disabilities are supported in their desire to use accessible community transportation by Easter Seals Project ACTION.

Technical assistance and training events are a constant, including the People on the Move: Using All Transportation Options (ADA and Beyond), a series of train-the-trainer conferences under way through December. Now the Project is developing a basic, general travel-training course for travel trainers who are new to such instruction or otherwise interested in building or refreshing their skills.

In mid-September, the Project will convene a curriculum design board to begin shaping the course. Meanwhile, travel training is being increasingly addressed across the country. One example is the Peer Travel...
ITS Workshop Showcases Innovative Technologies

Several staff members of Easter Seals Project ACTION glimpsed a promising horizon of useful technology at a July workshop in San Francisco sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration and the American Public Transportation Association.

Talking Signs, devices that bring greater safety and access to intersections, and cell phone features to help a pedestrian find their way were among developments described, discussed and demonstrated at the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) conference which was held in a city with many ITS features already in place.

The workshop also featured representatives from Canada, Japan, Korea and Great Britain to round out an international perspective on progress and challenges in the development of technology. “Technology offers tremendous potential for improving access to transportation as well as the pedestrian environment and this is an area of great interest to us now and in the near future,” Project Director Alan Abeson said. “Developments will benefit not only people with disabilities but everyone because we are all helped by universal designs of access to our communities.”

Federal officials at the workshop included Michael Winter, director of the FTA Office of Civil Rights, who noted that the event with its futuristic topic was a particularly fitting way to celebrate the 14th anniversary of passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Editor’s Note: To learn more about Talking Signs see the Easter Seals Project ACTION publication, Talking Signs Remote Infrared Signage: A Guide for Transit Managers at www.projectaction.org.

Welcome to a “New” Update

You are looking at a new format for Update, the newsletter of Easter Seals Project ACTION. The length has been reduced from eight pages to four, with more timely news and information packed into shorter articles spanning a wider range of topics. Increased timeliness also means the newsletter will be mailed more frequently, beginning with this issue, on a bimonthly basis instead of quarterly.

Project ACTION also offers a new electronic newsletter. Titled Extra, the online newsletter is sent via email on the third Thursday of every month. Readers can subscribe to Extra at the Project’s Web site, www.projectaction.org. As always, both newsletters are available free of charge.

Access Board Updates Guidelines

The U.S. Access Board announced the release of new design guidelines that cover access for people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The guidelines detail how accessibility is to be achieved in new construction and alterations and provide specifications for various building elements and spaces, including transportation facilities. The new document updates the Board’s 1991 ADA Accessibility Guidelines.

The Board’s guidelines serve as the baseline for standards used to enforce the ADA. These standards, which are maintained by other Federal agencies, will be updated according to the new guidelines. It is these standards, not the Board’s guidelines, that the public must follow. The guidelines are online at www.access-board.gov/ada-aba.htm.
News Updates

National Center for Accessible Public Transportation Established
A new research center on accessible public transportation has been established at Oregon State University through funding from the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The National Center for Accessible Public Transportation will explore improving access to inter-city modes of travel (air, rail, and bus) for people with mobility, agility, and hearing disabilities. Research to be conducted by the Center will focus on wheelchair transfer in confined spaces, such as aircraft aisles, and a survey-based study on existing and potential access solutions. This latter study will collect feedback from travelers with and without disabilities, airline and airport employees, bus and rail operators, and vehicle and aircraft manufacturers on access solutions. For further information, visit the Center’s new Web site at http://ncat.oregonstate.edu/ or call (800) 916-0099.

Report Issued on Mobility Aid Workshop
A report from an international workshop on space requirements for wheeled mobility aids is now available. Organized by the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Universal Design with sponsorship from the United States Access Board, the workshop defined research objectives in determining space requirements for mobility aids in built environments. Workshop findings include recommendations to the Center on a project to develop a database on human measures that will take into account the types of mobility aids now in use. The report is available at www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/space%20workshop.

Wheelchairs, continued from page 1
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that people using wheelchairs be transported, whether they can be adequately secured or not. If a wheelchair cannot be successfully secured, or the vehicle’s securement equipment isn’t functioning, the passenger must still be allowed to ride. However, it is important to note that the regulations also state that wheelchair users may be denied transportation if they do not allow their chairs to be secured.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) bulletin on wheelchair securement indicates that transit providers must establish and post a written policy governing these situations. Conversely, the FTA bulletin allows transit providers to also have a policy that securement is at the option of the passenger. The transit agency must, however, provide securement assistance to any passenger who needs or requests it. In addition, wheelchair users may only be required to use occupant restraints if all other passengers are required to do so. The FTA bulletin (ADA Information Bulletin, Volume 1: Questions and Answers Concerning Common Wheelchairs and Public Transit) is available online at www.fta.dot.gov/14863_ENG _HTML.htm).

Travel Training, continued from page 1
Program provided by the Transportation Project of Easter Seals Arizona.

“Students with disabilities are paired with trainers who have similar disabilities for up to 15 hours of free instruction,” explains coordinator Donna Powers. “The trainers undergo a three- to five-hour train-the-trainer session before they begin teaching and are paid a stipend of $10 an hour.” The program is under contract with the City of Phoenix Transit Department and helps to provide independence for the student while reducing need for paratransit service, she added.

Editor’s Note: For guidance about desirable skills in the teaching of travel training, see the new Easter Seals Project ACTION publication, Competencies for the Practice of Travel Instruction and Travel Training. This free 61-page publication is available to order or download at www.projectaction.org.

ESPA Mailbox
Would you prefer to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter, rather than paper? Has your address changed? Would you like to join our mailing list? Please let us know and we will update your information accordingly.

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phone: 800-659-6428
tdd: 202-347-7385
~ Calendar of Events ~

September 18 – 22, 2004
Rail-Volution 10th Annual Conference
Building Livable Communities with Transit
Los Angeles, CA
www.railvolution.com/

September 22-24, 2004
National Organization on Disability
Conference on Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities
Arlington, VA
www.nod.org/content.cfm?id=1517

October 10-13, 2004
American Public Transportation Association
2004 Annual Meeting
Atlanta, GA
www.apta.com/conferences_calendar/annual/

October 14-16, 2004
AARP
Life @50+ National Event & Expo
Las Vegas, NV
www.aarp.org/events

October 16-18, 2004
Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)
National Conference on Rural Independent Living
Minneapolis, MN
www.april-rural.org/

October 20, 2004
American Association of People with Disabilities
Disability Mentoring Day
www.dmd-aapd.org/

October 24-27, 2004
Transportation Research Board
16th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation
Roanoke, VA
http://trb.org/calendar/event.asp?id=124

October 25-28, 2004
National Association of ADA Coordinators
Fall 2004 Conference
Miami, FL
www.jan.wvu.edu/naadac/

Do you know about MPS?
Who, what, when, where and how to register is at www.projectaction.org!