

# **WORLD INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY**

## **Ensuring Access is Everyone's Job**

### **(Transportation Professionals)**

**FEBRUARY 3, 2021**

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>> MARSHA SAXTON: Hello, welcome. I'm Marsha Saxton with the World Institute on Disability. I'm the project director for this joint project, TRACS, the Transportation Resiliency Accessibility and Climate Resilience Project. We're now 2 1/2 years into the project. We'll eventually introduce all of our speakers today, but I particularly would like to introduce at the outset our partner with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Drennen Shelton and Shimon Israel, both from the Commission. Again, welcome, everyone. Also, I want to say thanks to our captioner who is going to be providing closed captions for the hearing-impaired participants. And I think we're ready to go to our first slide. Okay. As I said, the World Institute on Disability and Metropolitan Transportation Commission have collaborated for at least 2 1/2 years on this research and information gathering project. We want to thank the California Department of Transportation, CalTrans, for their funding and their commitment to



accessibility for passengers who have disabilities. Our theme for today's workshop is ensuring access is everyone's job. And this focuses particularly on transportation professionals. Next slide.

Our agenda for today is welcome. We're doing quick introductions of our panelists as we go through. We're going to briefly review TRACS outcomes projects which will soon be posted on our website, the World Institute on Disability. We're going to discuss our workshop goals. We will briefly discuss disability basic concepts, including universal design, and today we have a panel of speakers and we will introduce when we get there. We will be very much welcoming recommendations in this session. And affirm our commitment to accessibility.

Okay. TRACS is 2 1/2-year research, policy analysis and public education initiative to improve collaboration between transportation agencies and people with disabilities in the nine-counties of the San Francisco Bay area, which include Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma. This project is funded through the sustainable communities focus of Caltrans SB1 grant program. Thank you to Caltrans for your commitment to accessibility and for sponsoring this.

We have a question. Yes, we will discuss the slides. Our achievements, again, it will be posted on our website on the World Institute on Disability, with a potential to repost on other disability agencies' websites. We have created a wonderful access -- active policy advisory board. Some of you are joining us today. We have completed our research documents and we'll continue to post new documents as we can get them on our website. We held multiple community workshops, focus groups, interviews, events over our two years. And these two workshops, this one today for transportation professionals and next week for disability community, passengers, activists and so on, advocates, are our final workshops. And we are completing this project at the end of February.

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Thanks to all of our participants today in this webinar. And to those who have participated along the way, as we mentioned, this is our final event focused for our colleagues who work at



transportation agencies. We have a few goals for today's workshop. First, we're going to focus in on a few wide-ranging concepts of disability inclusion and these concepts have broad applicability and should be meaningful to your work regardless of your job scope. Second, we have a few speakers who will talk about their experience working with and through community advisory committees, the types of working groups or councils that we're all very familiar with in our work at public agencies.

And lastly, our slogan for this workshop is "ensuring access is everyone's job." So we hope to solicit commitments from you to go beyond your regular advisory councils and make new contacts with disability organizations in your area. This will help to root the concept of accessibility in your work and will help to improve accessibility more widely in the Bay Area transportation systems.

So before we begin, I want to set the stage and I want to share something that I recently heard during the Senate confirmation hearing for the secretary of transportation post. Senator Tammy Duckworth said "accessibility must be considered at the forefront of all policy development rather than treating it like an afterthought or a box checking exercise. We really need strong leadership from you." I want us to all hear this quote from Senator Duckworth and pretend that she is speaking directly to us. So with that, I'm going to turn it back to Marsha who will kick us off with some of those disability awareness basics.

>> MARSHA SAXTON: Okay, disability awareness basics, this is a very cursory list. I'll elaborate a little bit, but we're going to keep emphasizing that part of our commitment to ensuring access is creating long-term active relationships with local disability organizations. So there's constant interchange and re-enforcement of inclusion, accessibility and so on. So this is just very brief introduction to basic concepts of disability awareness for those who may be new to this.

The first is we may have heard all our lives, don't ask, don't stare at people with disabilities. This may seem alright, but it keeps us uninformed. So our suggestion is, if you need information, respectfully ask. And if you're just curious, don't ask because it is intrusive, unless you're friends. There's much more to say about that and we'll be able to have those



dialogues. And then the fear of saying something wrong, the wrong word, is this rude and so on, is confusing and staying away out of these fears is part of the discrimination. It prevents connection and adds to the isolation. So the suggestion here is go ahead, take a risk, connect with respect, with common courtesy, connection is hugely important to moving this process forward.

Another is countering the stereotype that people with disabilities are alone, lonely, isolated, although we are during the lockdown as everyone, but for people you're going to meet out and about, transportation, in the city, you know, in ordinary life, people with disabilities have whole lives. Their disabilities are not the main focus or the hardest thing in life.

Next slide. These are some technical distinctions we make in disability awareness and disability studies. The medical model is the old-fashioned model of disability that locates the problem of disability in that individual's body. So this may seem like common sense because, well, the reason they don't have that job is they can't climb the stairs to the office building or the factory or whatever, but we contrast that old model with the social model, which locates the problems of disability in discriminatory attitudes and policies and barriers in the environment. The social model arose in the 1970s and it's such a useful perspective because it enables everyone to be able to do something about the problem rather than fixing the person's body by medical intervention, which may not be appropriate or useful, the social model encourages accessibility and awareness.

Nothing about us without us is a slogan in the disability community. It's now used worldwide, which challenges assumptions that other people know best. So people with disabilities are experts in access and accommodations and should be included in every step of planning and implementation of policy. So nothing about us without us.

And so now just to reference to the full population, people with disabilities, people with hidden or invisible disabilities, for example, people with arthritis, hearing impairment, cancer, hidden disability population is the majority of this population and are equally entitled to accommodations with wheelchair users or blind people. Now, wheelchair users and blind people have visible disabilities, and you can tell that they may need assistance of



certain kinds of accommodation, but this is also true with people with hidden or invisible disabilities. Okay.

Universal design is very interesting and important to the evolution of the disability rights community. This is the typically called the seven qualities of universal design. It's very much important, very useful in transportation. And our goal is to fully implement these components in transportation design and operation. They're pretty self-explanatory. Equitable use means everybody or pretty much everybody can use the facility, the vehicle, the resources. And all seven of these are based on extensive research, over decades, including the broadest population of people with disabilities. Do they include absolutely everyone? Hopefully eventually. Especially with new emerging technologies. But we need to keep in mind flexibility in use, means there are adjustable components to the design. Simple and intuitive just means it makes sense and it's obvious. Perceptible information may be hearing impairment, visual impairments, make it available through Braille, through captioning and so on. Tolerance for error really refers to if there's something unusual, there's an accident or emergency, and there are options, for example, alternate exits. Low physical effort refers to particularly to wheelchair users and to people with deep conditions where, you know, the ramp is not too steep, and the level entrance is accessible and easy to use. Size and space for approach and use means that there's enough space for the capacity, expected capacity of the facility or vehicle. So people can -- the hallways are appropriately wide and so on. Okay. Drennen.

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Thank you, Marsha. We hope you will keep these concepts handy and that you will consider them as you do your work. I would ask that you print them out and maybe post them upright next to your computer screens because it's these concepts that will animate the existing laws and codes that we are already following. Like the Americans with Disabilities Act. Under these codes and other laws, transportation agencies are required to practice inclusivity which we all do, all of our agencies conduct public engagement, and we have citizen advisory boards, and we take public comment. And yet even here in the most progressive Bay Area transportation agencies continue to design and



implement projects and programs that may meet the letter of the law but they're not accessible to people with disabilities.

We've all heard the angry voices and complaints at our public meetings. And I've been asked by more than a few colleagues to explain and I'm just going to be brutally honest in my phrasing here but I've been asked to explain why people with disabilities are so pissed off about our transportation systems.

These systems are all compliant with the ADA. There's nothing nefarious going on with the transportation agencies trying to keep out disabled people. But for the great majority for people with disabilities, our transportation systems simply do not work. And right now, we're experiencing this unprecedented and exciting wave of equity work. All of our agencies are looking at how to better design our systems and how to serve the underserved. And as we move forward into the future, we need to be thinking about how to ensure that our agencies are incorporating the disability community more fully and that people with disabilities play more of a role in designing our transportation services. Next slide, please.

So we have three presenters for you today. Our speakers will talk about their experience working with or through advisory boards or councils. And we're going to have a Q&A session at the completion of our three speakers. But feel free to type questions into that Q&A box as we go.

So first up we have Annette Williams. Annette is the director of the accessible services at San Francisco municipal transportation agency and she's been there since 1990. Her team is responsible for accessibility to SFMTA's fixed route systems including trolley and diesel bus, light rail, historic street cars and cable car services. Her office also manages the contract for San Francisco paratransit and she's also responsible for overseeing accessible design and review for transportation related capital projects that includes public transit, bicycle, parking, pedestrian access and the public right of way. There's basically nothing in San Francisco that Annette doesn't touch. So Annette, thanks for being with us here today. Take it away. Annette, are you with us? We know you're logged in.

>> ANNETTE WILLIAMS: Sorry. Sorry about that. I was muted. That doesn't work very well, does it? Can you see me and hear me now?



Sorry. I was talking away to -- I guess to my house. Thanks for having me. My name is Annette Williams, as Drennen said, I'm the director of accessible services at MTA. And what Drennen and Marsha asked me to do was talk a little bit about kind of my on the ground experience in working with people with disabilities and using that input to make the system better. And what we as an agency have done in that area. And I'm not saying we've always been successful, but we have a really long working relationship with people with disabilities, and I'll talk a little bit about some of the things that I think have worked well. Next slide.

As Drennen said a little bit in the introduction, we're unique somewhat as a transit agency because we have all -- almost all the transportation functions under one organization. So not only do we do fixed route and paratransit, but we also work with the bike share program and the scooter share program and we regulate taxi services and design and built the bike lanes. So it gives us no excuses in terms of how all of these things work together and how do you make sure the whole system is accessible to people with disabilities. And we're trying to push the envelope on things like looking at adaptive bicycles and adaptive scooters and looking forward, working a lot on the whole question of TNCs and Uber and Lyft and ensure that those services are accessible. Just a little bit about the public transit system, we do 700,000 trips a day. It's lower now since COVID. Hopefully we'll be coming back as we all get vaccinated. About 150,000 of those trips are for seniors and people with disabilities. And in paratransit, we have about 12200 paratransit customers and do 700,000 trips a year. Next slide.

Our advisory committees have been really important to our success. We've had a paratransit coordinating council since the late '70s. We recently celebrated our 40th anniversary. And multimodal accessibility advisory committee has been working with us since the early 1980s. And both of these committees are very active. We meet at least monthly. The paratransit coordinating council has subcommittees of the different modes of our paratransit programs. We have a taxi subcommittee which met today. We have a group van subcommittee and SF access, which is more traditional ADA service subcommittee. What I think is somewhat unique with our PCC, maybe it's true of others in the Bay Area, is that we bring a



lot of stakeholders together. Not just the customers, people with disabilities that use the service, agencies that serve people who use the service, but also the providers themselves, drivers and provider representatives. So that we can really hash and talk about things and have kind of all the players in one place. I think that's been really helpful. In terms of the multi-modal accessibility committee, that committee advises us on all the other SFMTAs services, predominantly muni but bicycle lane program, parking, other MTA services that we do. And I just wanted to mention, I think Drennen talked a little bit about so how do you go beyond your advisory committee. Some of the things that I think have been really helpful and it's sometimes been working with community organizations about a year and a half ago we had a vision zero senior disabled working group and we brought together engineers working on separated bike ways as well as customers, people with disabilities who would either use transit stops or the bike way or have to crossover the bike ways if they were parking buffered bikeways. And we sat down in groups and really looked at the nitty-gritty and how had engineers heard from people with disabilities. For people with disabilities to hear what engineers were dealing with in terms of designing these facilities. Next slide.

So some of the important factors that I thought in my career I think have -- have been illustrative in terms of this working relationship, one is that you have to build relationships and trust with people that are advising you so they trust the advice they're giving you, you're listening, that you're hearing them and I'm sure there are times when I haven't listened, or we haven't listened in the way that we should. But I think that's so important because you've got to really hear what is it that people are having challenging with, what works and what doesn't work. And then following up in terms of what changes have you made because of that input so that you get back to them and say, here are the things that we've done that address what you had brought up. And that's the part of the acting on that advice.

Another thing that I found is really important is the geometry. And I'll show you a few examples. Is you know, it comes often down to inches or, you know, angles, like Drennen had talked about earlier. And that those things are very important and who best to get information from but the people who are actually using it and being able to try it out and give you





feedback, oh, yeah, this works, this doesn't work, this works for my particular situation when I have a walker, this doesn't work well with my crutches. So that we're getting that information from people directly.

And then another thing I think is always important and I think we don't in the accessibility world always think about this is money. We have to have funding. If we don't have funding, how do we implement the things that are important to the disability community? So we need to be part of that advisory committees and staff need to be part of that decision making when funding plans are drawn up. And often we come late to that game. So I think that that's something where we need to put more attention.

And then one other thing I think is important to point out is that it's important that in the policy making arena that you have people with disabilities. Not only at the board level but at the staff level and the more that people with disabilities are integrated into the whole kind of, what, hierarchy, board, staff, executive staff, the better you're going to be getting in terms of having input. So I think we've been fortunate to have quite a few really active members of our board that were and are people with disabilities and I think that's been really important.

So I just was going to show you a few examples. Next slide, please. So I don't know how many people remember back when we first started looking at low floor buses. When we first had accessible buses they were all lift equipped. Then with the manufacturers came up with was a ramp that started at the door and went down straight from the door to the street. And in San Francisco it's not realistic to expect that every single time a wheelchair user gets on or off a bus or a person with a walker, someone else is not using the stairs or needs that, is that they're going to be getting on from a curb. Sometimes you have to get on the street. And what we found with those lifts, by testing them with those ramps, by testing them with people with disabilities and our advisory committee was that they were too steep. If that ramp had to go down into the street, two of your wheels would come up when you tried to go up that ramp. And so we worked for a long time with bus manufactures to say, really, this doesn't work for all situations. And we really need to have a longer run, meaning that the ramp itself was longer so that the slope didn't have to be as steep.



And so we got a few different things. And I think now almost all of the ramps that you see out there do not start at the door and go straight down. Either they start within the vehicle already sloping and then come out when it folds out or they're bifold like this one that you can see the example. That really came from people with disabilities trying things out and saying, this works and this doesn't work. Next -- one other thing I wanted to mention. In the paratransit world, one of the things that we've done recently in terms of testing is speed humps. Speed humps are really important to pedestrian's safety because it slows the traffic on streets. But we were very concerned about what are the impact on people with disabilities if they're in a paratransit van and have to go over that speed hump. So we tested a number of different speed humps with people in the vehicles and let them give us their feedback, what worked and what didn't. And we've come up with one that has much more gradual slope and a wider part at the top and it's made it much easier for people to go over it. And of course also you need to keep that lower speeds, like 15 miles an hour. Next slide, please.

So the next one is about securement areas. Another thing that we noticed is in the original early days almost always the securement areas were right next to each other. So that if one wheelchair user was already in a securement on one side of the vehicle, and another person came on, it was very difficult to maneuver to get into that securement area next to the individual that was already there. There just wasn't enough maneuvering room. We decided a -- and this is all based on consumer input and our advisory committee, is we need to stagger those securement areas. And not only stagger them but also make them longer. So that there is more room, not the 48 X 30 that was the minimum required but more like 55 X 30 so that there is a lot more room to be able to turn around and to back in and to have more flexibility. Next slide, please.

Another thing that one of our advisory committee members came up with is, you know, if you're an individual are who isn't sighted or is low vision, it's very difficult to see, even if it's a large bus number at the front of the bus, if you want to make a complaint or you want to provide feedback, you want to be able to get that bus number without having to ask another customer. And so one of our advisory committee members, jewel



McGinnis, came up with the idea, why don't we put the bus numbers in Braille in large raised letters, raised numbers so that if we have all of -- if we have all of our buses with that number in the same place right behind the driver, on that panel, people can find it if they want to find it on their own and not have to ask. Next slide.

And then recently we've all had to do a lot of kind of quick thinking with our response to COVID. And to the needs that feel with disability have. In San Francisco we've had to cut back some of our meeting lines to reduce to the core service so that traditionally almost every person who lives in San Francisco has a bus line within like four blocks. But with the cutbacks and service to our more core service there is much longer distances that people had to travel. And so what we did was implemented this program called the essential trip card, ETC card, which provides to any senior or person with disability a small amount, \$60 per month, in taxi value that they can use for essential trips. And the reason we were able to implement that program so quickly is all the work that people with disabilities had helped us with to implement the debit card within our paratransit program. We were able to take this program that we had done for another purpose and translate that technology and do something very quickly. And we were fortunate because we've been working on a grant with the health department to do a special program at a few of our underserved health clinics in terms of transportation barriers so we had set up a taxi program for that and we already had kind of a registration method using Google forms and we were able to just quickly translate that and use that for the ETC program and within two weeks we had something up and running and we were able to collect all of this data, like the disability of the person, what trip needs they had, what ethnic groups they come from, so that we can see, are we really meeting the needs across the city, are we meeting the needs of -- are we meeting needs in an equitable way. A lot of that was because we had done a lot of work with our advisory committee and gotten their feet back before.

Another thing I think is important -- next slide -- is, you know, is to celebrate volunteers. Most people who work on these advisory committees are available to us as staff when we call and say, what do you think about this idea, do you have any ideas. You know, they're volunteers.



They're not getting paid for this effort. And so one of our advisory committee members said, we already do an annual meeting in November and we have a big luncheon and celebrate the drivers but she said, we really need to do something that celebrates the PCC. So we started an annual luncheon and we usually go to a museum or cultural event and often get docents able to take us on an accessible tour and we have a lunch together and we get to build on those relationships in a personal way and not just always working. So this is a picture of one of our previous luncheons at the D. Young Museum. You can only tell because of the dimple building in the background. People on our PCC, not only the people with disabilities that use our service but also providers and drivers and there's a lot of relationships that have been built through that work. I just included at the end my contact information, e-mail is the best right now with working from home. So feel free if anyone has any questions that we don't get to today, feel free to contact me. And I like this picture of San Francisco. It's a picture looking down Market Street, downtown, and there's no sales force tower yet. So it's an old one. But I think it's a nice picture of our city. We're fortunate because we're a dense city and we're able to only really serving about 50 square miles, which is a lot easier than a lot of the services that many of you have in terms of meeting the needs of our dense community.

So the next slide just has a few resources for those of you who get these slides afterwards. You can gain access to our website and different areas on paratransit, on the services that we're doing during COVID, on the ETC program. There's a nice video there that shows how it works. And some of our other services. So thanks a lot for having me. I think -- I really believe a lot of our success has been because we have worked so closely with people in the disability community and seniors to hear what's important to them and, you know, and I think it was mentioned earlier because of universal design, if you design things that work well for people with disabilities and seniors, often they work better for everyone. Like the calling out stops on the vehicles with automated announcements, you know, all of us now are benefiting from that, or the overhead signs that tell you what the next stop is. There are so many means that have benefited many more people than the people with disabilities that have really advocated for them. So thanks a lot. I appreciate your time.



>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Thank you, Annette. I want to remind our participants that we are soliciting your questions in the Q&A box. But up next we have Ernest Rogers. Ernest is the chair of the Solano paratransit Coordinating Council and member of the Solano Consolidated Services Agency Advisory Committee. He has worked in a variety of initiatives and programs with youth mentorship and works with inmates at San Quentin in sponsorship training programs and assisting individuals getting ready to return home. Ernest was born with osteogenesis imperfecta and a public transit user. Ernest, take it away.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: Thank you. Thank you. Annette, you did a great job. Thank you. I'd like to thank everyone for having me here today. I'm going to take it from a different level because the reason why I became -- I'm a volunteer. The reason why I became a member of the Solano County paratransit coordinating council is because I was having transportation issues. Being disabled, number one, let me take you back. Since I've been disabled and I look way younger -- I was born in the '50s and so I was raised --

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Ernest, Ernest --

>> ERNEST ROGERS: -- people to do --

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Ernest, we're having trouble with your audio. It's just slow. Maybe if you turn your camera off and continue speaking, it may come through a little bit clearer.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: Do what now?

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: I'm suggesting maybe if you turn your camera off and continue speaking we will be able to hear you clearer. Oh. Well, I think we lost him. Okay. There he is. Good.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: Is that better?

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Yeah, let's give it a shot.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: I will cut my camera off though because you don't really need to be seeing me. Can you hear me?



>> ANNETTE WILLIAMS: So much better. Maybe it was just -- that may have taken care of it.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: Okay. What I'm saying is basically I'm going to take it from a different angle. I'm going to explain about the changes I've seen in the disability world dealing with public transportation. I was born in the south. I was raised in the south. I was raised in the '60s and '70s. I was raised in the '60s and went to college in the '70s when there was no ADA. When the idea of a person with a disability was really not even to be seen basically. Less known to be heard. But as time has gone on and as I've grown and as I've tried to do more for myself and other people with disabilities stepped up, we seem to have been able to improve the services. So I joined the Solano County Paratransit Council because of that. I got caught one night late at night around 10:00, 11:00 at night away from the house and unable to get to the house by bus. So that's basically where I come from. Now, Solano County hasn't changed much. We're a different county from San Francisco. Are you guys hearing me? Nope?

>> ANNETTE WILLIAMS: Yes, we are. We can hear you.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: You are, okay. All right. I seem to be running fast because I'm nervous. But being caught late at night, far away from home, blocks away from home, not feeling well and not able, I felt like I needed to make my voice heard so I went to a paratransit meeting I was told about on the bus. When I went I was able to make my input but be it wasn't just my input, I know that the people there really cared so they developed trust. Another thing I found out through my years of being disabled is the fact that they do want to design stuff without our consent or without any knowledge, foreknowledge, behind knowledge, any kind of knowledge about what does it take really to make -- help a person to move seamlessly throughout sorority or especially mobile issues. Now, one of the things I've learned to I can't -- I lived with all types of people and one of the people I love to work with are veterans. But the thing I find myself hurting when I talk to a veteran is I really don't understand where they come from sometimes. But I can understand -- I can feel -- I can empathize with them when they lose a limb or when they lose their ability to move about freely. Being always asked for people to help you is a burden. Number one, on you. Number two, maybe on the people that are dealing with you. So that puts a burden



on the people with disabilities to want to be able to move about, want to be able to go because sometimes you need someone to go with you because you're scared of what might happen. You might need somebody because you don't know if there's going to be a (inaudible) in the road, if there's going to be any of those means. So that's why I joined the council. We have grown quite a bit. We have changed a lot of things. We have done a lot of the things that were mentioned in the -- from -- by Annette with the disability population. Some of my suggestions were made. I made some suggestions and I saw them -- I saw them take fruit. And I saw how we changed.

Solano County is a little different than San Francisco. We got a bigger region and people are way more spread out than a lot of the areas in San Francisco. We deal with a place called Rio Vista. That's way out and they have an elderly population of people who just became a mobility challenge. Okay. So we have to work with them. And we're trying to work them into a system where we can bring them in to where the hospitals are and we have taken all their advice. We even had meetings in their town so they could come. We try to make everything as approachable or as reachable as possible. So that's the basic thing about what I do.

Another thing I found out is advocacy. People with disability needs people that advocate for them. Not only because, oh, I feel -- but, no, because I really see the need. You know, the people -- we try not to ask so much because we don't want to seem like a bunch of needy people but we do need certain things. The only way you get it is to ask. The Bible says you have not because you ask not.

So we begin to ask, we begin to let our voices be heard. And that's how come a lot of changes have been -- are being made. There's another program we have in Solano County for the elderly called Go-Go grandparent. We hook up with a group and we have them elderly person can get -- it's almost like Uber or Lyft, pick them up and take them where they got to go. Call back and let the people know they made it safely. They pick them up and do the same thing. We have initiated all kinds of stuff in Solano County to help people with disabilities. The paratransit -- I'm going to tell you the truth. I don't use paratransit only because I'm too, I guess, how I want to say it? Because with paratransit you have to set a



schedule. And me, I don't necessarily live by schedules. I do what I want to do when I want to do it. I think that's the best thing about living, is the fact that you can do the thing that you want to do when you want to do it. That's another reason why I joined the Solano County paratransit authority, is because I do appreciate the idea of being able to get to a bus stop that's not far from my house. Being able to talk to them and say, hey, look, I need a little change on the route maybe that will help a lot of people with disability. Being able to communicate that way. Makes it easier for me and for my friends who like to assist me or who like to go with me even. So those are the things that I wanted to express at this meeting, is that first of all, another thing, I would like to thank everybody because it's your input, it's your passion to go out and ask people for their input that has made this thing a whole lot better than it used to be. I remember when there wasn't a bus for a person with disability to even get on. Less to be a person of color to sit on the back of the bus. We were not even allowed a seat on the bus. But now that has changed. So these things are part of society. And as --

[Audio breaking]

Hello.

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Yes, thank you, Ernest. You went out there at the end but I think we understand what you're saying.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: I was basically saying if they have any questions about how the -- how I have seen the ADA work from 1990 until now I would be glad to help. Still need a lot of improvement but it's a lot more being done. Just ask. I'm better at answering questions than I am about giving stuff. Okay?

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Thank you. Understood. Thank you. So I do want to remind our participants about the Q&A box. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to type them in. And then our last speaker today is Susan Rotchy. Susan is the executive director of Independent Living resources of Solano and Contra Costa Counties. She is a member of various advocacy committees around the Bay Area including the Blue-Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force that's helping to guide the future of Bay Area's transportation systems as we adjust to our new reality under COVID. She's a user of public transportation and my favorite fact





about Susan is that she is a former Ms. Wheelchair California. She's a real live beauty queen. Susan, thanks for being with us today and the floor is yours.

>> SUSAN ROTCHY: I'm Susan Rotchy. My background is I was in a car accident 25 years ago. And actually to be really honest, I always thought ADA was in place until it became me, right? Go back to school. Figure it out, paratransit, took that for about two years. Had a lot of problems. Learned to be an advocate for people with disabilities. And that is how my beginnings started 25 years ago.

You know, I've seen it evolve in transportation. It has -- Ernest is right, it has improved. One of the reasons it has improved is because consumers or clients like us with disabilities make the change, right? Ernest gets on a committee. I get on a committee. There's very few people on committees on transportation that actually ride are transit to work or actually go to school. I mean, there's a lot of people that are making decisions about what we do and they don't even ride the bus. Right? So -- and I'm sure Ernest can tell you stories where we have been left behind. I personally have. And -- been left behind or waiting outside in the pouring rain for an hour for paratransit. I mean, we can talk about some stories and share and feeling like we are just second-class citizens. Yes. But we have -- we've made great strides. We absolutely have. But it takes a team to make great strides. And I'm only speaking in Solano County probably because Ernest is right, we're always on Ron and Darrel's, you know, just on their behind to make change, you know, and not accept -- it's coming, it's coming. You know. You have to be involved. And because I also am the director of the Independent Living center we have a lot of complaints about transportation. And I feel their pain because I know. I've ridden the bus. One summer when gas got so high I just refused to pay the price and I decided I was going to ride the bus every day all summer. And the first day I rode the bus I said, I'm never riding that Solano Express again because it took me three hours to get to work and it should have only taken me an hour and 15 minutes. But the lift didn't work. The bus driver didn't know how to use the lift. This was five years ago. So when consumers call, I tell them, hey, paratransit isn't that reliable, let's get you travel trained to ride the regular



bus. But some people just can't. They live out in the country. They don't have that option.

So you know, we do -- we have made great strides. And in Solano County we have a program -- as Ernest talked about, Go-Go Grandparent. We also have a rideshare program that several of the nonprofits use a wheelchair accessible van for seniors and people with disabilities. And I do sit on various committees as well as I am an advocate for, you know, all disabilities, whether it's someone that's vision impaired and at times some of my staff or my consumers that are vision impaired, you know, the simplest task could be, hey, announce the bus stop, announce the right bus stop. That doesn't take any money. Right? It just takes education and pick up and let us know what bus stop you are at. Right?

So some takes money. So you know, that's what we always fight for. But some does not. And also, you know, the other thing that really goes a long way is courteous. Drivers, education, courteous. You know? Compassion. And not telling a client or a passenger, hey, the next bus is going to come in 20 minutes or 45 minutes because my lift doesn't work and you didn't check the lift before you left. So you know, courtesy from drivers is, you know, also -- it's how you present it. You know, just like how we present ourselves.

The other thing I wanted to talk about really quick is bus schedules and also because of COVID right now, you know, feeling safe in this environment. You know, in how we get our transit users back on the bus and on BART. And that's what the task force team t blue ribbon task force team is working on right now. And hopefully that -- to reassure you guys, right now transit is taking some great precautions to get us back on the bus. Some of the bus schedules have been delayed. You know, in other words, decrease because we don't have enough transit users. So until we start getting more transit users will we get a lot of the schedules back up on track.

If you have -- I don't want to repeat a lot of the stuff that Ernest has said because we both live in the same county. In Contra Costa County I do ride the bus and I have to admit, Contra Costa County the one thing I really like



about Contra Costa County you can ride the bus until 10:00 p.m. and in Solano that doesn't happen. If you have any question, please let me know.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: We're working on it, Susan, in Solano County. We're working on it.

>> SHIMON ISRAEL: Well, I guess now is the time that we turn to the question-and-answer period. We've got these great panelists. A lot of good discussion and presentation. And we want to open it up to folks in the Q&A box.

Take a look. See if there are any questions yet.

No questions yet. Maybe as everyone is kind of getting ready with ideas, thinking about what they might want to ask. To our panelists, anything, any best practices that have not been covered yet in terms of, you know, things about committees, about being the most effective that you can be in meetings or about best practices for transit vehicle operation, anything that we have not touched on?

>> ERNEST ROGERS: I would like to say that one of the best practices that we found in Solano is the fact that we have these meetings where we involve all of the communities. We get to like a senior citizen center and then we ask the people there do they have any question or comments about public transportation or what can we do to better it. And that seems to work well. If you do it in different communities and in different locations in the communities, it seems to make, number one, it makes it -- what do I want to say? It makes the transit authority look like it's involved in the community, which it is. And it makes it look like it's more accessible, which we hope it does. And then it makes people feel more like something is going to be done, because I can say what I want to say and then later on I can see it lapping.

>> SHIMON ISRAEL: Do you think that former relationships with elected office shuts is helpful and any tips on doing so?

>> SUSAN ROTCHY: I'll answer that. I believe that --



>> ERNEST ROGERS: I would like to answer that one, too. One of the locations that we have, I have found it very helpful to contact public preachers to kind of help push my age a little bit. But not only that, it develops a relationship with public figures. And it does help. It does help. And -- they do listen because now as we begin to take more -- more to voting, more to being heard, more to being seen, it does help.

>> SHIMON ISRAEL: And Susan?

>> SUSAN ROTCHY: I think that consumers should absolutely contact their state legislator. Their assembly member, and talk to them about how they -- how we can make change because a lot of those legislators -- actually most of the legislators, all of them, do sit on various transportation committees. So when you talk to their aide, the legislative aide, they really do take your information to heart. I always talk to our consumers at our agency, we do at times help them draft a letter to the legislator. Not just also participant in capitol action day. And we go with a list of things that we need in our community and these are all people with various different disabilities. So absolutely, contact your legislator and contact, you know, whether it's your nearest Independent Living center and work with them on advocacy and then the one thing I have to admit even during this pandemic now, you're able to participate on Zoom and ask questions because, before, it was really hard to attend those meetings for some people with disabilities. And so, you know, good -- that's another good practice. So yeah.

>> ANNETTE WILLIAMS: I think another thing with policymakers is they hold the purse strings. They often -- that's where the funding comes from. The so it's important to foster those relationships, you know, one of the things that we worked on in the last few years was this whole issue of accessibility to TNCs to Uber and Lyft and the legislator had to pass a law in order to set up the access fund to force really the TNCs to include accessible services as part of their service. And there's money attached with that. And I think that, you know, without having the legislature do that it probably wouldn't be able to happen. Especially because it's regulated by the state.



>> SHIMON ISRAEL: Any creative approaches to new PCC members? Any incentives other than paying transportation costs to attend meetings?

>> ANNETTE WILLIAMS: One of the things that we do is have elections in November for -- at the annual meeting for the executive committee. So we try to get a broader group of people to come and there are different affinity groups. There are people with disabilities, people who are older adults, and then agency representatives. Then you know, I think that makes it, you know, they're representing others, not just themselves but they're representing others. And I think that that has had some help. Other thing I think is to reach out to organizations and -- we had a lot of work with the -- it's called San Francisco school district access program. And they work with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have finished high school and are now doing a lot of living skills. And a lot of the people from that group have gotten more involved in our advisory committee. And they're very, you know, very rampant transit users.

You get connected with others who might be interested. Word of mouth is sometimes the way that people -- to actually get somebody to do something new, it's usually someone has to tell them, you should try this out. Or they have an experience like Ernest mentioned that got him involved. It's often hearing from somebody else, you can have a voice here, you can make a difference, you want something to change. That's been my experience anyway that it's word of mouth that often gets people to actually act and come to meetings and to say, oh, well, maybe I want to be a member of that committee, too.

>> SHIMON ISRAEL: Okay, we have a couple more questions. One. There's been a big push to provide less park for development projects but the amount of disabled parking is still based on a percentage of overall parking. As an amputee who counts every step I wish the percentage requirement of disabled parking is looked at again. This is true even at BART stations and other locations.

>> ANNETTE WILLIAMS: Unfortunately we don't have someone here from BART. We don't have parking at our stations. In San Francisco, we don't have any parking. Unfortunately. There's street parking and we work



towards -- as the person was mentioning, the pro ag, 4% on the streets of accessible blue zones. There has been a lot of work that's gone on in terms of disabled parking and parking reform because we do believe sometimes spaces are filled up all day by somebody with a placard who, you know, then the spaces are not available to people with disabilities who may be coming for shorter periods of time and maybe that person doesn't really need it for proximity. That's frustrating for people with disabilities because often then you can't get to the front door where you're trying to go because all the blue spaces have been filled since 6:00 in the morning when people came to work.

>> SHIMON ISRAEL: Agreed, yeah. Susan, did you want to add something? I thought maybe I saw a hand.

>> SUSAN ROTCHY: We do have a lot of consumer complaints about the parking, not having enough. Since these are the Baby Boomer, they're aging. And they're having also difficulty walking. There's just not enough. And Annette is correct, we've had a lot of people complain about, you know, someone that works in the city parks there all day and then someone that needs to get to an appointment in San Francisco for a medical appointment is unable to get that parking spot because somebody has been there because they're working parking all day. Yeah.

>> ANNETTE WILLIAMS: And we had a committee, disabled advisory committee on accessible work parking a up number of years ago and there were recommendations to charge for blue zones because part of the reason, at least they found in other states, that those spaces get filled up all day is because it's free and you can leave it there for three days. And so then there isn't the turnover that's needed for disabled people who want to park for short period of time or come for a number of hours because they're parked up. And it's not just blue zone, it's all the parking spaces because you can use a placard in any space and not have to pay for parking. So there is -- there's some desire to have statewide -- at least options for cities to be able to implement that. You know, limiting the time and potentially charging and maybe then having like a low-income amount for people who are lower income. Because the reason that there was no charge in the first place had more to do with the ability to pay because the meters weren't accessible and there wasn't an accessible way to pay. And what it's



morphed into is people using it some maybe that don't need it because they like the convenience and the fact they don't have to pay. And it just takes going to a doctor and having your certified that you need it. But they found in some states where it went way down, like huge -- many more spaces were available when they started to charge for parking because all of a sudden those people who were parking there all day weren't taking advantage of that.

>> SHIMON ISRAEL: Good insight. Next question, what is a good committee make up to ensure people are trusted, respected and heard. Disabled riders are clearly important but I have found that the they often can only provide input with respect to their particular issues. Those are important but often leave the full committee without the entire situation. I found that agencies that represent people with disabilities have a more universal perspective but don't necessarily speak from personal experiences. How do we get the balance right?

Susan, do you want to take this one?

>> SUSAN ROTCHY: So I think that, first of all, we need to start placing people with disabilities in leadership roles, right? That's the first thing. And also -- or putting some really doing a survey and getting some people that are transit rider, low income, a senior on a committee, because I do sit on a panel, several panels, and like I said, I'm sure Ernest and I are the only transit users, right? And they all have an opinion of what to say. But never been left behind or discriminated against because, hey, we have 40 able-bodied passengers on the bus, there will be another bus for you. Right? So we need to get people with disabilities in leadership roles, sitting on those committees or doing some breakout workshops or, hey, let's -- if you're having an in-person meeting, get there by public transit and let's see how your work has really been done. Okay. I'm going to get off my soap box.

>> ERNEST ROGERS: I like what Susan said. She's right. She and I have been on the only two in the room, but really? The thing is if they're in a leadership role, one of the things you have to find out about people is you've got to find people that are empathetic, who look at other things, just



not only from their side but from other people's side. I know we have a young lady on one of our committees, she's disabled, rides the chair and she only looked at it from her side. I be trying to tell her a lot of things we can't change because we don't have that right or we don't have that kind of change. But we can ask, you know, be sympathetic with them. And I think that's the biggest thing. You have to have people on the panel that's even - - that can empathize and see from other people's perspectives and also surveys. Surveys do good because a person can be six feet in a wheelchair and a person that's four feet in a wheelchair, there's a difference right there. You know. So it just has to be -- got to be a medium ground. You have to have someone that can empathize and understand how to go between those two grounds. A leadership role would help.

>> ANNETTE WILLIAMS: I think that people who work together for a period of time with different disabilities, they become aware of the issues that their fellow users are dealing with. I think also like just the citizens -- with have a citizens advisory committee that is made up of all different types of people and having people with disabilities on that committee as well to be speaking from that voice, because I think there's not enough cross pollination and often people who are not disabled really don't understand the challenges that people with disabilities face in using public transportation. And they needed indicating. And that's why like you were saying, having policymakers and those in executive positions to have disabilities, then they're in the room when those things are brought up and they can bring up their personal experience or what they've learned from their work. But I do think that people who work for a period of time become aware of other people with disabilities and their needs as well. And not just their own. Like you were saying, the empathy and the understanding and even just, you know, knowing the things that are important to, say, a person who is blind or a person who is deaf, you learn it from hearing from those people directly.

>> SHIMON ISRAEL: Very good. Empathy is good for sure. We do have just one comment. So California Commission on Disability Access would be the place to take the parking issue up. And I did want to open the Q&A to anyone else who had a question for the panelists.





It seems like we may be at the end. We have a bit left on the presentation. Maybe we'll resume there then? Shall we? Yeah. Okay. All right. This is actually my slide.

Okay. So these are recommendations that we wanted to share for transportation agencies. And we don't presume to know what's best. These are some highlights that have been revealed from our project. 2020 was very much a year of discussion about equity. And one of the things that kind of came to surface is discussion of pipelines. How do you get people into the relevant professions that have the relevant experience? This is something that we want to investigate an MTC but we feel that internship programs are a good vehicle for people to get the right people and the right positions and to get movement generally of people who have kind of -- that come from the disability community into planning professions.

The next point, we want to foster relationships with go-to organizations within your county. The first stop will be your centers for independent living and we'll provide a list on the website as a product of this project. You want to have trusted relationships with people in the county so you can just pick up the phone and have a sounding board if there are plan or service changes that may impact the community. It does not -- not every event needs to be a full-scale community outreach activity. Sometimes you just want to have a little bit of insight or perspective that can be represented in your work.

You want to partner with community agencies to do the outreach. Transit agencies and MTC may not have the best relationship or the reputation with the public and I see that as an MTC employee. Sometimes it can be helpful to have the local touch, have a trusted agency which has a good relationship with the community, who may have more ongoing direct engagement. And it can be good to have those folks on retainer, so consider paying for those services. Either one agency or a bench or group of agencies can be helpful.

And then you want to participate in county and regional emergency planning. So from time to time there are tabletop exercises for emergency actions. You want to engage with them and practice, practice, practice. Be connected on the county level but also be mindful of regional exercises as



well. Every county has a different liaison in terms of setting these up. For some those are sheriff's departments, others are health departments. We're going to add a list of those contact resources also on the WID resources page that we're developing.

And so to the last point, you know, you want to include disability and access into equity frameworks and analyses. So we have antiracist and antidiscrimination policies. We perform equity analyses to measure dispirit impacts of projects. But at present we don't -- at least most of those types of equity analyses don't include disability and access. We have our own work to do in our own house at MTC when we evaluate future projects for regional transportation plan. Historically disability has not been included as one of the metrics. Related to this, I will make a plug for MTC's coordinated plan, which will include some off the shelf approaches for developing equity analyses. And that's still in development. But these are in general hard to put in practice and they're not fully developed but continue to engage with us. It's all of our responsibilities to promote access and that's been a theme of this presentation. But do continue to reach out and be engaged as we develop this together.

>> DRENNEN SHELTON: Thanks, Shimon. We just about reached the end of our time together today. Hopefully you've learned something new or that you've heard something that will inspire you to expand how you include accessibility issues in your work. But we don't want you to stop here. We would like to ask for your commitment today to establish or strength then your relationships with the disability community. We want you to be the champion who voices accessibility issues and perspectives at your work. We want you to start by reaching out to a member of your own agency's advisory board or to your local Independent Living resource center and tell them you heard this presentation. Tell them that you're seeking to include their perspectives in your work. Go beyond that box checking exercise and look to really incorporate the disability lens in your work. It's not going to be easy. And it's going to feel awkward at times and you may be afraid that you're making a mistake of some kind. But I want you to remember, Senator Duckworth's words to you that we need strong leadership from you on this front.



Okay. And so in the coming weeks we will definitely follow up with everyone who attended today or who was registered. We're going to provide this presentation and more resources to you. We want to help get you started on this. And I just want to thank everyone for your time and attention and your commitment to ensuring accessibility. Thank you.

