Elevated 1 Line on Broadway in Kingsbridge neighborhood of the Bronx. 231st Station is seen in the background. NYC DCP.

05 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION,

Taxis and For-Hire Vehicles

New York City has one of the most extensive mass transit systems in the world. The city is served by rail transit, buses, ferries, taxis, and for-hire vehicles. The first subway line, known as the IRT (Interborough Rapid Transit Company), opened in 1904.[1] New York City's first subway line was revolutionary because it brought together all classes of people. Historically, the subway has been one of New York City's most democratic places, costing only a nickel when it first opened. Even though a trip costs much more than a nickel today, it is still more affordable to use public transportation than it is to own a vehicle.[2] Technology and social ethos have transformed dramatically since the first train began service more than one hundred years ago. The New York City subway system, which is considered by many as the greatest urban transportation undertaking, is now the source of numerous complaints and the source of frustration for many with limited mobility and disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 created minimum standards with which businesses and public offices must comply. Due to the high cost of retrofitting stations constructed many years earlier, public transportation agencies, such as the MTA's New York City Transit eventually came to an agreement to create an accessibility plan for key stations. Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations outlines the standards for accessible transportation facilities and specifications for transportation vehicles per ADA requirements. Title 49 Section 37.47 lists the criteria that public entities must consider when choosing key stations (light rail or rapid rail systems) to be retrofitted with elevators and escalators. Additionally, any new subway stations or new subway lines constructed will have to be fully compliant with the ADA legislation. As a result of a 1979 lawsuit, filed by the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association (now the United Spinal Association), New York City is required to increase the number of accessible stations to 100 by 2020.[3] There are currently 72 accessible key stations in New York City.

There is no other public transportation system that can be compared to New York City's mass transit network in scale and age. It is costly and time consuming to make changes to the existing infrastructure. Physical limitations, normal aging, as well as environmental barriers create real challenges. People with limited mobility, specifically some of the elderly, do not have the same transportation options as those who are able-bodied. Although New York City's seniors who live in dense neighborhoods have a wider range of transportation options, than those living in suburban or rural communities, there are still

1 Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How they Transformed New York*.
2 Ibid.

3 Federal Transit Administration, *Code of Federal Regulations Title 49 Section 37.53.*

opportunities for improvement.

New York City's current fleet of 6,000 buses is regulated by the MTA and is ADA-compliant. This fleet is outfitted with front door lifts or ramps which are fully accessible to assist those who need help with ambulation. They are also outfitted with rear and center door lifts to accommodate customers using wheelchairs.[4]

As an alternative to public transportation, taxis and paratransit services can be used to transport seniors and the disabled to appointments, senior centers, and other local destinations. Taxis and paratransit services both offer door-to-door transportation most of the time. Anyone that would like to be transported in a taxi must hail one on the street or wait at a designated taxi stand. Not all neighborhoods are served by taxis; therefore, a for-hire vehicle, or livery cab may be the only option when someone needs this type of service. New York City's paratransit service, known as Access-A-Ride, requires applicants to be pre-screened to determine eligibility.

Taxis and for-hire vehicles provide a transportation service for those that want to be taken to a specific location comfortably and for those that are not familiar with public transportation. Taxi rates vary depending on the distance of the ride. In the case of New York City, yellow taxis are more abundant in Manhattan than in the outer boroughs. For many people, taxis are used sparingly because they can be costly. Yet, there are some people who do not qualify for paratransit that have mobility limitations, and would benefit if taxi or for-hire services were readily available to them at affordable rates.

In order to receive paratransit access in New York City, one must be screened at one of the paratransit offices throughout the five boroughs. The administrator determines if the applicant is unable to use public transportation for either a specific duration of time, when the disability is temporary, or for an extended period due to a permanent disability. A challenge that faces the MTA is that it is very expensive to operate paratransit services in a city as vast as New York. Currently, New York City's paratransit system costs approximately $474 million a year, which works out to $66 per ride.[5]

Because of these current limitations with public transportation services, we look closely at improving accessibility within our transportation systems, furthering the potential of transit-oriented developments, and looking towards the gradual turnover to accessible taxis. Improving these developments in public transportation will enable aging New Yorkers to keep more mobile and active without having to change their everyday routines, and to stay engaged in the fabric of the City.

4 The Metropolitan Transportation Authority. *How to Ride the Bus.*
5 Kaminer, *A Godsend, Except When It's Not.*

LONDON, ENGLAND
Step-Free Access

IMAGE 8. Wide isle gates at Canary Wharf Station, London. Image used with permission from Transport for London.

Step-Free Access in London England focuses on making reasonable adjustments to London's underground rail system in order to provide step-free access, that is step free from the street to the platform, wherever possible.

This case study relates to *Age-Friendly NYC Initiative 23* which seeks to improve elevator and escalator service and enhance accessibility of subway stations.

BACKGROUND

London's underground rail system, the Tube, is the oldest in the world and some of its infrastructure dates back to the 1860s.[6] London is one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of approximately 7.4 million. In addition to the Tube, the city and surrounding region is served by buses, trams, ferries, light rail, taxis, and for-hire vehicles.[7] Although the Tube remains largely inaccessible, efforts are being made to add accessible infrastructure and new transportation options.

In 1995, the United Kingdom passed the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), a law similar to the ADA. The DDA places an obligation on companies to make goods, facilities, and services available to disabled people (Section 19) and make reasonable adjustments if goods, facilities or services are not available to disabled people or if there is some barrier. For small shops with a step-entrance, this might mean simply making sure a wheelchair ramp is available. New train stations must be constructed to be fully accessible.[8] Reasonable adjustments will be determined by the circumstances at each station. Some stations may not be retrofitted because they are too small or because their platforms are too far underground for reasonable adjustments to be made. However, wherever possible, all steps or barriers will be removed or alternative access will be provided to create step-free access.[9]

In 2008, the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR) came into effect, which creates European accessibility standards for trains, light rail, and trams. The European regulation signifies that eventually European trains will be reasonably accessible.[10] The definition of a "disabled person," which was used in the 1995 DDA, was changed to "persons with reduced mobility" in the 2008 RVAR. In 1995, a "disabled person" was defined as a person with a mental or physical impairment which has substantial long-term effects on the person's ability to perform daily activities.[11] "Persons with reduced mobility" include all people with disabilities as used within the 1995 Act, but it also included others that may experience reduced mobility, such as pregnant women, and people travelling with small children.[12] Presently, all London trains have notices that designate seats for customers less able to stand such as: disabled passengers, older

6 Transport for London, *Business Plan 2009/10-2017/18.*

7 Walker, *Urban Audit III: London and other Large European Cities.*

8 Darren Crowson, Transport for London, Email Correspondence, 4 February 2010.

9 Ibid.

10 Ricability, *Trains and Trams.*

11 Office of Public Sector Information, *Part 1. Disability.*

12 Department for Transport, *Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations: Exemption Orders Annual Report 2008.*

people, pregnant women and anyone travelling with children.[13]

FINDINGS

Many old underground stations are not fully accessible or step-free but there is a program to try and change this wherever possible. Currently the Tube has 58 stations that are step-free from the street to the train platform.[14] Just as in New York City, all of London's buses are fully accessible. Transport for London (TfL), London's public transport agency, has included improving accessibility as one of the agency's top priorities in their 2009/10 to 2017/18 business plan. Some of the accessibility improvements include installing: wide-aisle gates on the Tube for people with wheelchairs, strollers, or luggage, more step-free access points, tactile strips and color contrasted handrails, and new electronic information displays (IMAGE 8).[15] One simple but effective thing being done is adding humps to some sections of platforms so the platform level is raised up to the door level.[16]

There are additional plans to improve accessibility and increase capacity with the construction of the Crossrail. The Crossrail is a new rail project that will provide 27 fully accessible stations in central London and provide connections to existing Tube stations, National Rail, Docklands Light Railway, and buses. Additionally, it is expected to significantly reduce congestion on the parallel Tube and light rail lines.[17] Crossrail is anticipated to open in 2017.[18]

The Docklands Light Railway, an automated train, was opened in the late 1980s to serve the London Docklands section of the city. It expanded over the years from 11 to 40 fully accessible stations. There are plans to expand the system and to elongate the trains in order to accommodate more passengers. The light railway provides connections to National Rail, the Tube, and buses. The system currently carries 67 million passengers a year, and that figure is expected to rise to 100 million by 2012.[19]

In addition to the Crossrail and the Docklands Light Railway, Tramlink opened in 2000. Tramlink is an electric streetcar system located in South London, an area that was underserved by rail. The tram consists of three lines that stop at a total of 39 accessible stations. It provides accessible links to the Tube, National Rail, and bus lines. Trams were once prominent throughout London, but they were phased out and replaced with buses beginning in the 1930s. Tramlink is the first investment of its kind in many years and passenger ridership has grown to 26.5 million a year.[20]

COST

TfL provides a plethora of information on their website including capital improvement costs, business plans, and future investment strategies. Step-free access improvements are expected to cost £226 million (approximately $352.7 million USD). TfL's aim is that by the end of 2010, 25 percent of Tube stations will be step free.[21] Future investment programs will address additional step-free access plans which will expand the accessible network.[22]

NEW YORK CITY APPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

New York City's first subway opened in 1904, approximately 30 years after the first Tube.[23] Both London and New York City have infrastructure that was constructed many years before accessibility legislation took effect. There are requirements in place that both cities are complying with in order to improve their existing infrastructures. However, neither system is obligated to be fully accessible.

There are currently 72 ADA key stations in New York City, and the remaining number of key stations must be completed by 2020.[24] A station is designated as a key station if it meets ADA guidelines for accessibility. In addition to the mandatory 100 key stations that the city must have by 2020, there are currently 16 accessible non-key stations.[25] Additionally, any new station constructed must comply with ADA guidelines. Eighty-six out of 468 New York City subway stations or approximately 18 percent are currently ADA accessible. London's Tube currently has 58 step-free stations. The Tube has a total of

13 Ibid.
14 Transport for London, *Tube.*
15 Transport for London, *Business Plan 2009/10-2017/18.*
16 Darren Crowson, Transport for London, Email Correspondence, 4 February 2010.
17 Transport for London, *Transport for London Crossrail Investment Program.*
18 Ibid.
19 Transport for London, *Docklands Light Railway.*
20 Transport for London, *Tramlink User Guide.*
21 Darren Crowson, Transport for London, Email Correspondence, 4 February 2010.
22 Transport for London, *Step-free Access.*
23 Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How they Transformed New York*.
24 Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, *Welcome Aboard: Accessibility at the MTA.*
25 New York City Transit, *100 Key Stations List.*

270 stations; therefore approximately 21 percent of the system is currently accessible. In addition to the 58 accessible Tube stations, the Docklands Light Railway has 40 step-free stations and Tramlink has 39 accessible stations.

In London, TfL has expanded the rail network by adding light rail and trams to underserved parts of the city. Additionally, there are plans to add new infrastructure, such as the Crossrail which will increase accessibility and capacity in Central London. Light rail or streetcars could supplement the existing subway infrastructure in New York City, just as it has in London. The greatest barriers to adding new infrastructure is the cost and finding an appropriate location for a service facility. Several efforts to provide high speed rail have not been successful. There may be new funding sources when SAFETEA-LU, which went into effect in August 2005, is reauthorized in 2011. Occasionally there are funding sources available for mass transit improvements, such as the Federal Transit Authority's New Starts program which had helped fund new systems and extensions to existing fixed guideway transit systems.[26]

Currently, London's Tube and New York City's subway have roughly similar levels of system accessibility. Accessibility will increase in New York City when the Second Avenue subway and the 7 line extension are open. The 7 line extension is expected to open in 2013. The first phase of the Second Avenue subway is not expected to be completed until 2016.[27] Although, there will be 116 accessible subway stations by 2020, that will only be 25 percent of the entire system. The Second Avenue subway and 7 line extension will increase accessibility in the city, but system-wide there will still be many barriers.

Work plans are already in effect to keep adding to the number of accessible key stations in New York City's subway system to address the challenges of accessibility within public transportation. However, there are still improvements to be made in order to align with *Issue 23 in Age-Friendly NYC*, which suggests providing reliable elevator and escalator services and their statuses to the public before they make their trip.

26 Federal Transit Administration, *New Starts Fact Sheet.*

27 Metropolitan Transportation Authority, *Second Avenue Subway: Project Description.*

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Access at the MBTA

IMAGE 9. MBTA Accessible bus. Image used with permission from MBTA.

Access at the MBTA in Boston Massachusetts focuses on how a class action lawsuit settlement based on a lack of transit accessibility for the disabled was discriminatory, and had a major impact on the MBTA setting standards for other transit systems across the country.

This case study relates to the *Age-Friendly NYC Initiative 23* which seeks to improve elevator and escalator service including status information before making a trip, and enhance accessibility of subway stations, thereby improving trip efficiency.

BACKGROUND

The greater Boston area is one of the oldest cities in the United States with a major seaport located in the Boston Harbor. The Boston

Metropolitan region is a subset of the Greater Boston area. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has a population of 5,819,100 and the City of Boston's population is 589,141.[28] Boston's elderly population comprises approximately 10 percent of the city's population.[29] The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) or the "T" became a part of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MASSDOT), effective June, 2009.

The "T" was built prior to the implementation of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). On July 25, 2002, Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) filed a class action suit against the MBTA, stating that the transit system discriminated against the disabled. The claim of discrimination was based on the lack of accessibility available to the disabled to utilize and access public transit, including safety issues and security concerns. The plaintiffs claimed that the MBTA presented serious safety and security hazards and inequities, such as: inadequate ramp and wheelchair accessibility at subway and bus stations. Also the disabled were denied equitable access to public modes of transportation in violation of Title II of the ADA. The outcome of this lawsuit has had a major impact on the MBTA as well as other transit systems across the country.

As a result of the settlement of the lawsuit the MBTA made the following adjustments to their fixed route transit system and paratransit service (The Ride):

- Provided subway platform ramps; subway and train accessibility; proper training to operators of bus and trains to assist the disabled; and proper service to passengers with disabilities (IMAGE 9)
- Addressed the lack of operational and preventive maintenance on bus lifts, station elevators and escalators
- Improved the accessibility of the MBTA and fixed route service
- Ensured ADA compliance
- Developed service monitoring procedures responsive to customer needs
- Improved overall communication with all riders including for the disabled and seniors[30]

The settlement included all the necessary bus maintenance scheduling, operation purchases and rehabilitation, and subway and elevator operations. It also included station management and communication with passengers, and customers service along with training and management as well as provisions concerning monitoring and enforcement of the agreement.

The lawsuit settlement brought to bear the common interest of both parties to maximize their goals in creating one of the leading innovative accessible mass transit systems. BCIL, one of the groups representing the plaintiffs, now has a seat at the table to enforce and monitor paratransit decisions involving the disabled and senior populations. Moreover, this MBTA model sets the stage for older transit systems whose structures were built prior to the 1990s.

IMPLEMENTATION

There were three areas of policy implementation of the class settlement:

- Short-term strategies to improve accessibility and barriers to the MBTA system
- Long range planning goals
- Continuation of monitoring

The short-term partnership strategies of MBTA (The Ride) and BCIL were implemented and developed to improve procedures in training of operators to help the disabled and elderly. An aspect of the short term strategy also included customer relations and providing public service announcements highlighting the importance and availability of services. The other short-term strategy is the on-going coordination of four contractors that can utilize centralized dispatchers to locate emergencies and reduce unnecessary long waits and/or missed appointments. The continuing need to update emergency policies reflects the changing needs of the subscribers.

The Ride is the MBTA paratransit program that provides door-to-door transportation to individuals unable to use regular transit service. Individuals must submit an application to enter the program. This

28 United States Census Bureau, *2000 U.S. Census*
29 Ibid.
30 Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, *ADA Settlement Notice Summary.*

application attests to their disability (physical, cognitive, or mental disability). The Ride began its operation in 1977, from a relatively small operation serving a 12 mile area in Brookline, Cambridge, and parts of Boston. It has now grown to one of the largest paratransit operations in the nation covering 729 square miles.[31] The paratransit vehicle fleet consists of 233 sedans and 357 vans that are 100 percent accessible. Its operational area is composed of 60 cities and towns including Boston, which is the largest city with a population of 591,763 (2000 U.S. Census) in the service area. The paratransit system services over 1.8 million passengers a year and operates between the hours of 6:00AM to 1:00AM seven days a week.[32]

The Ride has the latest communication equipment to enhance its response to subscribers (61,000) which consist of a population that is 80 percent ambulatory and 20 percent wheelchair users. The response time has improved to 98.5 percent based on pickup time and appointment.[33]

This service is provided by private contractors who are subject to an open competitive bid process to attain a contract for a period of five years. The coordination of services is provided by three contractors servicing the 4 zones or service areas:

- North (Blue) -Greater Lynn Senior Service
- Northwest (Red)-Veterans Transportation Services
- South (Green)- The Joint Venture TTI/YCN Transportation
- Boston Area (Yellow) - All contractors serve this area

The second part of increasing "T" accessibly includes long-term strategies and implementation. The fixed route accessibility is more capital intensive and requires longer time periods to accomplish its goals. Since early 2000, the following are recent fixed route achievements:

- Bus fleet consists of 993 buses, 100 percent accessible.
- The majority of the commuter rail stations have LED signage.
- MBTA has designated 80 key stations to be made accessible by 2010, which is a greater percentage than any other transit system in the country.[34]
- Increased operation of all elevators at joint commuter rail stations in Boston.[35] The maintenance of these elevators creates various challenges because of the 15 different manufacturers involved. Maintaining stocks of inventory parts are difficult and sometimes parts are difficult to find. The ages of these elevators vary and only 10 percent are under warranty.[36] There was no official policy or procedure to provide alternative service when an elevator is inoperable. The MBTA implemented a plan in 2005 to track out-of-service elevators that were not returned to service the same day. MBTA reports that the availability of elevators is presently over 96 percent.[37] It has established an elevator replacement program designed to avoid the operation of elevators beyond their effective life.[38]

The third area of policy implementation per the settlement is the continuation of monitoring the MBTA. An independent monitor was appointed by the court to assess compliance goals of the settlement.[39] The Department of System-wide Accessibility (SWA) was created to be a clearinghouse of information regarding access-related issues, projects, and initiatives. Some of the department's functions include:

- Tracking settlement compliance.
- Drive change when necessary throughout the MBTA.
- Employ undercover testers and observers to assess compliance with the provisions in the agreement.[40]

FARES

The MBTA launched a premium discount plan for seniors and the

31 DeNucci, *Independent State Auditors Report on Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Administration of the Ride Program July 2004 to June 2008.*
32 Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, *Chief Operating Officer*.
33 Carol Joyce Harrington, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Phone Interview, 11 February 2010.
34 TranSystems Corp. et al., *Evaluation of MBTA Para-transit and Accessible Fixed Route Transit Services Final Report.*
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 MBTA Accessibility Lawsuit Update, Fall 2007.
40 MBTA ADA, MBTA *Settlement Notice*, April 25, 2006.

disabled. The Transportation Access Pass (TAP) is known as Charlie Card and provides discounts on different modes operated by the "T" except the Ride. (The Ride is a restricted unit for the disabled and the fare is $2.00 to all destinations within the service area.)[41]

The discount for Charlie Card users on most modes of "T" transit took effect January 2007. The "T" implemented cards for seniors 65 and over, persons with disabilities, and the blind/visually-impaired. The "T" has issued over 155,000 Charlie Cards for seniors and persons with disabilities including 6,000 cards for the blind and visually-impaired.[42] A photo ID card permits access to ride all "T" services for free.

The "T" developed requirements for seniors, the disabled and the blind/visually impaired to undergo an application process to obtain their Charlie Cards. With the implementation of the Charlie Cards, seniors and the disabled have a stable way of travelling with options of either single one-way trips or multiple discounts plans. The improvement in accessibility and the promotion of this program has opened the possibility of greater local travelling for this group of individuals.

FINDINGS

The lawsuit has altered the MBTA decisions impacting long term priorities, budget planning and organizational structure. It has had a direct impact on the organization and ridership. It has set the standards that other transit systems have been able to use as a benchmark such as New York City Transit, City of Chicago Transit, and Philadelphia Transit; each of these are considered older transit systems across the country, although the physical conditions in each system are different.

Terms of the class action settlement removed the endless analysis and discussions that succeeded in paralyzing the decision-making process of projects from start to completion. The settlement's terms required time tables, policy changes, restructuring of management, training requirements, coordination, schedule maintenance and preventive maintenance including new procedures in designing and replacement of parts and purchasing of new equipment.

The partnership between the activists groups, the "T" and The Ride established a push and pull relationship stimulating major achievements through transit program development and evaluation because of the settlement. These achievements exceeded the requirements set by the ADA (1990). The Ride has increased its subscription, improved its pickup and drop off time, increased the number of vehicles available and shortened the waiting list expanding hours of service. The "T" has expanded the accessibility for its fixed route services. New technology and communication equipment have improved transit safety and signage. This series of improvements are all tied together with effective procedures, monitoring and response by the MBTA in compliance with the ADA.

As an outcome of the class action suit, the MBTA safety and security functions have been enhanced, and have added to the well being and protection of the system's users, especially for the elderly and the disabled. The MBTA maintains its own police force patrolling areas either by foot or in vehicles. They have specialized patrols with K-9 dogs and utilize other special methods to detect any illegal activities that may take place in their jurisdiction.

The "T" maintains several closed-circuit television facilities located throughout its service areas.[43] Cameras monitor various key locations on train platforms and in subway stations, inhibiting those with illegal intentions from preying on unsuspecting travelers during their journey. The "T" has accessible telephones and informational numbers in key locations for emergencies and quick response time from one of the central operational centers.[44] Since the upgrade in purchasing of technology, training and equipment in 2009, the "T" has reported a 21 percent reduction in serious crimes. Accordingly, the issue of safety and security is a major factor encouraging ridership.[45]

Boston's key station plan is the most aggressive in the country. Currently 65 percent of the MBTA stations are accessible compared to 18 percent of New York City's subway stations. Both cities were required to create a key stations plan as a result of a lawsuit, but the settlement in Boston has so far resulted in a much higher percentage of accessible stations.

The selection of 80 key stations was a compromise between the

41 Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, *Reduced Fares.*
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Metro Magazine, *MBTA Crime Drops to Lowest Levels in 30 Years.*
45 Ibid.

MBTA and the Advisory Committee. The MBTA initially wanted 50 key stations and the Advisory Committee wanted 150 key stations. The criteria used in selecting the stations took into account the following: (1) stations near major travel destinations, (2) stations that connect to other modes of transport, and (3) stations with high ridership.[46]

NEW YORK CITY APPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

By 2020, 25 percent of New York City's subway stations will be accessible. In addition to the inaccessible stations, the key stations can quickly become inaccessible when an elevator is out of service. Since 2007 the MTA has been posting elevator and escalator outage information on their website, updating it three times a day.[47] Yet when problems occur while a person is in transit, typically there are no alternative ways of accessing a station. In Boston, the MBTA has established an elevator replacement program designed to avoid the operation of elevators beyond their effective life.[48] The goal of this program is to reduce breakdowns so that people are better able to move throughout the system. In stations that have reoccurring elevator outages perhaps alternative ingress and egress should be explored, such as wheelchair accessible escalators. Adopting policies that can dramatically increase transit options for New Yorkers with limited mobility is in accordance with transportation initiatives stated in 2030 PlaNYC to improve access to existing transit.

The accessibility issues of key stations in New York City's transportation system are currently being addressed both by previous regulation and requirements and by *Initiative 23 of Age-Friendly NYC*, which seeks to improve elevator and escalator service, and enhance accessibility to subway stations. There is potential to further improve existing transit infrastructure to make it more accessible.

46 Kathy Cox, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Telephone Interview, 19 February 2010.
47 Neuman, *Taking the Guesswork Out of Which Subway Escalators are Broken.*
48 TranSystems Corp. et al., *Evaluation of MBTA Para-transit and Accessible Fixed Route Transit Services Final Report.*

LONDON, ENGLAND
Accessible Cabs

IMAGE 10. Modern London Cab. Traditionally called black cabs, but now they may be found in other colors. Photo used with permission from Transport for London - Taxi and Private Hire.

Accessible Taxis in London England focuses on taxi programs, private, for-hire vehicles and paratransit that serve as alternatives to public transportation.

This case study relates to *Age-Friendly NYC Initiatives 24, 25, 26 and 27* where the concentration is on improving Access-A-Ride, matching accessible taxis with users who need them, developing a model accessible taxi and a taxi voucher program for older adults.

BACKGROUND

In addition to the Tube and buses, London is served by taxis, private for-hire vehicles, and minicabs (IMAGE 10). The Public Carriage Office (PCO) is responsible for the licensing of all taxi and private hire

services.[49] Taxis can be hailed on the street, at designated taxi stands (there are approximately 500 taxi stands throughout the London area) or a person can call to reserve a taxi. The first accessibility taxi law was put into effect on February 1, 1989. It required that all newly licensed taxis (not the ones already in operation) be capable of carrying a passenger that is in a wheelchair. On January 1, 2000 a second law was passed requiring all taxis licensed for use in London to be capable of carrying a passenger who is a wheelchair user.[50]

In London, there are four programs that provide customers an alternative to public transportation. These four programs (Taxicard, Capital Call, Cabwise, and Dial-A-Ride) described below work by either subsidizing a taxi ride, private for-hire vehicle, or paratransit service. Although each has their own eligibility requirements there is some overlap.

ELIGIBILITY

The Taxicard program is available to older and disabled London residents with serious mobility impairments. A general practitioner must endorse an applicant if it is determined that a person has a mobility impairment.[51] This program allows those eligible to take a traditional London taxi at anytime for a subsidized rate. Capital Call is another program, which has the same eligibility criteria as Taxicard. People may become members of both programs and use them both. The difference between the two programs is that Taxicard is used with the traditional London taxis and Capital Call is for subsidized trips in private for-hire vehicles, such as the livery cabs in New York City. In 2008/2009 there were 84,000 Taxicard members using 1.6 million Taxicard trips, and 8,500 Capital Call members using 23,500 Capital Call trips.[52]

In addition to booking a taxi over the phone, there is a service called Cabwise which allows people to text the word 'home' or 'cab' to a dispatcher. The person that sent the text will receive a response shortly-thereafter with the numbers of the two nearest 24 hour taxi companies. Cabwise is a service available to anyone and it provides information for customers that need on-demand service from various locations in the London area.

Dial-A-Ride is another program that provides transportation for those with a permanent or long-term disability that makes using the public transportation system virtually impossible. Dial-A-Ride is different than the other services because it must be booked in advance. Dial-A-Ride is for trips that include activities such as shopping, visiting family and friends, and other recreational activities. Dial-A-Ride is not to be used to attend doctor's appointments, for traveling to and from work, or for school transport.[53] A person is automatically eligible for Dial-A-Ride if they meet any of the following criteria: is a current member of Taxicard, registered blind, age 85 or over, in receipt of higher rate attendance allowance, or in receipt of war pension mobility supplement.[54] Dial-A-Ride is similar to New York City's Access-A-Ride program.

FUNDING

All four programs offered to disabled and elderly individuals that have limited mobility are subsidized by the government either partially or fully. Dial-A-Ride is free to the user. Taxicard is financed by the London boroughs and the Mayor of London, and is administered by the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee. The program varies slightly from borough to borough. Most Taxicard users pay a flat fare of £1.50 (roughly $2.40) per trip. The rest of the trip is covered by the borough subsidy, with the exception of the member fee, which would bring a ride to roughly £3.70 (or $5.80) per trip.[55] Capital Call is operated by the Transportation Co-ordination Center (TCC), and is funded by a grant from the Mayor of London.[56] Each Capital Call member receives an allocated annual travel budget. The member must pay the first £1.50 (or $2.40) of each trip. When the budget is used up, the person must wait until the next fiscal year begins.

FINDINGS

London residents that need alternative transportation have many options. The Taxicard and Capital Call programs allow those that meet the eligibility requirements to have on-demand, door-to-door transportation service. In New York City, Access-A-Ride, which is similar to Dial-A-Ride, must be booked in advance, which may not

49 Darren Crowson, Transport for London, Email Correspondence, 5 October 2009.
50 Ibid.
51 Transport for London, *Taxicard.*
52 Darren Crowson, Transport for London, Email Correspondence, 5 October 2009.
53 Transport for London, *Dial-A-Ride.*
54 Ibid.
55 Transport for London, *Taxicard.*
56 Transport for London, *Capital Call.*

be convenient for everyone that needs to use this service. These programs are highly subsidized; therefore the boroughs and the City of London pay a significant amount to keep these programs in service. Access-A-Ride is subsidized as well, and as a result, some aspects of the program may be cut due to budget shortfalls. These programs exist in a city comparable to New York City and provide valuable ideas that if able to be funded, could make travel more convenient, by creating an on-demand option for those that currently use Access-A-Ride.

NEW YORK CITY APPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

New York City has many programs that allocate funding to organizations that provide services for the disabled and elderly. Access-A-Ride is a paratransit service run by NYCT available to those that are unable to use public transportation in New York City. Prior to becoming an Access-A-Ride user, an individual must be evaluated at an assessment center. Subsequent to the evaluation it takes the MTA approximately three weeks to come to a determination and notify the individual of their eligibility. If found eligible for Access-A-Ride, the member must pay the full public transportation fare and may arrange to bring a personal care attendant (pca), guest, or a dependent child. Eligible members may be reimbursed for taxis and for-hire vehicle trips only if NYCT has made an error in the arrangements for Access-A-Ride. The service is available 24 hours a day, but one can only reserve a car between the hours of 7AM and 5PM and at least one to two days in advance. This service is used for doctor's appointments, visits, and other planned trips within the five boroughs. Access-A-Ride does not provide on-demand transportation services.

Additionally, New York City has many yellow taxis and livery cabs (black cars). There is only one way an individual can reserve a yellow taxi, and that is by hailing one on the street. Livery cabs are intended to be used as a call-ahead car service, but in some neighborhoods where taxis are scarce one may flag down livery cabs on the street. One goal of the Mayor's Office recent report, *Age-Friendly NYC*, is to create a taxi voucher program for older New Yorkers who are unable to use public transportation.[57]

The Accessible Dispatch Demonstration pilot program began in July 2008. It was a two-year pilot program. If implemented, the program will allow passengers in wheelchairs seeking transportation to call New York City's 311 system to request an accessible vehicle. The Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) will then dispatch the nearest available vehicle in response to the request.[58]

The private market has responded to the impending older adult population growth. One company in particular, The Vehicle Production Group (VPG) has designed a vehicle they called the MV-1, which they are marketing as a paratransit or taxi vehicle. The company did a number of demonstrations in large U.S. cities, including New York City (IMAGE 11). The vehicle is designed to carry up to two wheelchair passengers or six seated passengers comfortably.[59]

In November 2010, Mayor Bloomberg and NYC Taxi and Limousine Commissioner David S. Yassky introduced a competition called the "Taxi for Tomorrow" which introduces the first-ever custom-built taxicab specifically designed for New York City. The project is designed to maintain the iconic design of the yellow taxicab of New York City

IMAGE 11. MV-1 with ramp shown with ramp extended for wheelchair access. NYC DCP.

57 Mayor's Office, *Age Friendly NYC-Enhancing Our City's Livability for Older New Yorkers.*

58 New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, *Notice of Promulgation of Rules*.

59 VPG LLC., *Mobility Reinvented Introducing the MV-1.*

while enhancing safety, sustainability, and accessibility for New Yorkers. According to the Mayor's press release, the project began in 2007, the winning design of the cab will be announced in 2011 and the gradual taxi fleet turnover will begin no later than the fall of 2014.[60]

New York City's paratransit services provide transportation to thousands of users over a vast geographical area. If the taxi fleet was 100 percent accessible, then demand for paratransit would likely decrease. Since current taxis do not cover most areas in the outer boroughs, paratransit would still be needed. There may be opportunities to expand the Accessible Taxi Dispatch Demonstration pilot and expand the requirements for those that can use it to include seniors or those utilizing electric scooters or walkers.

60 City of New York. Mayor's Office. "Mayor Bloomberg and Taxi Commissioner Yassky Announce Three Finalists to Be the New, Exclusive New York City Taxicab."

PORTLAND, MAINE
ITN Portland - Dignified Transportation Services for Seniors

IMAGE 12. The standing woman was a volunteer who drove enough miles to go around the world three and a half times. She is now using her transportation credits as a riding member. Image used with permission from ITN Portland.

Independent Transportation Network in Portland Maine focuses on a program which expands transit options for seniors by employing both paid and volunteer drivers to provide flexible on-demand affordable transportation that is reliable and efficient.

Independent Transportation Network provides an efficient and reliable alternative transit option, and relates to *Age-Friendly NYC Issue 24* concerning the efficiency and reliability of Access-A-Ride.

BACKGROUND

The Independent Transportation Network (ITN) is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to serving the senior community in Portland, Maine, with their transportation needs (IMAGE 12). It was started by Katherine Freund in the mid-1990s after her three-year-old son survived being hit by a car driven by an 84-year old driver. That event

sparked an interest in transportation issues for her, which led to the development of the Independent Transportation Network. The program offers rides to older adults in the greater Portland, Maine, area. The user must pay for ITN's transportation services at a rate based on the distance travelled and whether or not the ride is shared. Currently, Ms. Freund serves as president and executive director of ITN America, which has grown into a national organization. She set up a pilot project in the Portland area with the objective of creating a model that other communities could replicate. In Portland, the program provides nearly 17,000 rides a year to about 1,000 members age 65 and older. ITN America now has nine affiliates which provided almost 26,000 rides in 2007, and expects to have 40 affiliates by 2010.[61]

ITN aims to provide a transportation alternative to people who have grown up and grown old with the automobile. The Independent Transportation Network begins by examining some of the implied assumptions underlying current alternative transportation practices. These assumptions include:

- When seniors who have traveled in automobiles all their lives can no longer safely drive, they will be satisfied with transportation in vans or buses.
- Seniors who have paid for their own transportation all their lives need rides in publicly subsidized transit when they stop driving.
- Seniors who still drive have sufficient mobility.
- Seniors, who maintain their safety by limiting their driving to daylight hours, familiar roads, fair weather, and non-rush hour travel, always feel safe on those occasions when they do drive.

The ITN replaces these old assumptions with new assumptions. These include:

- Seniors who have traveled in automobiles all of their lives prefer to travel in automobiles.
- Seniors who have paid for their own transportation all of their lives prefer to pay for their own transportation. There is dignity and independence in doing so.
- Seniors who limit their driving to maintain their safety may have limited mobility even if they still possess and use a driver's license.
- Seniors who limit their driving because certain times, conditions, and driving situations feel unsafe, may feel unsafe when or where they do drive.[62]

The ITN is a transit service that provides seniors with their transportation needs so that they can continue to be mobile in a way that is safe for them.[63]

FUNDING

In addition to membership dues, rider fees and charitable gifts, additional funding is made available through voluntary local community support. Area retailers became involved in the "Ride and Shop" promotion, to help pay for rides for their customers. Doctors' offices and clinics can help the program and meet the transportation needs of their patients with donations to the "Healthy Miles" program. The goal is to make each community program self-sustaining within a five year period.[64]

FINDINGS

ITN Portland uses private automobiles to transport people over 65 and the visually impaired, anywhere within a 15 miles radius of Portland, which includes 13 towns. ITN is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and offers flexible service through paid and volunteer drivers. A background check of the drivers is conducted based on their driving and criminal records. Prior to application, vehicles are inspected and drivers are tested. The screening process of the drivers and their vehicles may vary at other affiliates.[65] Volunteers use their own cars to drive people, but the organization also has a fleet of donated cars, which are driven by paid drivers. There are no restrictions on the trip's purpose; for example, it can be for medical appointments, shopping, social visits, or other purposes.

In addition, volunteers may perform many of the organization's office

61 Greene, *12 People Who are Changing Your Retirement.*

62 Freund et al., *Independent Transportation Network: Alternative for the Elderly.*
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Lisa Holbrook, Portland Independent Transportation Network, Telephone Conversation, 15 December 2009.

activities and outreach function. Volunteer drivers receive a small mileage reimbursement. They can also earn credits for their own transportation should they forego driving in the future or donate them to relatives, friends or needy riders.

Specific fares are determined by several factors: the mileage, the time the trip takes, whether the riders are willing to share a ride, and whether the trip is planned or service is needed immediately. ITN uses a cashless, pre-paid account system, earning discounts for advance planning and ridesharing. The average charge per trip is around $7.50 with a minimum charge of $5.00. There is a 15 percent discount for sharing the ride and a 50 percent discount for advance planning. Fares do not cover the full cost of the rides ($13.81 per trip on average). Some donated funds are used specifically to provide rides for low-income people who cannot afford the fares with its "Road Scholarship" program.[66] Riders can also earn credits by donating their own cars to ITN through their "Car Trade" program after they've decided they should no longer drive, unlocking the value of an asset that normally would just be sitting in their driveway.[67]

NEW YORK CITY APPLICATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Around the US with approximately 15 affiliates the service that ITN provides is growing in demand. With the expected population growth of the elderly population in NYC the demand for ITN's type of service may rise. Although current ITN organizations tend to be situated in less dense areas, a new affiliate has recently been established in the City of Chicago. Chicago, like New York City, has a number of transportation options but believes there is a role for a dignified, yet reliable transportation system that meets the needs for door-to-door accommodation. The program in Chicago illustrates the model's capacity for replication among a diverse range of locations, including major cities like New York. Existing systems of public transportation in New York City were not built for people who become frail as they age and programs like Access-a-Ride may still leave some transportation needs unmet. ITN offers a transportation alternative that is proving to be effective in some parts of the country.

66 Niesz, *Independent Transportation Network: Senior Transportation Public/Private Partnership*.
67 Kaplan, *Maine's Independent Transportation Network Could be a Model Program for Minnesota Seniors.*