



Planning, Policy  
and Programming

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**Project Title:**

The Nexus Between Infrastructure and  
Accessibility

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## The Nexus Between Infrastructure and Accessibility

Investigating the barriers to transit accessibility for disabled riders

### WHAT IS THE NEED?

Despite the increased accessibility of transit facilities following the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, other obstacles continue to impede usage of transit systems by persons with disability. These barriers relate to infrastructure and environmental factors such as inferior quality of sidewalks, curb cuts, and street lighting. Such barriers often prevent people with disabilities from accessing public transit facilities, and increase their demand for more costly paratransit services. This project explored through case study analysis successful strategies employed by transit agencies in the United States to address infrastructure barriers impeding access to transit facilities by persons with disability. The final report documents the strategies identified through the case study analysis and provides guidance and recommendations to transit agencies seeking to respond to this significant concern that is limiting transit access to a specific transportation-disadvantaged population – namely, persons with disability.

### WHAT WAS OUR GOAL?

The goal of this study was to provide Caltrans with a greater understanding of how those with disabilities are limited to transit accessibility and how potential funding sources may be used to improve transit accessibility. Additionally, the study offers guidance to transit agencies seeking to enhance transit access to people with disabilities.

### WHAT DID WE DO?

This research study explored, through case study work, efforts that have been effective in improving pathways to transit.



Caltrans provides a safe, sustainable,  
integrated and efficient transportation  
system to enhance California's  
economy and livability.

Interviews and site visits were conducted with five transit agencies, along with their partners, that are actively engaged in improving pathways to connect transit consumers – particularly people with disabilities – with transit stations and stops. These agencies are: Broward County Transit (Broward County, FL), Memphis Area Transit Authority (Memphis, TN), NJ TRANSIT (Newark and New Brunswick, NJ), Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (Portland, OR), and Link Transit (Wenatchee, WA). Promising practices and/or lessons were identified through the case study analysis.

## WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

In examining the lessons learned and promising practices identified among the five cases, nine of these promising practices and/or lessons were identified through the case study analysis that should be considered by any transit agency seeking to create improved access to its services for persons with disabilities. These include:

- Understanding Needs – whether through research or field work such as data collection and customer interviews
- Pursue Partnerships – from both the public and private sectors, thereby generating many positive results and instilling a sense of community ownership in a project
- Communicate – with project stakeholders and partners so that you can identify issues and function as a “checks and balances” tool
- Approach Cost and Funding Issues Creatively – as this is key to overcoming cost-related barriers for improvement projects
- Think Holistically – especially as it relates to strategies that stretch beyond infrastructure issues but are vital for long-term success in accessibility
- Appreciate Breadth of Benefits – including the somewhat unanticipated positive social changes experienced from greater accessibility

- Prepare for Opposition – as “Not in My Backyard Syndrome” or NIMBYISM can be a common occurrence when pursuing infrastructure improvements
- Incorporate New Technology – as technological and physical design innovations can increase efficiencies and yield long-term cost savings
- Remember that ADA Improvements Benefit All – as infrastructure improvements meant to improve accessibility will generally benefit all system users

## WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

Caltrans, along with transit professionals, will gain insight into the mobility challenges for those with disabilities and potential solutions to improve transit accessibility. This accessibility is key to improve transit system operations overall, increase transit ridership, and lower the use of expensive paratransit services. The results of the case study research will provide transportation agencies nationwide with best practice models of how to address infrastructure barriers inhibiting transit facility access by persons with disability. This study should be considered by any transit agency seeking to create improved access to its services for persons with disabilities.

## LEARN MORE

Review the complete report.  
<http://transweb.sjsu.edu/MTIportal/research/Publications.html>