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Checklist for Assessing the Accessibility of Transportation and Mobility



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Using the Checklists

This guide consists of a short introduction and instructions on the use of checklists to assess the accessibility of a transit route, including the path of travel. There are three checklists that cover walking to the transit stop, riding on the vehicle and the transit stop/station. These checklists can assist with:

- routing and scouting for personal trip assessment,
- training exercises and trip planning,
- trip by trip determination for paratransit eligibility,
- community accessibility assessment for multiple routes,
- and individual personal trip assessment.



Photo credit: www.pedbikeimages.org / Jan Moser

People using the checklists can selectively draw on the sections of the checklists that are most relevant to their intended purpose. The checklists are designed to be a resource to enhance the accessibility of a community, including public transportation, by evaluating individual routes/trips and fostering awareness of people's different needs and abilities.

The checklists can also be used as the foundation for constructive dialogues between advocates, transit users and transit professionals, elected officials, and other decision makers to improve transit services for everyone.

Factors of Accessibility

Transit trips involve the use of something other than a private vehicle or car, like the public bus, ferry, light rail, train, or sidewalks. A variety of riders of all ages and abilities may be interested in making a trip by transit; therefore, the checklists encourage the assessment of all trip aspects—including accessibility for physical, sensory, and cognitive access.

Underlying all aspects of access to transportation by people with disabilities are the provisions of the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA). The ADA contains regulations to ensure that transportation services are provided in a way that makes it accessible to and usable by people with disabilities and provides design standards that indicate the minimum requirements necessary. To learn more about ADA regulations and guidelines go to the [Federal Transit Administration](#) and the [U.S. Access Board](#) websites.

Unlike the ADA, [universal design](#) is not a legal requirement. Universal design is a concept to build all places and services to meet the needs of everyone who will use them. While the ADA sets the baseline for access, universal design strives for all that is possible.

Many choices are made when designing and implementing transportation services including pedestrian pathways that connect riders to transit systems. When those choices are made based on the principles of universal design access increases for everyone.

In undertaking accessibility assessments related to travel and mobility, it is important to consider physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility, as that information can help people with motor, sensory, and/or cognitive disabilities as they navigate transportation systems.

- **Physical accessibility** relates to architectural, design, and environmental characteristics that enable an individual to travel from place to place. Such design takes into consideration differing abilities to walk, stand and sit and builds access that will allow for the use of mobility aids of all types.
- **Sensory accessibility** relates to aspects of design and information sharing that enable an individual to travel independently. Such design takes into consideration that people have differing abilities to hear and see and builds in aspects to provide visual, auditory and tactile information that makes travel possible for all.
- **Cognitive accessibility** relates to the ability of transportation-related directions, instructions, and signage to help individuals understand and learn, and therefore, supports mobility and access to transportation.

Universal Design is a design approach that seeks to create environments, objects, and systems that can be used by as many people as possible. To this end, Universal Design is the process of embedding **choice** for all **people** in the **things** we design.

- **Choice** involves flexibility, and multiple alternative means of use and/or interface.
- **People** includes the full range of people regardless of age, ability, sex, economic status, etc.
- **Things** include spaces, products, information systems and any other objects that humans manipulate or create.

<http://www.universaldesign.com>

Using this background information on ADA standards and guidelines and universal design, take a transit trip in your community and assess transit facilities in light of how a person with different abilities may experience them, using the checklists in the next section.

Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation Checklists

Preparing for the Trip

A trip should be planned using public transportation that includes walking to a transit stop or station, spending time at the stop or station, boarding a vehicle and staying on it long enough to assess its features and the service provided by the operator, and exiting the vehicle at a destination point. The destination point is also a stop or station that can then be assessed similar to the first one. The return trip completes the assessment for that particular trip.

Gather the following items:

- the Checklists for Assessing the Accessibility of Transportation and Mobility,
- a pen or pencil for making notes or a hand-held device that will capture and record data,
- a trip map and directions,
- enough fare to make both the outbound and return trips and
- a camera to illustrate findings.

Also, remember to dress appropriately for the out-of-doors trip. Sensible shoes are strongly recommended!



During the Trip

During each part of the trip, follow the corresponding checklist and make notes about the accessibility features and services. Also make note of any features or services that are lacking. Detailed notes will help with later review and understanding. Illustrate the findings by taking photographs of features that need attention or are exemplary.

After the Trip

The completed assessment results can be used several ways.

1. Share your experience using the checklists and traveling a transit route with others interested in accessibility, livability, and transit.
2. Discuss your findings with the transportation provider to acknowledge the accessible features of the provider's vehicles and system and commend them for their work.
3. Use your findings to determine if the trip is one that a particular individual (perhaps yourself or a friend) would be able to make. If you are not comfortable with the level of access that exists, a different trip or a different way to make the same trip may need to be considered.



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Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation Checklists

Going to the Stop/Station

Going to the Stop/Station	Yes/No	Comments
1. Are the sidewalks free of construction and impassable barriers (e.g. trash cans, post boxes, telephone poles, signage)?		
2. Are the sidewalks flat and free of impassable cracks?		
3. Are there clear street signs posted to help travelers find their way?		
4. Are there other directional cues to support wayfinding?		
5. Are there curb cuts available, accessible, free from debris, etc.?		
6. Are there detectible warning strips (truncated domes) at the curb?		
7. Are push buttons available for walk signals and are they easy to find, reach and use?		
8. Is there adequate time to cross the street before a signal changes allowing vehicles to enter the intersection?		
9. Are there Accessible Pedestrian Signals? (a device that communicates information about pedestrian timing in nonvisual format, such as audible tones, verbal messages, and/or vibrating surfaces) http://www.accessforblind.org/aps_abt.html		

Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation Checklists

At the Stop/Station

At the Stop/Station	Yes/No	Comments
1. Is there a clear path of travel from the transit stop/station to adjacent pedestrian pathways?		
2. Is there clear access to the boarding area?		
3. Is there a flat concrete pad at the boarding area?		
4. Is adequate seating present at the stop/station?		
5. Are route numbers on the bus stop sign at least three inches tall?		
6. Are other signs at the stop/station easy to read?		
7. Are there braille signs indicating which buses/trains use that stop/station?		
8. Is visual information in terminals, bus stops, or stations variable: by size, contrast, color, layout, spacing, etc.		
9. Is auditory information variable: amplitude, speed, timing, cueing, etc.		
10. Is auditory information available and are alternatives provided, such as text or voice recognition-to-text technology, visual symbols for emphasis, sound alerts, etc.		

Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation Checklists

11. Where visual information is provided, is there text or spoken equivalents for that information? Are physical objects or spatial models used?		
12. Is the environment clean/safe?		
13. Are there comfort/security features present? Trees that offer shade, benches and places to rest, bicycle racks, handrails on stairs and ramps, restrooms open and accessible, working drinking fountains, working public phones or call boxes etc.		
14. Is the lighting adequate for safe nighttime use?		
15. Is the stop or station crowded?		
16. Is the background noise and chatter distracting?		
17. Is the smell at the stop or station distracting?		

Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation Checklists

On the Vehicle

On the Vehicle	Yes/No	Comments
1. Does the vehicle have signage to indicate the route number/name and final destination?		
2. Does the operator or an automated system announce the route number/name and final destination?		
3. Is the vehicle crowded?		
4. Is the background noise and chatter on the vehicle distracting?		
5. Is the smell on the vehicle distracting?		
6. Is the lift/ramp/kneeling equipment in good working order?		
7. Is the fare box accessible?		
8. Are mobility aids secured?		
9. Are there seats designated as "priority" seating?		
10. Are stop announcements clear and audible?		

Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation Checklists

11. Do operators call out stops upon request?		
12. Do operators provide assistance as needed – using the fare box, extra time to communicate, finding a seat, etc.		
13. Is the operator calm and friendly?		
14. Is there adequate time to board and exit the vehicle?		
15. Is the operator pulling the vehicle all the way to the curb and minimizing the gap between the sidewalk and vehicle?		

Building Awareness in Accessible Transportation Checklists

Recommendations for Improving Accessibility

What improvements can be made to increase accessibility regarding going to the stop/station, waiting at the stop/station and riding the vehicle?

Glossary

Accessibility features	An element of a structure or system that would enable people with different abilities to use the service or structure. For example, an entrance with a stairway that also has a ramp for people who use wheelchairs or have difficulty with steps. The ramp would be an accessibility feature.
Accessible	Capable of being reached or used.
Accessible pedestrian signals	A device that communicates information about pedestrian timing in nonvisual format, such as audible tones, verbal messages, and/or vibrating surfaces. (http://www.accessforblind.org/aps_abt.html)
ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)	The United States Access Board's ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) serve as a minimum baseline for design, construction and alteration of buildings and facilities relevant to ADA standards. These guidelines for accessibility are to be applied during the design, construction, and alteration of building and facilities covered by Title II (public buildings and facilities) and Title III (places of public accommodation and commercial facilities) of the ADA. (http://www.access-board.gov/ada/)
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	This is the abbreviation for the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, also known as Public Law 101-336, that is codified at 42 UC Sections 12101 et seq. This civil rights legislation prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, state and local government, transportation, and telecommunications.
Amplitude	The varying intensity of sounds—sounds that vary getting louder or softer may be distracting to some riders, especially for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders. The variation could interfere with comprehension.
Assessment	The act of determining the value, importance or size of something.
Association of Travel Instruction (ATI)	An incorporated non-profit professional association of travel training instructors and travel trainers.
Auditory information	Related to or experienced through hearing.
Boarding area	A defined space to be used for embarking or disembarking from a vehicle.
Braille	A system of writing for people who are blind that uses characters made up of raised dots.

Clear path of travel	A travel space that is free of obstructions that could hinder wheelchair users, blind patrons, or others with disabilities. In general, this means a route at least 36 inches wide and free of chairs, tables, displays or other obstructions.
Cueing	To give a reminder of or hint about something.
Curb cuts	A short ramp cutting through a curb or built up to it.
Detectible warning strips (truncated domes)	A standardized surface feature built in or applied to walking surfaces or other elements to warn of hazards on a circulation path.
Disability	Disability means, with respect to an individual, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment.
Final destination	The place that you arrive at the end of a trip.
Mobility	The act of moving or the ability to move from one's present position to one's desired position.
Mobility aids	Electronic and manual devices like wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, or canes that are used to increase a person's locomotion.
Occupational therapy	The therapeutic use of occupations, including everyday life activities with individuals, groups, populations, or organizations to support participation, performance, and function in roles and situations in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings. (http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/Advocacy/State/Resources/PracticeAct/36437.aspx)
Operator	The person responsible for driving the bus, train or other type of vehicle.
Pedestrian	A person traveling by their own locomotion outside a vehicle (e.g., someone walking or using a wheelchair on a sidewalk).
Pedestrian pathways	A path people can use to travel from one place to another without a vehicle.
Priority seating	Designated seats, usually in the front of a vehicle, reserved for people with disabilities and older adults.
Route number/name	The name, usually a number, associated with a set pathway that a public transit vehicle follows on a timetable (e.g., the 980 bus always travels up and down Main street from First Avenue to 40 th Avenue).

Stop announcement	Announcement made by a person or by a recorded message which informs passengers on a bus, trolley, commuter rail, or rapid rail of the locations where the vehicle stops along a fixed route. Public and private entities providing fixed route service must announce stops at transfer points with other fixed routes, major intersections and destination points, and intervals along a route sufficient to permit individuals with visual impairments or other disabilities to be oriented to their location and any stop on request of an individual with a disability.
Transit	Transportation by car, bus, rail, or ferry that is publicly or privately owned which provides service to the general public, including special services, on a regular or scheduled basis.
Travel training	Travel instruction is the array, continuum, or family of services offered to individuals with disabilities, seniors, and others who need assistance to increase their mobility and travel on public transportation independently. www.travelinstruction.org
Universal Design	A design approach that seeks to create environments, objects, and systems that can be used by as many people as possible. To this end, Universal Design is the process of embedding choice for all people in the things we design.
Wayfinding	Wayfinding is the process that people use to navigate within their communities as they move from place to place. Wayfinding cues include: signs and maps; marked pathways; landmarks such as sculptures, fountains, distinctive buildings, gardens, benches and rest areas; and lighting.