



This transcript was downloaded from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center's website (www.nadtc.org). It was developed by Easter Seals Project ACTION, a technical assistance center operated by Easter Seals, Inc. through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration.

EASTER SEALS PROJECT ACTION

**Rail Accessibility:
Ensuring Equal Access to a Growing Transportation Mode
December 1, 2011
2:00 p.m. ET**

Operator: Good afternoon. Welcome to this presentation of Rail Accessibility: Ensuring Equal Access to a Growing Transportation Mode, a Webinar being presented by the Easter Seals Project Action.

All participants will be in listen-only mode. There will be several opportunities to ask questions during today's presentation. At that time an operator will give instructions on how to ask your questions. If you should need assistance during the conference, please signal an operator by pressing star, then zero on your touchtone phone. This conference is being recorded.

I would now like to turn the conference over to Krystian Boreyko.

Krystian Boreyko: Thank you so much, Misty. Welcome everyone.

Easter Seals Project Action is excited to present today's session. We are going to learn about new federal regulations surrounding the accessibility of rail systems, what considerations go into the design and construction of rail projects, the importance of accessible fair vending equipment, and what Amtrak, our nation's intercity carrier, is doing to improve the accessibility of intercity rail.

At a time when rail is part of the national dialogue on Mass Transit, our aim is to ensure that accessibility for all riders is included in the conversation.

I would like to remind everyone that this session is being recorded and transcribed and is going to be available in text, Braille, and audio CD formats following the conference upon request.

Please visit the Easter Seals Project Action Web site at www.projectaction.org to obtain a PDF or text format. You can also contact ESPA distance learning at Easterseals.com and that's all one word, to request a Braille or audio CD.

Now I'm going to turn it over to Rik Opstelten to introduce today's speakers.

Rik Opstelten: Thank you, Krystian.

Today's first speaker will be Richard Devylder.

In July 2010, President Obama appointed Mr. Devylder as the US Department of Transportation's first Senior Advisor for Accessible Transportation. He advises the agency's efforts to ensure all modes of transportation are accessible and integrated to meet the diverse, functional needs of the public. He brings to this position deep experience from previous work as the special advisor to the secretary for the California Emergency Management Agency and Director of its office for access and functional needs, also as Deputy Director for the California Department of Rehabilitation.

We also have Lauren Skiver, Deputy Chief Operating Officer for the Maryland Transit Authority Administration. Ms. Skiver is responsible for the operation of bus transportation, bus maintenance, light rail, metro-subway, and mobility repair transit.

Ms Skiver began her transit career at Hart in Tampa, Florida, as a bus maintenance clerk 14 years ago, after serving in the United States Army. She went on to become Director of (Para) Transit at both Hart and MTA.

She became MTA's Deputy COO in December of 2009 and is excited to have the opportunity to improve accessibility providers on MTA's fixed-rail services.

Don Kloehn has more than 36 years of experience in the transportation field, with involvement of all aspects of transit facility design, construction, maintenance, and operations.

His broad expertise with transportation facility and vehicle accessibility and safety issues, as well as his in-depth knowledge of state and federal codes affecting accessibility in transportation provides Mr. Kloehn with a strong, national reputation.

Lastly, we have Gary Talbot. He is the Program Director for ADA at Amtrak. He is responsible for collaboration among Amtrak's departments to development and implement policy and procedures to respond to the requirements of the American's with Disabilities Act.

Prior to joining Amtrak, Talbot was the Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, one of the largest mass transit agencies in the United States that includes a vast network of bus and rail lines, including bus rapid transit, rapid rail, light rail, commuter rail, and commuter boat service.

In February of 2004, President George W. Bush, named Mr. Talbot to the US Access board. He is currently serving his 2nd term.

I will now give the presentation over to Mr. Richard Devylder.

Richard Devylder: Thank you and good afternoon everyone. I'm going to run you through some basic information about the new ADA rules. Obviously there are a lot of questions and scenarios that come up based on your community and your area.

We wanted to give you some general background as to the new rule that came out.

The first slide is my contact information. Feel free – if you have questions or just want to chat about transportation access – to get a hold of me, my e-mail is Richard.Devylder@dot.gov; and my direct line is 202 366 0129.

Let's skip to the third slide.

The amended regulation that the Department released a couple of months ago is requiring intercity, commuter and high-speed passenger railroads to ensure a new and significantly renovated station platform.

The passengers of these facilities can get on and off any accessible car of the train.

Also, passenger railroads must provide level entry boarding at new or altered stations in which no track passing through the station and adjacent to platforms is shared with existing freight rail operations.

We often times get questions about freight and so forth, and the general rule, and there are sometimes exceptions, but the general rule is if freight is sharing the track going through the station then in that situation the rule is a little bit different.

Next Slide.

Share track with freights: its options for new or altered stations when level boarding cannot be achieved. These are three options that they need to look at in terms of providing boarding onto a train.

Car-born lifts, mini-high platforms and station-based lifts, which many of us refer to in the industry as the mobile or sometimes (inaudible) first came out the crank lifts.

Next Slide.

DOT's Federal Transit Administration or the Federal Railroad Administration, depending on which we are talking about, will review a railroad's proposed method to ensure that it provides reliable, and safe services to individuals with disabilities in an integrated manner, and that's very important to consider in terms of looking at the new rule.

We want it to be integrated to the fullest and we want to ensure that people are able to access the train cars.

Next Slide.

In the plans that are submitted to FRA and to FTA, there are a couple of important elements that staff will look at in terms of the plans.

One is that the equipment will be deployed, maintained and operated. How does the provider plan to ensure that it's going to demand so that the equipment is going to be working at all times and so forth?

And then, secondly, personnel would be trained and deployed to ensure that service to individuals with disabilities was provided in a safe, timely, and reliable manner.

So this last slide and those two points are very important. We get questions often about what do you mean by integrated, and what do you mean by using car-borne lifts, or mini high-platforms, if we are not able to have level boarding, or mobile lifts.

Mobile lifts is obviously the key issue that comes up often, because it's not integrated and it does make it personnel focus, because you are going to need obviously personnel to assist in terms of pulling the mobile lift out and helping you get on and off the train. And so it's very important from our standpoint when we are reviewing the plans that those types of issues are looked at, that they are addressed, and that there is also a redundancy in terms of what the plan is going to be. Just saying that we are going to have an employee there doesn't give us the full scope of what needs to happen, but how are you going to maintain the lifts, how are you going to make sure nature doesn't hurt the lifts so that they are operable at all times and so forth.

With that we are going to pass it on to the next presenter.

Lauren Skiver: Thank you very much, Richard. I wanted to – let me go back, sorry – my comments are really about going from demand response, which I've done for many years, to be responsible for a rail system at the MTA.

One of the things that I quickly understood about the rail system was that in many instances people with disabilities were not really part of the plan. They were a reaction when they were trying to use either our commuter bus or our commuter rail services.

What I want to talk about is that we know that most rail trips require at least two modes of transport to achieve. If you drive, that's one hurdle that can

jump fairly easy, but if you use Para transit, the complexity of your trip has just increased considerably. The use of pickup windows, on-time performance issues, all play significant roles in deterring rail usage for people with disabilities.

In reviewing the MTA's bus commuter schedules, I quickly discovered that load time needed to use a lift was not built into any of the running times in the routes at the stops and the MTA serves many, many locations within the DC area to bring people back to the Maryland area. So these are very busy lines, but there is a requirement that if you are going to encourage people with disabilities to use this type of service that you have built success into that by increasing load times so that it does make it accessible.

The next thing on the slide is level of accessibility at rail system. Stations can be difficult to navigate, each station layout is likely to be different, and again, I'm speaking from the MTA system, so I want to make sure that's very clear.

People who are unfamiliar with the layout, it can be very daunting, especially late at night or in poor weather. Minimum levels of lighting, appropriate and visible signage, clearly marked facilities, all make the system more accessible for everyone.

Accessibility by region is different. In commuter rail, obviously, people are traveling within the same system, but in using cross country rail systems there can be a lot of difference in the accessibility or the uniformity of stations by region.

The other thing that struck me when I first started working closely in rail was there is a commuter mentality, which does not really allow for the need for assistance, or more time. Many individuals who aren't either familiar with the trip, or have not made that trip 100 times like every other commuter, need a bit more time.

I noticed in our commuter systems that we had not really looked at boarding, or the ease of boarding as a way to make our system more accessible.

Existing conditions:

Passenger rail is highly dependant on rail vehicle, rolling stock and station and infrastructure accessibility. As Richard just spoke about, we have a lot of big changes coming to make this more accessible, but as we all know in rail the wheel turns a little bit slower in making these kinds of modifications.

So looking at existing design challenges, high platform versus low, gaps in accessing the vehicle are all things that systems have to look more seriously at.

In our system we have several lines that do have a dual track use, which means that they have freight and passenger and we have several issues with accessibility at those stations, which the agency is addressing.

We don't own any of these infrastructures either, which is another complexity in the MTA system. Having control over infrastructure has – we do have a great relationship with both track providers, but it does slow down the process sometimes for making accessibility improvements to some of this infrastructure.

I like this slide because I am a real visual person and what this slide says to me is where you see those question marks; for people with disabilities using rail service this is the biggest question. You know, if we jump in our car and drive to the station, right on, and then get off, either walk or use a supplementary transit system to get to our destination, those question marks are much easier, but for people with disabilities those are all big questions that all affect that station A to B trip.

One of the things that we are looking at at the MTA is that if an area is covered by Paratransit service, and it's not a straight commuter rail, that is not part of our service area, we are trying to get a lot more focused on looking at how we can develop feeder bus travel from communities to the station so that we don't create longer Paratransit trips taking that person home all the way to the destination.

I mean that is one of the benefits for transit who do have rail, and who do have rail lines that are a part of their fixed route system, their core service, that you reduce those travel times on Paratransit.

So, you know, as the slide before said, the biggest hurdles for people with disabilities are before travel, understanding the schedules and timetables, are they accessible format, ticketing, reservations, and these are all different depending on the type of travel the person is trying to make; whether it's cross country or just a commuter route into work.

Station Facilities:

Understanding what entry, points of entry are accessible, how to navigate. I'll give you an example, at our BWI station we have – it's really one point of entry between north and south but if that elevator is out of service, you are not getting on that southbound track to take that train to DC.

So understanding communication for facilities, understanding how to communicate with passengers that elevators or escalators are out of service, are all very important for before travel at the station.

On the train:

Information systems, reliable technology, again, signage and where are the accessible cars, elevator and escalator information. We are using currently a tech system where commuters sign up for information regarding trains, whether trains are late, escalator, elevator information and that has been very successful for our MARC commuter riders. But we are still looking to improve that. I mean sometimes elevators go down and there is a little bit of a lapse of time in alerting people that that has taken place; and so we are always working on how to get information out clearer and more quickly.

We are also looking at our rolling stock. We are looking at different parts of our older rolling stock and what rolling stock we are looking to purchase to make sure that we are always looking at accessibility as part of that plan.

I believe the key component to accessibility on any transit services are the people. I'm not always really popular with some of our IT folks because I always say "technology is great, but people have to drive it." And one of the things I think that is really a key component that we are focusing on here is informed staff. Making sure that people understand, not just regulatory requirements, but also the spirit of the regulation. It's imperative to us that all our staff members understand both of these elements in order to provide more accessible services.

I think many agencies spend considerable amount of time training. They spend a lot of money educating operators on the regulatory responsibilities of the ADA, but we don't invest the same time and energy into supervisors, management and decision makers on why we need to make our system accessible and we don't – so we don't talk enough about the spirit of the law.

Ensuring that staff is available and effective is really one of the keys to using any service, but certainly in rail. And, again, I'm speaking from – the MTA service is a little unique – I mean not only do we have a vast amount of commuters that ride to DC everyday, but the BWI airport, which is one of our busiest stations, moves a lot of folks to the DC area just for a vacation and travel, so we have a wide variety of riders on our MARC commuter rail service; and I would say just as many during off-peak times, or just folks taking pleasure trips as necessarily the ones that we have commuting in the mornings trying to get to work.

I want to talk a little bit briefly amount the TICO historic street car system in Tampa, Florida, because I was actually working for HARTLine at the time, Hillsboro Area Regional Transit, and I was deeply involved in the opening of that street car system.

It opened in October of 2002 in a smaller operation. It's a joint venture between HART and the City of Tampa. So HART owns the vehicles and operated the service, and the City of Tampa built the infrastructure, so it was a real joint venture.

The interesting part is that even though it was pretty new construction, and I mean in the world of rail, rail systems aren't built every day, there were a lot of old mistakes made just based on contractors, design, and sort of the way that this joint venture was rolled out.

There were path of travel issues, some passenger boarding issues, track gaps at crossings, and then the biggest issue here is when you have a joint venture those are remarkable and they are definitely needed in our time of funding and the available dollars to do these types of programs.

One of the things that was an issue in this particular system was HARTLINE was operating it, therefore the vehicles going down the street say HARTLINE on them, but they weren't necessarily responsible for the infrastructure in the stations, so it took a long time for all the parties to come together and make some real progress on some of the issues.

I would just point out a couple of things, and again this is – I have an update to this – but this is back when I was there and I was documenting what was going on.

If you look to the slide on the left, and there is an arrow point to a – it almost looks like a – it's hard to see on there, but it was a grate that did not meet the gap and the grate did not meet ADA requirements.

To the right of that arrow there were issues with path of travel. There was no kiosk placed there for persons with disabilities to board at the high block area. So not unusable by any means, definitely usable, but for people with disabilities and people using mobility devices, but again, it was just striking that in that day we would still have these types of errors in meeting accessibility requirements.

And then the photo to your right just shows a gap that did not meet the ADA requirements for travel over that – that's actually at a street crossing.

One of the things I didn't mention is that the Paralyzed Veterans Administration in Tampa had really offered to work with the city and HART in the design and collaboration of this system, and their offer wasn't accepted

at the time, but they were very valuable and instrumental in helping to document some of the things that needed to be addressed after construction was finished.

On the left side, you have a segregated entrance for wheelchairs and ambulatory passengers. So if you look at where the left side arrow is pointing, that's where people with disabilities and using mobility devices would enter.

And then down at the right side arrow was an entrance for ambulatory passengers. And then there is a pole there, right in the middle of that entrance that was not placed correctly. These things have been addressed since this time. Again, it's just pointing out that when you build something brand new there is a lot of faith and trust put in that all of these things will be designed correctly and it really takes having somebody onboard in the project to be monitoring every step of the way to ensure that accessibility requirements are followed.

So Areas of Focus: And these again are about my observations on the MTA service. Again, I bring a Paratransit focus to rail and one of the things that I noticed right away when I started working with commuter rail and other rail services is that a lot of folks just had never anticipated people with disabilities using their service. Or if they did, they just figured the ones that could that was good enough.

So one of the things that we really started to concentrate more on in Maryland is really improving customer service and information. Making sure that people have detailed information about station locations, how to use them, and information about serviceability on our escalators and elevators.

We are also looking to improve link services. We would like to see people be able to use those services instead of creating very long Paratransit trips. And our system for being a very urban area, we still do very long Paratransit trips and one of the things we want to look at is improving, sort of linking, so that individuals can make more decisions about independent travel without having to use our Paratransit service.

Engineering Solutions, Ease of Station and Vehicle Access and Universal Design. We have several stations that are undergoing facelifts that we want to make more accessible. We do have two new lines that are in the pipeline. We have a red and purple line that are in the development stages and are exciting projects, but we want to make sure that they are all very accessible.

And then also having a regional dialogue with our partners down to the south. I mean WMATA is a big sister agency to us and so having a lot of good conversation with them about how to make the transition from Maryland to DC for people that are working, or going for leisure activities, is easy.

Also, Real-Time Passenger Information: Again, I kind of talked about that. This information is very, very valuable. Again though, I think the key is really focusing on employees, both of Amtrak, who are our partners, and others, to understand that as I said in the beginning of my presentation that people with disabilities are part of the plan, not a reaction to their attempting to access our service.

And then the last thing I just wanted to talk about is inclusion instead of requirement. Anticipating customer needs rather than reacting. Doing the right thing before legal action. I mean I think that's extremely important. The development of feeder and link. I can't talk about that enough. I think that's what brings people to a rail system is having ease of accessing it, not requiring to have a car to do so; and passenger education.

One thing I want to leave you with is this presentation, I started working on this a couple of years ago, and the impetus of that was that when I first took over the rail services at MTA my sister had come out to visit me and she has cancer and she was going to ride to DC to catch a plane and I'm thinking she's a world traveler, I work for the MTA, this is going to be no problem.

We get to the station and the elevator is out. I didn't get a text on that, it wasn't working that day. Long story short, she made it onto the train, but it was very difficult, highly stressful, and I remember seeing her little face as she finally got on and went and sat down and I thought it was a miracle that she got it to the train and got that trip, but the bigger thing was that as a person

who works in this business I just want to make sure that everything we do is trying to ease that travel experience for others. So the MTA is very focused on that and I think that all transit systems should be looking at how does that person use the system and how usable is the system for everyone.

So thank you very much and with that I will hand it over to (Don).

Don Kloehn: Thank you, Lauren.

When we first started talking about this session today, we were looking for accessibility issues that would highlight rail access. And in talking to Krystian and others of the ESPA we decided maybe a best practice example would be a good thing to do.

So my portion of this is to provide you an example of a transit agency, a commuter rail agency in fact that has effectively replaced their ticket vending equipment and validation equipment and the process in which they did that was extremely valuable to them and cost-effective. So we are going to progress through that process for you little bit.

As most of you know in rail environments the off-board ticketing, the ticket vending, or AFC equipment that is provided is very complicated and when the ADAAG, the American's with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines were revised in 2004, the access board wisely updated specifically the requirements for ticket vending equipment. ATMs are included in those requirements as well, and they are fairly extensive and highly technical type requirements now, where as in the old, original version of ADAAG is was less strenuous on transit agencies in terms of compliance. The key words in the code are that it must be accessible meaning that it meets all the requirements of the ADAAG in terms of the technical requirements and that those particular pieces of equipment be usable by people with disabilities, particularly those who are visually impaired or who are blind. And that's a very challenging thing to do when you apply that, I think, in the sense that the spirit of the law does.

So transit agencies are somewhat stressed out when it comes to understanding and actually applying those requirements when they development

specifications and design documents to give to a manufacturer to make them new ticket vending equipment.

Some of the key requirements – there's too many to list here, we'd probably have to take a 4-hour session just to train on the ticket vending requirements, but just some key elements are that equipment must now have speech instruction for independent use. The original requirements did not require this but we found through the years that having a voice instruction that provided information to allow a person to be able to find tactile cues on the face of a vending machine and then go from point A to Z until you could finally purchase your ticket was very practical and it created the usability feature of the machine.

Now, having said that, to be able to actually develop a script and all of the tactile cues that are necessary on the face of the machine to make it truly simple to use and further enhance the usability of the device is a challenge. So that's where we started in our reviews. The actual script for the audio machine must be clear and concise. Enough words to be able to make sure that the device is independently accessible and usable and it must allow a person, in a reasonable amount of time to purchase the ticket to go through the process at least for the first time.

A couple of other things, as I mentioned, the machine must be usable and accessible and the reach range now and the revision of the ADAAG also changed. It is now reduced from 54 inches to 48 inches and that's the universal maximum height reach range under the new ADAAG. And that also creates somewhat of a challenge in terms of some of these machines are pretty tall and all of the older machines really – coin slots and certain controls on the device are actually higher than 48 inches now, so when they go to replace new machines and they have to find characteristics that enable all of the controls to operate the device to be at or lower than 48 inches above the finished floor; so that's a challenge in itself.

And this particular project we did that through – this was a cubic machine that you see in the slide – and this was installed at the South Florida Regional Transit Authority, or tri-rail, in southeast Florida. This particular machine, to

make it accessible in terms of the reach-range, they had to put a different base on the device so that it lowered it to the point where the highest control is 48 inches.

The original thought was well; we'll just take one within a bank of machines and make it accessible. Typical bank in the tri-rail stations are two machines, or three machines side by side. We'll just take one and lower it, but it worked out better that we just decided that all of them being lowered to the height range making all of them equally accessible really worked well too. So that was the final decision.

Another change is the requirement for privacy, so that if a person has the desire to not have the audio instruction and therefore a person standing behind the user seeing what information is being punched on the face of the machine, the privacy factor could be applied by using a simple headphone, and all of the machines now require this. So when a person uses the audio feature they can control the volume by – you can see in the bottom right picture – by repeated presses of the audio button will increase the volume to a certain level and then it will drop back down to the starting volume level.

And if they use an earphone it's the same thing. It controls the volume that way but it also allows the person to hear the audio instructions without everybody around them hearing it; so it's a very useful feature.

Another change is at least one tactically discernable input control shall be provided for each function. So all that means is if the audio instructions tells a person to go to the keypad, locate it in the center left and press button 5, then obviously button 5 has to be tactically discernible. And the same is true of every feature on the device, and tactically discernible could be raised characters, raised lettering, and of course Braille, where you use those particular features to be able to identify. It's hard to see in the picture the brail except for the cancel button, but in all cases where you see raised lettering on these particular machines it was accompanied by Braille beneath the raised lettering so that a person that can read well can be able to move through the face of the machine.

Where you see the pictograms of Visa, MasterCard and so forth, on the audio instruction it would actually list the types of devices that could be used – a type of fare media that could be used to purchase a ticket.

When it comes to money input it would give the denominations of bills and/or coins, so a person will be able to tell, whoever is visually impaired and couldn't see the pictogram what it would take, they would know right off the bat what they could put into the machine.

The function keys must contrast visually from background services and characters and symbols on key services must contrast visually from key surfaces. Again, these are all situations where a person that might have some visual impairment but can make out colors would easily be able to discern certain controls or information or instructions on the machine. These are all elements we had to look through and make sure that in the specs that the manufacturer was required to comply with and meet these particular standards.

For cubic it was a big learning experience. I went through this twice with cubic. In fact, where Lauren works at the MTA in Baltimore, their light rail system purchased new fare vending equipment and I was involved after the fact with that one where we had to revise the scope, the actual audio script, and change all the voice messages and the voice files that go into the machine to make it more succinct.

And then we also add some tactical elements on the face of the machine to make that script work better and the devices that are in place now, we use at all the light rail stations is very effective. And I know from various conversations with the disability groups out there that they are very happy with the usability of that equipment.

So the same type of practice was applied here in south Florida and it turned out to be very good in terms of saving the SFRTA from having to go back after the fact and make changes to the devices that should have been made during manufacture. I think a lot of the manufacturers probably take the perspective ?we'll build it to the way you spec it and if you don't spec it

properly we'll gladly take your money again to make revisions to the machine.” That's kind of what happened in Baltimore and that's what we were hoping to avoid down in south Florida and so far it has worked really good.

So the earlier you can look at the voice instruction script that is being used in the voice system and the earlier that you can look at the actual specifications for the tactile cues and the various instructions on the face of the machine, the sooner you can get to a fully accessible machine.

Testing, you know, we went out to the manufacturer site in San Diego and actually tested a prototype device they had constructed, went through the instruction line by line by line, listening to the advice and then following the instructions to the various tactile cues, seeing if things worked or didn't work and then we made suggestions; in fact, several pages of suggestions to get them to change and make thing even better.

And then when their final delivery of a prototype was delivered to south Florida, we again examined that particular unit and made sure that they had met all of the earlier remark requirements and they did; they did a good job.

And then we set up a focus group of individuals who had various degrees of either blindness or visual impairment and we had them use the machine. The only requirement was that they were familiar with using the transit system, or were transit users and then we just turned them loose and we watched to see how they could use the machine.

We recorded it, taped it, and videoed it and did everything like that and then asked them afterwards, interviewed, and said “what would make it better? What could we do? “

For the most part it was usable with a little bit of feeling around and trying to figure it out and once they found the audio instruction button then everything clicked. Once the voice instruction triggered then we knew that it was easy enough to follow and they purchased their ticket.

So the lesson learned from the focus testing was how do we better define where the audio instruction activation button is, and there was all sorts of

discussions about some sort of proximity sensor that might – you know when someone gets close enough to the machine, it might say purchase tickets here, press the audio button located at waist height on the left side of the machine. And because it was tactilely discernable you could find it fairly easily.

But we were already at the point where we were ready to install the device into the stations and that was a major change. So what tri-rail is going to do though, on future retrofits where they have to change voice instructions and so forth, because of fare increases or whatever, then they are going to actually enact that sort of instruction that will help people find the audio instruction activation button better than they have been.

So it's a very effective and very judicious way of actually buying new equipment out there and certainly a process that I think any transit agency that is looking into either rehabbing or purchasing new ticket vending equipment would actually benefit from.

I'm going to turn it over now to Gary Talbot so he can be your final presenter today. Gary.

Gary Talbot: Thank you very much. Hi, my name is Gary Talbot and I'm with Amtrak. Thank you very much for the opportunity. If I could have the next slide I will try and get through a few of these as quick as I can, because I know there's some stuff towards the back that we all want to – that I want everybody to see and hopefully ask questions if you have some.

Stations and ADA Accessibility. I just wanted to touch on the station perspectives. What Amtrak looks at; what communities look at, especially when you are looking at a new station and putting in a new station. Amtrak service for customers with disabilities, our ADA requirements, the new platform requirements, due to the new platform rule from DOT that Richard mentioned. And the station development process that we are in the midst of today.

If I could have the next slide please.

Amtrak and local communities will look really at 7 to 10 key factors. I won't go through all of them, but for me kind of put your head on for accessibility, all of these hit us and there is an accessibility component to all of these. And really not just for people with disabilities, but for seniors. Certainly folks with disabilities, moms and dads with strollers, lots of folks with luggage that get on and off our trains everyday, and many of these issues impact them, especially if they are not accessible.

Our brand identification, joint development and revenue opportunities with the community are very important.

Transit hub and multi-modal. Think about Amtrak for a moment. We certainly don't want to have the nation's railroad go to a station that is out in the middle of nowhere, that's a brand new station that we built today and it's not connected to anything, no bus, no other modes of transportation. I mean that would really be hard on a business case to convince folks to do that.

And then from the community side, economic development and using that station as really a center or a transit oriented development opportunity. The community image, multi-modal station investment, and that rail is key mode in transportation system, station development matched to the scale of the community. It's a really important piece so that the station really matches that locality where it's placed.

And of course our dilemma, always, is sufficient funding at all levels of government. If you look at our system just a quick map, we serve 529 stations. We are in 48 states. I am still coming up to speed on many of the issues because I haven't been here that long, but it is a pretty vast system that is for sure.

Next slide please.

Large urban stations linked with small rural stations. If you look at our top 25 stations, they account for 63 percent of our ridership and our top hundred stations account for 87 percent.

This next slide kind of shows that in a graphic form. What it really tells you is we have a lot of stations that are low-frequency of service and low board and alight.

Next slide please.

Kind of shifting gears now away from new stations and how we pull new stations together. So just looking at communication and really our service for customers with disabilities, if we look at communication, training and procedures, our timetable indicates which stations are fully accessible and which provide limited access.

Today, the limited access is referred to as barrier free. That is something I'm trying to work at and really how we distinguish between the two. What's currently called barrier free, or limited access is where we provide a path of travel from, let's say parking down to the platform, and in many cases there will be a mobile lift to get you on and off the rail car.

The difference is on the fully accessible, those are the stations where the station itself is fully accessible. The counter heights, the restrooms, the path of travel from parking through to the station and then from the station to the platform.

Our Amtrak.com we've got 1800 US Rail to reserve accommodations for people with disabilities and then the call centers that give the automatic 15 percent discount to customers with disabilities.

Under training and procedures: All station, train and onboard service staff are trained to assist customers with disabilities. We reached out to, and signed contracts with Open Doors and Open Doors has been doing the training for us.

Next slide please.

Here is kind of a screen shot of both Amtrak.com and some of the things that you will find on there, and some explanation of what the different symbols mean.

Next slide please.

This is the fully accessible versus limited accessible stations that I mentioned. If you look online again it's going to say barrier-free on that lower box that has the ISA, the International Symbol of Accessibility inside a box that would be called on the Web site today, barrier-free. And this just shows that 354 of our Amtrak stations have either full or limited access, serving 94 percent of the Amtrak passengers. And then further explanation about fully accessible versus limited accessible.

If we look at limited access for a second, 142 of 483 stations, or about 30 percent are fully accessible, serving 7.4 million board and alight or 13 percent of our customers.

Next slide please.

If we look at our ADA requirements we have statutory requirements that Richard spoke of. The DOT regs are found at 49CFR Part 37 and then Part 38 for the vehicles. I think everybody is pretty much covered. It prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals; it covers public transit providers, including Amtrak. It covers all of our rolling stock and it covers our fixed-route buses as well as our rolling stock for the trains. It covers our stations, bus stations, buses, bus stops, used by Amtrak.

Next slide please.

Our station requirements. New rail stations must be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. It describes the responsible party for purposes of making stations ADA compliant; that's a really important piece, who is responsible? And what you'll see when you look at Amtrak, many of our stations we may not even own the station. We may not even own the platform. Sometimes we have a little piece of a parking lot if you can believe that, and then we have to come up with all kinds of creative solutions to gain access to be able to improve a path of travel from the parking into the station, or from the station down to the platform and so on. It makes it very, very difficult at times, especially from an accessibility perspective.

The station owners and persons in control of the station must cooperate with the responsible party. In some cases that is us and in other cases it's not us.

Existing intercity rail stations must be made accessible by July 26, 2010. That was a big day for us, that was our 20th anniversary and unfortunately we have missed that deadline. But I will tell you that we are working very hard to get to that level of accessibility and get all of our stations accessible as soon as possible.

Next slide please.

Stations which must be made ADA compliant: When you boil it all down for Amtrak, Amtrak regular train service, we have 483 that require ADA compliance. We have 37 due to Katrina, there were 12 that were suspended and there were flag stops; there were 25 of those that did not require it; so we have 483 to make ADA compliant.

Next slide please.

Now, if we look at platform requirements, the new DOT level boarding rules were issued on September 9, 2011. These are the rules we have all waited for for many, many years.

The new DOT platform rules require Amtrak to provide level boarding platforms where they are the responsible entity and the tracks directly adjacent to the platform are passenger only, and Richard got into that. I'm not going to go through that again, but I would say this, I think it is important for folks to know – I mean if the tracks directly adjacent to the platform are shared-use tracks that means there's freight and passenger traffic. Amtrak will evaluate the frequency of service, the numbers of customers that board and alight at that location and in addition to that we are trying to factor in other things like major employment, major education, and major medical. We did a similar thing up at the MBTA when we were looking at our key bus routes and trying to define – in trying to prioritize well which ones are the most important to people with disabilities and I think this will give us more data to look at. Well, okay, just because there's freight next to the platform, maybe we still

want to go after the freight guys and say look we need you as partners in this, and we need to do level boarding. And here are all the good reasons why.

Accessible board and alight strategies will include level boarding platforms, car-borne lifts, mini high platforms, and in some – and I wrote – in some cases mobile lifts and I'm working on that.

Next slide please.

Assistive boarding devices for passengers with disabilities: I apologize. My updated photo on the left top did not get in there; that's a mini high platform and a very small one I might add. When I think of a mini high platform, and I think Richard would agree, we are thinking more of the 45-foot long, 20-foot wide. They are really just a setback platform that's at high level and set back for a bunch of reasons; maybe because you have freight coming through or something like that. They function almost as good as a high-level platform. They are not as good as a high level, or let's say as a level boarded platform might be, but they are certainly the next best thing I think.

In addition to that we have ramps and car-borne lifts.

Next slide please.

Our guidelines are currently under being developed – or updated – excuse me. And that's because of the new platform guidelines – or the platform standards, rather, from DOT.

We prefer full train-length platforms but will consider other options. Platform edges, bordering drop-offs must have detectable warnings that are 24 inches wide.

Level boarding platforms are preferred by Amtrak, but when not available assistive boarding devices will be available for customers with disabilities. And again, this is back to the you know, how do we see it, and I think it's – you know level boarding is certainly what we want. But if we can't get that, car-borne lifts are a good option. The setback platforms are another good option and then where we can't do anything else or board and alight is very

low, or frequency is very low, and the impact to the community is very low, then maybe in those cases the mobile lift will suffice.

Amtrak will submit all station plans to FRA, and this is what Richard brought up. I think this is a great thing; great opportunity for DOT to work in concert with Amtrak. And with other commuter railroads around the nation to really make sure that everybody is on the same page from an accessibility perspective.

So now, today, these 483 stations we talked about, if we are providing level boarding, we can just go ahead and do the level boarding, but if we can't provide level boarding for some reason or we don't think it's necessary, we have to right a narrative to the FRA, submit that, and in some cases include FTA as well, if there is also heavy rail or light rail at that station, and get their approval on our plans. And I think that's a good change.

Next slide please.

Our challenge is to achieving full compliance funding is always a challenge. The time required for completion. We just talked about – you know we were supposed to be done in July 26, 2010 and we are quite a ways off from that, so time is certainly an issue.

Our report to Congress in February of 2009 indicated that the initial deadline was infeasible for Amtrak. We projected some costs, but I do believe now, because we have the new platform standard from DOT, I think we are going to have to revisit the cost. Because there is certainly going to be more stations that have level boarding and to provide level boarding is certainly a cost increase from just doing a low level platform with a mobile lift.

Next slide please.

Progress to date: Since 2009 in our ADA report, Amtrak awarded contracts totally \$109 million for ADA projects in more than 200 stations.

We renegotiated property rights with 7 host railroads for approximately 300 stations and we refocused our ADA compliance plan. We excluded the state of good repair work, which I think was a really good move.

When you have this number of stations, and this many accessibility elements that need to be brought into compliance at this quantity of stations, it really is, I believe, a much better move to focus on the accessibility work first.

Once we bring it up to compliance, then it can fall into the state of good repair cycle and that type of thing. And this gives higher priority to the 150 stations where Amtrak has responsibility for all station components.

Next slide please.

In our development process I really thought it was important that just to try and share well what does it look like for Amtrak to go through a station development where you – whether we are going to go in and do this major overhaul to bring it into compliance, or it's a brand new station, this is just to give you an idea of the type of work that goes into every single station times a very, very large number, 483.

Next slide please.

Station planning and funding: Amtrak's support to local agencies through the planning process, our Amtrak station program and planning standards and guidelines that we have, our great American stations and our outreach. We are actually going next week to Burlington, Vermont, for a civic conversation. I'm really excited about that. It's my first chance to do that as an Amtrak employee and it will give me a chance to talk about some of the accessibility stuff that we want to do at their station.

I just lost my connection, I so apologize, hang on one sec. I'm sorry. Can you go to the next slide for me, please?

Krystian Boreyko: Gary, it's on the next slide.

Gary Talbot: Thank you.

On the station graphics, the signage standards – excuse me the station graphics signage standards manual, we are updating that to reflect the new 2004 ADAAG, the 2006 DOT. As it says, they are under continual development. We do have some recent updates in there and I'll be working on that as well.

And then, under “future features”, the electronic signage, we call them the PIDS, the Passenger Information Display System, that's part of our ADA program as well. So where we are replacing veritable message signs and audio signs and things like that we are putting in the PIDS that are dual mode.

Next slide.

Advances in customer services stations, Wi-Fi internet access along the Northeast corridor, electronic ticketing – there are some major changes taking place after the 1st of the year. Passenger information display systems that we talked about and then the Web site with continual improvements.

Next slide please.

Conclusion: Our stations are critically important to communities and Amtrak. Vital community centers and development generators and really critical links between community and transportation, and I think even more so for people with disabilities. I think it has been very under-utilized because it hasn't been accessible. But I think as we bring it up to accessibility standards and provide that service for folks, I think they really will look to Amtrak as a true alternative.

Amtrak can support station development; we discussed that through our design guidelines, prototype standards and so on.

Next slide. I think that's it; that's my conclusion. Thank you very much for the opportunity. I appreciate it.

Krystian Boreyko: Misty, could you please give us directions for Q&A?

Operator: At this time, if you would like to ask a question, please press star, then the number one on your telephone keypad. Again, that's star one to ask a question.

Your first question comes from the line of Chris from DC.

Chris: Could you clarify, tell me stations where will still have mobile lifts after everything is all said and done. That is part one.

Gary Talbot: This is Gary Talbot, should I just go ahead answer that?

Krystian Boreyko: Yes, please Gary. Thank you.

Gary Talbot: And this was Chris?

Chris: Yes.

Gary Talbot: I don't know the answer to that. I will say this, I'm hoping that as we roll out our – we call it the ASDP Program, the Accessible Stations Development Program, I'm really hoping, like Richard said, that mobile lifts become a backup in many cases where we are able to do a setback platform if we can't do a level boarding. Or maybe level boarding just doesn't make sense and that's a key piece of the Amtrak system. Is that in some cases I'm not so sure that's really where you would want to spend a tremendous amount of money if it's 700 or 800 people a year that get on and off a train, but that said, you know if the host railroad will allow it, if it makes sense to do it, then I still believe that level boarding ought to be our preferred option.

So I guess the way I would answer your question is my hope is that the number we have in play today is considerably reduced after we complete our efforts.

Chris: And I guess my part is two is to Richard. And that is given the folks in the community clearly do not prefer mobile lifts, why does the final rule not prioritize mobile lifts as the actual last option?

Richard Devylder: Hey (Chris) it's Richard. In terms of your question, you are asking why it's not kind of ranked like a hierarchy?

(Chris): Yes.

Richard Devylder: And . . .

(Chris): And how do we create it to folks on the outside very clearly that it is our last option.

Richard Devylder: Well, as you can see in the room, we did move the mobile lifts to list it as the last option. But you are correct in that it does not – there is a hierarchy and that is the reason why a plan must be submitted to either FRA or FTA as to the plan in terms of the uses in ensuring that the option that they are choosing is going to be reliable and that people are not going to run into service gaps when they attempt to get on and off the train.

And how are we going to emphasize that?

Staff clearly understands that our goals are to in some ways phase out mobile lifts and use the other options, and they know that. As you know, I've been very boisterous publically about this issue.

Krystian Boreyko: Next question please, Misty.

Operator: Your next question comes from the line of Cheryl from Florida.

(Cheryl): Hi. Thank you for having this program and it's so timely. I live in central Florida and I'm working with the SunRail through the Florida Department of Transportation on accessibility issues for our new SunRail system.

This isn't covered in your presentation, but because I have all of these wonderful minds, and experience there, I wanted to ask a question about whether there are any standards, or regulations in place for leaving the rail cars in case of an emergency if you are a person with a disability. How is that normally handled in the already established rail systems like Amtrak, tri-rail et cetera? Does it require particular equipment perhaps for somebody in a wheelchair where they can't a power chair out, et cetera? How is that handled?

Don Kloehn: I know from working, this is Don Kloehn, from working with tri-rail and other agencies around the country that there are specific standard operating procedures and policies developed for emergency evacuations where you actually try to develop every known scenario that could occur on your system and what actions who takes throughout the entire system. So what does the trainman do, the operator, what does central control do, what do station personnel do, who contact who during the process, who takes charge of the incident, all of this is spelled out in an emergency plan and it's very detailed and it has to be practiced. You have to have two, three, or maybe even more training sessions, or stage practice drills where you actually have victims or some incident occur where you involve the local fire department, police department, rescue squads and so forth. So it's a coordinated effort and it's very detailed. Probably the federal government, I don't know for a fact, but I'm sure that FTA probably has several guidelines.

Easter Seals, TRB and others probably have all kinds of printed material that will help organize that kind of activity, so I know you can find help there.

Lauren Skiver: Don, this is Lauren. If I can also add that APTA also has – it's not active now, but there was a committee pulled together to develop some standards. So if you go to the APTA Web site that's another place to search if you'd like to get some information on that subject.

Cheryl: Great. Thank you very much.

Gary Talbot: If I could just add in, this is Gary Talbot from Amtrak, I will tell you my previous life up at the MBTA in Boston, we did some really cool things and actually did some stuff with Richard on a FEMA conference that he invited us to. We actually put evacuation chairs on what's called every married pair in the heavy rail system. So in heavy rail and commuter rail, when two cars are connected together they become a pair, every single pair had an evacuation chair and then we actually did drills and evacuated people with disabilities, or mobility users off of a train car in a simulated derailment and for the first time didn't have to take them off of a car on a stretcher, but rather left them upright in the chair and it worked out just fantastic.

Operator: Again, if you would like to ask a question, please press star then the number one on your telephone keypad.

Your next question comes from the line of Kenneth from DC.

Kenneth: Hi. I have a number of questions about a number of station scenarios. The way I read the rule on platforms it seems, and maybe I'm reading it wrong so correct me, but it seems like in most places, even when there are multiple tracks going through – passing through – a station, they are always owned by the freight rail so the freight rail is always going to say well we have the right to run our trains on any of the tracks so the platform rule seems to be, to me, the way I'm reading it – I mean I would like it to mean much more than I think it means, but it seems like it's going to be mostly meaningless if you are reading the rule or if the rule is being interpreted to say if a freight train passes next to the platform you don't have to do level boarding. And so I have a bunch of stations where this would be the case. Paoli and I sent this in advance, and I don't know if folks have seen it, but the Paoli SEPTA and Amtrak station has four tracks passing through the station, but I'm guessing that freight operates on both the outer tracks and the inner tracks.

Similarly Aberdeen, Maryland. I assume the Maryland person might be able to answer that. There are three tracks passing through that station and I again, assume that freight runs through any of those tracks so that station, even though there is a passing track, sounds like a station where there will never be level boarding.

On the next station on the MARC line, the Edgewood station only has two tracks passing through, so is that a station where there will never ever be level boarding?

And similarly in other stations, mostly from living in upstate New York, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, all those stations generally just have two tracks so they are also going to be – never have level boarding is what it sounds like to me. So if whoever is the expert can answer, and I'm particularly interested in the Paoli station because that's also a commuter rail station and I think that in

commuter rail mobile lifts are just a ridiculous – everybody gets angry about using a mobile lift at a commuter station.

Gary Talbot: If I could answer that. This is Gary Talbot. Is that OK, Krystian?

Krystian Boreyko: Yes, absolutely Gary.

Gary Talbot: I can speak to a couple of the stations.

Paoli, let me just share with you.

I just relocated here with my wife. I'm a full-time wheelchair user, actually found a house over near Paoli, and really liked the house. The Paoli station wasn't accessible. I found a different house in Wilmington where the house was less than two miles from the Claymont commuter rail station and it was accessible. So we actually bought a house in Wilmington. Unfortunately the lifts that are used to get you down to the underneath tunnel at Claymont don't work, so we should have bought I guess over in Paoli.

But anyway, the Paoli station I'm told that SEPTA is going to do a new station and it's going to be level boarding. But I can get some more information on that, but that's what I was told.

The other one, Aberdeen, I was just at Aberdeen just a few weeks ago and actually got off an Amtrak train there on a mobile lift. I wasn't real pleased and we are looking at whether or not we can do level boarding there. So I can't promise anything but I can promise you that I sure did not like my experience. I know you wouldn't like it and we are going to work hard to see if we can come up with some other solution. Level boarding, setback platform, or something.

Aberdeen is a really busy station and it just would benefit so much to have some type of level boarding there.

On the other stations, I wrote them down, if you could send your question in or if you did, then I'll get that list of stations that you are interested in and I'll try to give you some more feedback.

Richard Devylder: This is Richard. In response to your question, obviously that's why we have approached it in terms of freight does own a great deal of rail, no question about it. It doesn't necessarily mean that they are always going through the stations and we have put together a list of options that we believe is reasonable to look at. It's just an effort for people to seriously, and honestly plan, and to look at what are the options available and what is – and the rule we talk about we are looking for the most integrated means as possible and that is why we want plans submitted so that we can look at and worth with the different rail groups to determine the best options. I'd like to look at it a little more positive outlook and I think that we will have more level platforms than we have now, but we will not have 100 percent as your observation is.

Lauren Skiver: This is Lauren from the MTA, just to address the same question, I think the MTA is very interested in partnering with Amtrak or CSX, any of the track owners that we partner with to do combined projects that make the most sense.

Krystian Boreyko: This is Krystian from Project Action. We just have a couple of questions from the chat room.

Here is one.

It is for platform boarding: What is the maximum distance between the platform and the car?

Gary Talbot: It depends on whether or not you are on a curve or you are on tangent track. I believe its – Richard, do you know what it is in the new rule, in the new reg?

Richard Devylder: I don't have it in front of me.

Gary Talbot: I want to say its 13 inches maximum on a curve. But if you have a bridge plate, depending on what the span is, you may have to do handrails, something like that if you are trying to bridge over that type of a gap. Most of the gaps, at least in rail, SEPTA does this, Amtrak does that, and that has really taken away from the issue due to the bridge plate deployment.

Krystian Boreyko: Great, thank you. We just have a question here. I think it's from someone who came in a little bit late to the Webinar, but asking about accommodations

– in whether accommodations from New York trans stations were discussed and it says it was difficult to get accommodations there.

I don't know if anyone has any insight on that.

Richard Devylder: I'm not familiar with what you are asking but if you want to get a hold of me I'm happy to have a conversation with you about the New York station. This is Richard.

Gary Talbot: I'm not aware of any – I'm not exactly sure what the question is but like Richard if there is a specific issue, especially at a station or something like that, this is Gary Talbot, and I would sure want to know.

Krystian Boreyko: All right. Thanks so much.

So we have a few minutes left, does anyone else have any questions that they would like to call in or ask over the chat?

Operator: Again, if you would like to ask a question, please press star, then the number one on your telephone keypad.

You have a question from the line of Chris from DC.

(Chris): Richard, can you clarify whether DOT, or how DOT defines reliable in terms of elevators. As you know, if you are – let's just take BWI station, with one elevator. If that elevator is working let's say 95 percent of the time, that still leads roughly an hour every day where it may not be working. So how does DOT evaluate reliability in terms of access features?

Richard Devylder: So you are asking me – I think it's a couple of questions – first, how do we define reliable elevators?

Chris: Yes. It could be elevator or it could be a mobile lift. In either case, the question is how do we define it and therefore how do we set standards for transit agencies?

Richard Devylder: Well there is no – in the regulations, as you know, there is no like two days, five days, ten days, sort of thing in terms of them being out, but there is a

pattern, a cellular, so as we receive information, both from the transit group, but also complaints from – because customers using service, obviously there is a pattern of, a breakdown of the device or of the technologies that you are trying to use to access the stations or getting on and off a train are considered in looking at the whole situation. But you know from our discussions in the past that there are no actual numbers that are given within the regulations.

Krystian Boreyko: Thank you so much everyone for your questions. If you think of additional questions after the session that you would like to ask the presenters, please send them to [ESPAdistancelearning](mailto:ESPAdistancelearning@easterseals.com) and that's distancelearning@easterseals.com and we'll be happy to make sure that you get answers for those.

(Rick Obelstein): We have nearly used up our time for today. Thank you everybody. We have just a few more minutes left before we end. I would like to thank Richard, Lauren, Don and Gary for the excellent presentations and all their useful information.

Before we close, are there any closing comments from the presenters?

No? Well, thank you again, from all of us. On behalf of Project Action we would like to thank everyone also who is on the call, as well as our friends at Better World and Elluminate

As we have said before, if you are interested in having a text or PDF transcript of today's program, please visit our Web site at projectaction.org in about 30 days time.

And if you would like the transcript in brail or audio CD format, we ask that you please make that request to espadistancelearning@easterseals.com and give your postal address.

There will be a recording of this webinar available in the future, in actually a very short number of days. Please contact us if you would like to have instructions for how to access that.

And again, thank you for your participation. In a few minutes there will be a link sent to each of the participants with an event evaluation, we ask that you take a few moments and provide us with your feedback concerning the effectiveness of today's presentation.

Also, please continue to watch our Web site projectaction.org and your e-mail for future project action events.

Most importantly, thank you again for your commitment to bringing together the disability community and the transportation industry to improve accessible transportation in our communities.

To all of you, have a wonderful day.

Operator: Thank you. This concludes today's conference call. You may now disconnect.

END