



ACCESS CURRENTS

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Board Explores Aspects of Airport Accessibility at Recent Meeting

Over 80% of travelers with disabilities report access barriers at airports according to a consumer survey. The Board is examining airport terminal accessibility as part of an ongoing program to explore access issues in depth in order to improve compliance and to promote effective design. At its November meeting, the Board conducted a full-day session on the topic as a first step in this initiative. Invited speakers briefed members on a range of topics, including ticketing kiosks, telecommunications, security screening, boarding bridges, research, and consumer surveys. The Open Doors Organization, a nonprofit entity focused on promoting accessible consumer services, presented findings from its survey of consumers and results from outreach efforts with the airline industry.

Increasingly, self-service kiosks are becoming the norm in airports and transit stations, stores, and other venues. These devices feature various interface technologies, such as touch screens, that by themselves are not accessible to all users, particularly those with vision impairments. Representatives from the U.S. Postal Service and Amtrak gave a presentation

on system-wide installations of accessible self-service kiosks in post offices and train stations across the country. The meeting also covered telecommunications access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, a common compliance issue at airports. Communication Services for the Deaf demonstrated new technologies, including a video phone enabling sign language communication that has been piloted at Chicago's O'Hare airport.



Speakers

Brandi Rarus
Communication Services for the Deaf

William Peterson
Department of Homeland Security

Larry Goldstein
Transportation Research Board

Katharine Hunter-Zaworski
National Center on Accessible Transportation

Michael Adam
U.S. Postal Service

Matthew Hardison
Amtrak

Eric Lipp
Open Doors Organization

J. Garrett Macfarlane
FMC Technologies Jetway

Airport security checkpoints and screening procedures have raised important considerations for passengers with disabilities, including those who use mobility devices, wear prostheses, travel with oxygen or other medical equipment, or have a sensory impairment. A representative from the Department of Homeland Security gave a presentation on emerging screening technologies, such as retina scanning, and programs and efforts to ensure access for all travelers. Also on the agenda was discussion of aircraft boarding, and a jetway manufacturer briefed members on key requisites and parameters governing the design of boarding bridges.

The session also included presentations on research sponsored by the Transportation Research Board through its Airport Cooperative Research Program and by the National Center on Accessible Transportation. Representatives from these organizations briefed members on projects studying airport signage and wayfinding information, boarding chair transfer, boarding technologies, aircraft lavatories, airport surveys, and real-time communication systems.

The Board plans to examine other access issues at airports, including parking, passenger drop-offs, ticket areas and counters, and baggage claim areas. For further information, contact Bill Botten at botten@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0014 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

President Bush Appoints New Members to the Board

President Bush recently appointed three new members to the Access Board: John Gunnar Box of Corona, California, Ronald J. Gardner of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Neil K. Melick of West Palm Beach, Florida. The President also reappointed three current or former members: Douglas Anderson, of Wheaton, Illinois, James R. Harding II, of Tallahassee, Florida, and Gary L. Talbot of Foxboro, Massachusetts.



John Gunnar Box, a native of Southern California, is founder of Colours 'N Motion, Inc., a company that manufacturers and customizes wheelchairs and wheelchair accessories. He has run the company as its president for the past 16 years. Previously, he organized and operated a family run aerospace company. Box sits on the boards of UNITY, a Corona youth organization, and the Los Amigos Research and Education Institute.



Ronald J. Gardner is an attorney who has practiced law for over 25 years. Most of his legal work involved litigating tax and bankruptcy cases. He serves as President of the National Federation of the Blind of Utah. Previously, Gardner served as Legal Director of the Disability Law Center in Salt Lake City and as Director of the Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness at Louisiana Tech University.



Neil Melick, CBO, is Director of the Construction Services Department of the City of West Palm Beach, Florida. He is a Florida licensed Building Codes Administrator and International Certified Building Official, as well as a Florida Certified Building Contractor. He is Chair of the Florida Accessibility Advisory Council and is a member of the Florida Building Commission's Accessibility Technical Advisory Committee. In addition, Melick has served as president of the Building Officials Association of Palm Beach County and chair of the Building Code Advisory Board of Palm Beach County.



First appointed to the Board in 2003, Douglas Anderson, Associate AIA, is a Partner at LCM Architects in Chicago who assists both public and private entities in complying with the ADA. As an Accessibility Project Manager at the firm, he has advised various clients, including Fortune 500 companies, on meeting the design requirements of the ADA. Anderson previously was employed at the Great Lakes Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) at the University of Illinois at Chicago.



James R. ("J.R.") Harding II, Ed.D., who previously served on the Board from 2002 to 2006, is employed by the Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as a Partnership Specialist for the Office of the Director. Dr. Harding is active in a variety of organizations and causes, including the Governor's ADA Working Group, the Florida Building Commission Waiver Council, the Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged, the Citizens' Advisory Council of Leon County, and the Chamber of Commerce.



Gary L. Talbot is Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). He was named to his first term on the Board in 2003. Before joining MBTA in 2007, Talbot served as a Senior Engineer with Walt Disney World Ride and Show Engineering in Lake Buena Vista, Florida where he oversaw design and development of ride and attraction accessibility enhancements. He previously managed the General Motors Mobility Center in Warren, Michigan.

The new members, who will be sworn in at the Board's next meeting, succeed Pamela Dorwarth of Sarasota, Florida, James J. Elekes, M.Ed, MPA/CPM of Surfside Beach, South Carolina, Denis Pratt, AIA of Kennebunk, Maine, and Gwendolyn Trujillo of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Public Provides Input on Guidelines for Federal Outdoor Sites

Over 80 organizations, agencies, and individuals provided feedback to the Board during a four-month comment period on accessibility guidelines it proposed for Federal outdoor developed areas. In addition, almost 40 people provided testimony at a series of public hearings on the proposal held in Denver, Washington, D.C., and Indianapolis. The Board received comments from professional and trade groups, including the National Recreation and Park Association and the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association, individuals with disabilities, disability groups such as the American Council of the Blind and Paralyzed Veterans of America, the National Center on Accessibility and other organizations involved in outdoor recreation, trail and park operators, Federal agencies, including the Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service, and state and local parks and recreation agencies.



Board members hear testimony at one of three public hearings on the guidelines held during the comment period.

The proposed guidelines address access to new or altered trails, beach access routes, and picnic and camping areas on sites managed by the Federal government. They specify where compliance would be required and provide detailed technical criteria for achieving accessibility. Many comments endorsed the structure and application of the guidelines, including limited exceptions based on terrain and other conditions, and provided recommendations for further clarifying coverage. Pointing to the strong need for the guidelines, respondents encouraged the Board to promptly complete this rulemaking, to follow-up with similar guidelines for non-Federal sites, and to develop supplementary guidance and training materials.

Most comments addressed trails and outdoor recreation access routes and called attention to compliance concerns and areas where further guidance is needed, such as in determining adequate surface firmness and stability. Information was provided on trail signage and map systems and other subjects in response to questions posed by the Board in its published proposal. Commenters also provided input on access to beaches, including proposed criteria for access routes and compliance and maintenance concerns, picnic areas, and camp sites. The Board is analyzing issues and will finalize the guidelines based on its review of the comments and hearing testimony, which are posted on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/outdoor/nprm/comments/.

TEITAC Scheduled to Submit its Report to the Board in March

The Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee (TEITAC), held its seventh meeting November 13 – 16. The Committee, which is developing recommendations to the Board on updating its Section 508 standards for electronic and information technology and its Telecommunications Act guidelines, continued review of the most recent draft of its report. Discussion focused on unresolved issues and on remaining steps in finalizing the report. The Committee continued its deliberations by teleconference on December 18th to reach consensus on these items.

The Committee will hold an additional meeting January 7 – 9 to complete work on its report. Under this schedule, the Committee will present its report at a meeting of the Board in early March. For more information on the Committee's work, visit the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/sec508/update-index.htm, the committee's website at <http://teitac.org/>, or contact Tim Creagan at creagan@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0016 (v), or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

Board Support Broadens Major Study on Human Measures and Wheeled Mobility

A major multi-year study on people who use wheeled mobility aids is being conducted by the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Universal Design with support from the Board. Through this project, researchers are collecting anthropometric data on people using various types of manual wheelchairs and motorized devices. Space requirements, maneuvering parameters, reach ranges, and other measures are being entered into a database that will be instrumental in evaluating existing accessibility criteria and design specifications. To date, measurements have been taken on 400 subjects. Data will be collected on an additional 100 subjects in 2008 to meet the target sample size as established by a previous Board analysis.

“This project is groundbreaking both in its planning and scope,” indicates Lois Thibault, Research Coordinator for the Board. “Previous studies involved modest sample sizes and their results could not be aggregated due to variations in how data were collected.” Extensive planning went into the design of this project and the development and vetting of a standardized measurement protocol, including input received through two international conferences. “Our hope is that other researchers will use the methodology developed in this project and further build upon the established database so that changes can be captured continuously,” Thibault notes. For further information on the project, contact Thibault at research@access-board.gov or visit the RERC’s website at www.ap.buffalo.edu/idea/Anthro/index.asp.



A researcher at the RERC on Universal Design measures the reach of a test participant.

Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.

Volume 13 No. 6 November/ December 2007

Page 4



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