

11th Annual Mobility Workshop for Seniors and People with Disabilities

October 17, 2014 at the Ed Robert Campus, Berkeley, CA



Beyond Paratransit: 21st Century Mobility

On October 17, the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) and its Paratransit Advisory and Planning Committee (PAPCO) held its 11th Mobility Workshop, celebrating its twelfth year of providing specialized transportation programs and funding for seniors and people with disabilities in Alameda County. Over 100 people attended this year's workshop!

"Beyond Paratransit" highlighted that emerging technologies are profoundly affecting the transportation options available to seniors and people with disabilities. It also underscored the

imperative that the specialized needs of these populations must be adequately taken into consideration in this climate of rapid change.

Presentations focused on access to healthcare and social service facilities; technologies for "healthcare in the home;" opportunities for collaboration between seniors, people with disabilities, and technology developers; and the accessibility challenges and opportunities of new transportation services that use web- or mobile-based apps. The day concluded with a presentation about new funding opportunities through Measure BB.

Highlights:

Discussions of:

- *Transportation Access to Healthcare and Social Services*
- *TNCs and Accessibility*
- *Hot topics in transportation for seniors and people with disabilities*

Launch of:

- *New 211 Transportation Resource Finder*
- *New Access Alameda guide and website*

Our largest Resource Fair yet!



Our Most **Exciting** Workshop Yet!

Matt Todd, *Alameda CTC*

Sylvia Stadmire, *PAPCO*

Bonnie Nelson, *Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates*

The workshop began with opening remarks from **Matt Todd**, Principal Transportation Engineer for the Alameda CTC. Matt highlighted the important work the Commission has been able to undertake due to revenues from the Measure B sales tax. These programs include paratransit, senior shuttles, and taxi programs; travel training and educational initiatives that provide accessible and multi-lingual information; and projects and activities that improve the pedestrian environment and transit access for older adults and people with disabilities. He also emphasized the importance of this year's Measure BB, which will enable the Alameda CTC to sustain these important programs as well as create new ones.

Sylvia Stadmire, in her 7th year as Chairperson of PAPCO, gave an overview of PAPCO and their activities. PAPCO takes very seriously their responsibility for advising the Alameda CTC on funding for paratransit and other mobility programs for seniors and people with disabilities. This year the committee put an emphasis on helping to develop the new Access Alameda website and printed guide. PAPCO also enjoys the opportunity to receive presentations from grant recipients and this year has learned more about travel training, shuttles, and volunteer driver programs.

Bonnie Nelson, founder of Nelson\Nygaard, has been with the Alameda CTC's paratransit coordination team for more than a decade. Bonnie acknowledged the variety of modes workshop attendees had taken to get to the Ed Roberts campus, primarily using public transit, from almost every other Bay Area county! She highlighted the success of Measure B, passed in 2000, and celebrated the fact that Alameda County sets aside over 10% of its sales tax revenues for specialized transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities—more than any other Bay Area county and likely more than any other county in the entire country. Measure BB, passed by voters this November, will double the funding for such programs.



Presentation: Hot Topics in Accessible Transportation

Bonnie Nelson, *Nelson \ Nygaard Consulting Associates*

Bonnie also discussed several “hot” topics relevant to audience members.

New payment options. San Francisco currently offers a debit card that doubles as a paratransit ID card. Participants in the program can preload their card with stored value and pay for accessible taxi trips with the card. It also allows them to ride paratransit services. Modeled on San Francisco’s success improving the experience of paratransit riders, the City of Berkeley is currently developing a similar program.



photo by SFCTA

Clipper expansion and technology update. Seniors can now get Clipper cards in southern Alameda County due in part to the tireless efforts of Shawn Fong, Manager of the Fremont Paratransit Program. Also, the Clipper team currently is working on the “C2” project to plan for the next generation of Clipper. They are currently in public input phase, so look out for opportunities to provide feedback.

Accessible parking policy update. Last year’s workshop included a full presentation on San Francisco’s efforts to improve parking access for people with disabilities.

Representatives of the committee are working with state legislators to create enabling California legislation to allow for two major policy changes to ensure accessible parking spaces are more available. These policies would allow removing the meter payment exemption and establishing reasonable time limits for accessible spaces.

New rewards programs. Two new rewards programs were highlighted that seek to improve availability of accessible vehicles. The SFMTA offers accessible taxi providers \$10 extra per accessible trip provided, \$10 towards a medallion purchase per trip, and for every two trips served in outer lying



photo by SFCTA

neighborhoods, the driver gets a pass to go to the front of the line at SFO. City Car Share incentivizes volunteer drivers to provide trips to seniors by offering a free annual membership to those who volunteer drive at least 12 hours per quarter.

Panel Discussion: Transportation Access to Healthcare and Social Services

Cliff Chambers, *Mobility Planners LLC*

Stephen Johnston, *Aging 2.0*

Cliff Chambers, an expert in public transit planning and management, began with a summary of a recent MTC study on the location decisions of major health care facilities. It asked: Why do health care facilities locate where they do, often far from fixed-route transit?

Through focus groups, interviews, mapping, and case studies, the research team concluded:

- Facility location is mostly a city- or county-level decision
- Contrary to many claims, the costs of building a facility are only 3% higher for transit-accessible locations—cost is not the driving factor in the location decision
- There is a trend of de-centralization, whereby more providers are establishing satellite or specialist clinics, which are more accessible
- Comparatively, Alameda County has high public transit accessibility to health care

Cliff stressed that part of solution lies in better coordination between land use decisions and transportation and was hopeful for citizens to get involved with



that effort. He highlighted the Ed Roberts Campus itself as a perfect example of how community involvement, patience, perseverance, advocacy, and vision can result in a highly-accessible social service facility.

A member of the audience also stressed that advocacy is needed on site-specific projects. For example, local paratransit stops at medical facilities must be planned and coordinated early so that passengers can be picked up and dropped off easily.

Cliff's presentation was followed by **Stephen Johnston**, founder of Aging 2.0, a new organization that strives to connect young innovators working in mobile technology to people within the aging population itself. These innovators want to solve big problems but are sometimes unaware of seniors' needs. In his words, he wants to "bring people who innovation has forgotten to the mainstream."



Stephen stressed that Aging 2.0 is "thinking differently about the whole problem" by asking whether, instead of having to go to facilities, health care can come to us in our homes? Stephen shared lots of concrete examples of new technologies in this space. For example...

- ActiveProtective —"airbag pants"— detect a fall as it happens and inflate an airbag to protect the hips. As seniors age, they become more prone to falls, which can leave them vulnerable to other health complications.
- Sabi and Cuff each focus on bringing beauty to products aimed at seniors. Sabi has developed a fashionable cane that is both practical and stylish.

- Cuff, which makes "smart jewelry," sells a device that tracks seniors' activity in an unobtrusive way so that caregivers can respond when needed.
- Whill is redesigning the wheelchair with a goal of making it both practical and beautiful.
- Kenguru has designed a one-person vehicle with a ramp so that people using wheelchairs can roll themselves in and drive themselves to their destination.
- Other new technologies included Local Motors personal mobility pod, Noonee's exoskeleton, Rio Mobility's Firefly power wheelchair adapter, and Geppetto's avatar-based home health software.



To spur more innovation, Aging 2.0 and Stanford University have partnered to hold a design challenge titled "Enabling Personal Mobility Across the Life Span." They are collecting ideas between September and December 2014.

The major takeaways from this session are that there are opportunities to get involved with innovators by joining an Aging 2.0 Consumer Panel to improve mobility – and quality of life. These technologies can be beautiful and even affordable due to the rapid innovation in technology.

Panel Discussion: TNCs and Accessibility

Kate Toran, *San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency*

Jay Connolly, *Lift Hero*

Emily Castor, *Lyft*

Marilyn Golden, *Disability Rights and Education Defense Fund*

Transportation Network Companies, or “TNCs,” are companies that provide on-demand transportation services using a web- or mobile-based app to facilitate payment and connect drivers with passengers. Both panelists and audience members agreed that “TNC” is not an intuitive or clear term. This moderated discussion brought some clarity to what TNCs are, how they are impacting established transportation services, and their potential to address the mobility needs of seniors and people with disabilities.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency’s goal is to ensure service quality and availability of taxis, but they have no clear regulatory power over these new TNC companies, which are under the jurisdiction of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The agency recently released a study reporting that overall taxi trips have decreased over 60% between March 2012 and July 2014 and that accessible taxi medallion holders have started to turn in their medallions due to a decrease in overall demand. **Kate Toran**, Director of Taxis and Accessible Services, cautioned that while



these trends correlate with the increased use of TNCs in San Francisco, they are unsure of the direct effect of TNC use on the city’s taxi programs. They are hopeful they can coordinate solutions.

Two private providers of transportation—Lift Hero and Lyft—were on hand to discuss their experiences providing

transportation for seniors and people with disabilities.

Jay Connolly, founder of Lift Hero, described his



photo by Lift Hero

company's mission as increasing freedom and reducing isolation as people age. To do this, they offer a door-through-door service that connects seniors and communities with qualified drivers through a phone-, mobile-, and web-based system. Lift Hero complies with all CPUC regulations on TNCs and provides relevant training on safety and senior sensitivity.

Emily Castor, Director of Community Relations at Lyft, explained how their company started with a desire to make real-time, dynamic ridesharing available. She acknowledged that Lyft and other companies' growth may have had unintended consequences on the disability community and offered several initiatives they are undertaking to combat that. First, in several cities, including Austin, Seattle, and Chicago, Lyft contributes to an "accessibility fund" for funding accessibility programs and projects. Secondly, in California, they have initiated Lyft Access, envisioned as a fully accessible transportation option for people with disabilities.

Both Lift Hero and Lyft discussed the challenges they are experiencing in trying to expand their offerings to the disability community. Neither company owns their fleet of vehicles. Lyft has invited owners of accessible vehicles to participate, but has had minimal response. Both are considering the potential either to coordinate fleets of existing commercial providers (like San Francisco's accessible taxis) or to partner with existing social service organizations that have their own fleets of accessible vehicles.

Marilyn Golden of the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) is working to address the accessibility issue by asking TNCs to accept and comply with the ordinances and regulations with which traditional taxis must comply. She is wary that without this compliance, the growth in TNC use will negatively impact society as a whole by reducing the availability of taxis (both accessible and non-accessible taxis) and by allowing drivers to discriminate through the applications' passenger rating systems.



Several workshop attendees emphasized that traditional taxis do not always adequately serve needs of the disability community either. The panel promoted a lively discussion with the audience that continued long after the session was over. Overwhelmingly, panelists and audience members agreed that this is an evolving issue and that all interested parties must continue to engage in respectful and open-minded discussion, collaboration, and solutions.

Presentation: New 211 and Access Alameda websites

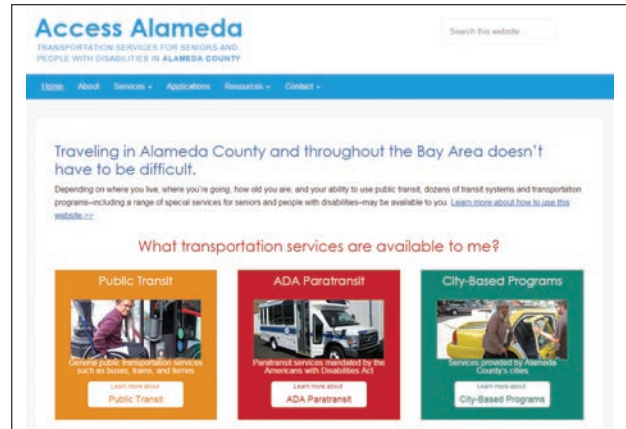
Mallory Nestor-Brush, *AC Transit*

Rick Otto, *Eden I&R*

Cathleen Sullivan, *Nelson \Nygaard*

The workshop marked the launch of two important new mobility resources in Alameda County. As **Cathleen Sullivan**, Senior Planner at Nelson \Nygaard, stated, “The Transportation Resource Finder is the ‘phone book’ for Alameda County transportation options, and the new Access Alameda website is the ‘guide book.’”

The 211 Transportation Resource Finder is a searchable, online database of transportation options and social services in Alameda County. AC Transit and Eden I&R partnered to develop the tool. **Mallory Nestor-Brush**, Accessible Services Manager, and **Rick Otto**, Director of Information Technology, were on hand



to demonstrate how residents can find the resources they need.

Revamped Access Alameda Guide and Website — An educational resource that clearly guides seniors and people with disabilities through the range of transportation options available to them funded by the Alameda CTC. The Alameda CTC worked with PAPCO to update and enhance this important resource using funding from a federal New Freedom grant.

Presentation: Measure BB

Tess Lengyel, *Alameda CTC*

Tess Lengyel, Alameda CTC’s Deputy Director of Planning and Policy, closed out this year’s workshop by celebrating PAPCO’s achievement in overseeing the expenditure of over \$120 million in transportation dollars. She highlighted the importance of this year’s Measure BB ballot measure, which will make an additional \$774 million available to paratransit

services. Measure BB augments and extends the existing transportation sales tax, and provides some of the “most flexible dollars that exist”—allowing PAPCO and Alameda County to continue their reputation as a leader in transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. **Measure BB passed with 70% of the vote on November 4, 2014.**