

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired



Orientation and Mobility Division Update

Spring 2021

Volume 24 Number 1

From the Chair

Hello Orientation and Mobility Division,

Twenty-twenty is behind us, what have we learned, what have we lost, and what have we gained? Twenty-twenty-one brings with it hope, forward thinking, and the ability to reflect on the impact of the previous year.

Sometimes people make resolutions to reach during the new year. Similarly, the O&M Division has committed to implement a plan of activities that should be attainable within one calendar year. Now and then our activities overlap from previous years, such as the Professional Issues Committee on Support Canes, sometimes they recur annually, such as the Donald Blasch Scholarship Committee and sometimes they have deadlines that are stationary and inflexible, such as biennial elections. So, what events or activities are set into motion for the year 2021?

By the time this edition of the newsletter is published members of the Environmental Access Committee (EAC) will have attended a virtual Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board. The EAC was represented at committee meetings, workshops, and plenary sessions. Thanks to Meg Robertson, Janet Barlow, Beezy Bentzen, Raychel Callary, Jennifer Graham, Linda Myers, and Claudia Libis for sharing their expertise and time at many committee meetings and other events. Annually, we attend meetings at TRB to advocate and address areas of the built environment that could impact people with visual impairments.

EAC members who attended committee meetings or visited exhibitors were not charged a registration fee. Those attending the full month of committee meetings, workshops, and poster sessions were graciously supported by Polara Engineering and the Association of the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER).

Members of the EAC such as Janet Barlow, Beezy Bentzen, Elizabeth Robertson, and Lukas Franck attended the virtual annual meeting of the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Controls and Devices (NCUTCD) <https://ncutcd.org/> advocating for changes to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Controls and Devices https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno_2009r1r2.htm.

During December, the AER O&M Division staffed a virtual vendor table at the virtual Southeastern Orientation and Mobility Association (SOMA) conference held on December 13-15th. 2020. Our 'table' had postcards and brochures sharing information about the division and how to reach out to members of O&M Division board, such as the chair, chair-elect and district directors. Visitors could come to our 'table'

and then be invited to chat in a room with people who volunteered their time such as Valery Kircher, Maggie Winn, Chris Tabb, Raychel Callary, and our AER President, Neva Fairchild.

Thanks to Raychel Callary, chair-elect, experts have been busy, reviewing literature and creating drafts for new or revisions to existing position papers on topics ranging from remote instruction to the use of support canes. After the drafts are prepared, we will share them with members of the O&M Division. We look forward to your comments. The final drafts will need a majority approval before they can be accepted as position papers.

Other activities on our annual list include writing articles for the O&M Newsletter. If you have something to share, please reach out Susan Langendonk at susanlangendonk@gmail.com

Thank you for being a part of the AER Orientation and Mobility community and working together to learn and grow.

I welcome questions, suggestions, comments, or any topic related to Orientation and Mobility, you can reach me at aeromdivision@gmail.com. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the AER Orientation and Mobility Division.

JoAnne Chalom

Division Announcements

O&M DIVISION POSITION PAPER REVIEW

I am so grateful to the teams of practitioners and “university folks” that are volunteering their time and expertise to prepare drafts to update current O&M Division position papers, and to the teams creating drafts to address additional topics. Position papers provide professional guidance, and communicate the views of the Division.

A few new papers are being developed in response to member requests. One paper will address remote instruction, in response to a need for guidance in this area with so many challenges and opportunities.

Papers being updated examine issues including providing travel instruction to people with nonvisual disabilities, and the use of visual occlusion in O&M instruction. I am so looking forward to hearing the opinions of colleagues on these important topics. The AER O&M Division is here to serve you, and the position papers can support and defend practices that promote high-quality services. Best wishes for 2021, with hopes that these challenging times might soon come to an end.

Raychel Callary
O&M Division chair-elect

ENVIRONMENTAL ACCESS COMMITTEE REPORT

EAC members, are a resource to all O&M Division members in trainings and or giving resources on environmental access and public right of ways issues.

January was a busy month for EAC members. With the funding support from the OM AER division 8 members were able to attend the annual Transportation Research Board meetings and presentations. This year it was held virtually during the entire month rather than 5 days. These meetings and presentations cover all transportation modes, addressing topics of interest to policy makers, administrators, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of government, industry, and academic institutions. There is very limited represented of individuals who have disabilities or agencies/professionals who work with them. When attending, EAC members bring up the needs of pedestrians who have vision loss. This year over 18,000 individuals attended from all over the world.

Due to the virtual aspect of this event, and the extended time, we were able to attend a number of committee meetings and presentations, we normally miss. Some of the meetings/presentations attended include:

- Human Factors in Road Vehicle Automation Subcommittee
- Pedestrian and Autonomous Vehicle Interactions Subcommittee,
- Transportation Planning Policy and Processes Committee
- Pedestrians Committee
- Intercity Passenger Rail Intermodal Interface Subcommittee
- Bicycle Transportation Committee
- Paratransit Subcommittee
- Signals; Standards; and Assets Subcommittees,
- Traffic Signal Systems Committee
- Traffic Control Devices Committee
- Transportation in Military Communities
- Transportation and Public Health Committee
- Roundabouts and Other Intersection and Design and Control Strategies Committee
- Accessible Transportation and Mobility Committee
- Winter Maintenance Committee
- Workshops: Improving Pedestrian Crossing Safety along Major Arterials
- Highlights from the 2020 Automated Vehicles Symposium
- New Developments in Safety on Low Volumes Roads
- Equity of Innovative Mobility Services and Technologies
- Emerging Mobility Technologies: User Perceptions and Preferences on Accessibly
- Step in and Step Up Sexual Harassment on Transit What we Know what we need to know and a call to action.

Meg Robertson Transportation Research Board (TRB) Report:

One presentation, *Urban Rail Transit in A COVID-19 World: Its Present & Possible Futures*, I was able attend, discussed research and COVID risk rates when using public transit. So far, the research has shown no outbreaks related to transit usage. As people return to transit, there has been no increased uptake in COVID rates. The researchers were a bit surprised by the results but in talking to Public Health researchers, they felt that this result is related to the following:

There is limited talking on a bus or subway with other riders.

Mask usage has been higher on for transit users and staff.

Usual transit rides are short in duration

Typically, subway transit cars have good air flow

Japan and other high transit countries, have not seen an increase of COVID with more riders using the system. Further research will continue but at this time, it seems if using COVID protocols, (Proper mask wearing, washing hands) one's risk of exposure COVID does not increase, if using public transit.

Transportation in Military Committee

Normally this would not be on my radar to attend, however, the lack of transportation on a base, has recently impacted a number of Mass. consumers, who were hired for federal contracting jobs. Paratransit could get them to the base, but not onto the base, due to security issues. If dropped off at the gate, there was not an accessible route to get to the work location or around the base. At this committee meeting, many members, did not know that this impacted so many individuals or was a barrier to employment. There focus was on the transportation needs of the troops based on bases, not federal or contracted employees. The federal government has doing a lot of hiring individuals with disabilities to fill federal jobs on bases but there has been nothing to address the transportation barrier. The committee has agreed to begin to study this issue, relative to non-military/federal personal.

JoAnne Chalom Transportation Research Board (TRB) Report

Micromobility Presentation

Micromobility continues to be a topic of interest to many parties. According to dictionary.com "*micromobility* refers to the use of electronic scooters and bikes to travel shorter distances around cities, often to or from another mode of transportation (bus, train, or car). Users typically rent such a scooter or bike for a short period of time using an app."

Partnerships have been developed between local agencies and vendors. Data has been collected to ensure that companies with permits are compliant with the requirements for their service.

Two members of the Environmental Access Committee submitted questions through the Q and A portal and were able to have them answered during a lectern session. One included a question about robots on the sidewalks and how their presence could be hazardous for pedestrians with visual impairments. One of the presenters addressed this question and stated that it is still a fluid situation and in development, we know it's our responsibility, but we aren't ready for prime time, yet!

Another question focused on addressing the consequences for consumers who choose to ignore the rules of the road and use micromobility on sidewalks. People with visual impairments or orthopedic impairments may be physically injured by users of micromobility. What immediate actions eliminate future access for the users who demonstrate negligent behavior? This question was answered by referring to the varied policies throughout the United States.

Some places have created the option to dial 3-1-1 to lodge a complaint, others have systems set up to decrease or eliminate access to micromobility if it deemed that users did not abide by the rules of the road.

To find out the policies where you live check out the Micromobility Policy Atlas at the Shared Mobility Center: <https://learn.sharedusemobilitycenter.org/atlas/>.

Other resources to learn about micromobility policies include the Open Mobility Foundation <https://www.openmobilityfoundation.org/about/>.

Raychel Callary Transportation Research Board (TRB) Report:

Automated Vehicles

Presenters discussed how automated vehicles will likely be designed, in order to reduce the footprint. AV developer NURO recently received authorization for a fully automated vehicle without windshield wipers and other systems needed by human drivers. AV shuttles were presented as a promising way to reduce the “cost per mile” of travel by half, but only if people were willing to share vehicles.

Areas of research include interaction with vulnerable road users. Proposed rulemaking can be found at [regulations.gov/docket?D=NHTSA-2020-1016](https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NHTSA-2020-1016) There have been several requests to extend the public comment period.

There is a need for additional AV testing in rural areas where markings might not be present, roads are winding, and inclement weather may be encountered. Urban-centric testing is leading to urban-centric solutions, so more testing in rural areas is needed to ensure that automated vehicles can properly navigate these environments. A successful Iowa City project was discussed using automated vehicles along a set loop.

A presenter from Partners for Automated Vehicle Education (PAVE) was among presenters discussing the increasing prevalence of delivery robots. A study was described that demonstrated that delivery robots will almost always yield to pedestrians. It was noted that pedestrians will need to learn to interact with automation. Personal delivery devices have no driver or passenger, and have fewer regulations. They may or may not have remote support. Some travel like pedestrians on the sidewalk, and other types use the bike lane or road. Future devices may be used for snowplowing, medical surveys and treatments, and security. Although visual beacons are required, there are no requirements for audio at this time. The PAVE representative noted that they were collaborating with NFB and other disability groups on accessibility needs.

Crosswalks

An evaluation of aesthetically treated crosswalks was discussed. This will be a two-phase project, looking first at the effects of rainbow crosswalks and then to pianos and various patterns.

Micromobility

Current laws have not kept up with the emergence of e-bikes, scooters, and other low speed vehicles. 28 states have low speed vehicle laws, and there is a huge variety in how states and municipalities classify and regulate these. A representative from Lime noted that misparking can affect people with disabilities, and that he hoped people would go to the company rather than local police regarding enforcement issues, and said that they have worked with local disability communities to create clear sidewalk access. Some areas utilize transit police for enforcement issues. A Spin representative stated that they are working on coordinating technology to combat sidewalk riding and misparking. This technology needs to be more

accurate before companies are willing to utilize the ability to slow down a vehicle perceived to be on the sidewalk in order to avoid causing a vehicle in traffic to suddenly slow down.

It was noted that data collection from micromobility companies could be used by cities to help determine where bicycle infrastructure would be best utilized.

A recent study was discussed which determined transportation to be a major barrier to employment. Some areas are considering having accessible vehicles in their bikeshare programs to increase options for active transportation and employment access.

Roundabouts

A study in the Seattle area conducted prior to the design and installation of a large roundabout demonstrated to the researchers the importance of getting stakeholders involved early in the process to provide the best experience to all types of users.

Rapid flashing beacons were noted as becoming more common at crossings, but raised crosswalks can cause issues for buses.

Having a philosophy of “integrating” rather than “accommodating” in design was noted as important in roundabout design. This means that a person should be able to access without being “invited”, and that a roundabout should not be a weak point in an otherwise workable system for a pedestrian or bicyclist.

Law

A trend away from jaywalking laws was noted repeatedly. Since pedestrians used to be allowed to travel freely but are now restricted by laws created to protect pedestrians from vehicles, some areas are reconsidering these laws as one way to accommodate people with disabilities.

Research projects were discussed intending to reorient pedestrian discussions to emphasize that walking plays a central role in community transportation and well-being.

Transportation as a social determinant of health: Social determinants of health were described as factors contributing to health which occur as a result of policies and practices. Transportation was recently identified as the third most commonly cited barrier to accessing health services for older adults. Access to transportation has been shown to lead to earlier, more consistent health care. Sectors outside the healthcare system were noted to affect health, while the healthcare system addresses illness. The built environment can promote health if it leads to reasonable options for active transportation. [CDC.gov/hi5](http://www.cdc.gov/hi5) has more information about promoting transportation options and community health.

Linda Myers, EAC member: Transportation Research Board (TRB) Report

Per the TRB website, Snap Searches are designed for the busy researcher or professional who would like to quickly get up to speed on complex research topics. <http://www.trb.org/InformationServices/Snap.aspx>

Snap Searches provide a succinct summary of current activities in TRB on a given topic including:

A list of recent reports from TRB and The National Academies and current and upcoming related projects Rachel Copperman spoke about papers submitted to the Passenger Rail Transportation Committee and one slide of her presentation was Word Art (cool idea) where she took the words from the paper titles and made art. Accessibility was included so I thought it was a good time to add that It is so important as changes happen to passenger services that the changes are more inclusive.

One thing mentioned in the Signals; Standards; and Assets Subcommittees, ACP25(2), Joint Subcommittees of ACP25 was that the Signal timing may be changed on your routes due to Covid Timing. It makes sense because traffic has changed but I just never thought to point that out to my students. Another point made was that there may be new money from the new administration so it might be a good time to submit requests to your cities such as new APS.

While attending Emerging Mobility technologies: User Perceptions and Preferences on Accessibility, I learned that 91% of drivers over 90 who stop driving do so because their doctor recommended that they stop. So, if you have a person who you feel doesn't have the vision to be driving, you might want to see if you can get them to have a chat with their doctor or have family members speak to the doctor.

Additional resources from TRB meetings

If you have an interest in being part of a research panel for upcoming projects including micromobility periodically, NCHRP solicits Panel Nominations for upcoming NCHRP projects. Panels that are accepting nominations can be accessed through this link: <https://volunteer.mytrb.org/Panel/AvailableProjects>. They are encouraging the nomination of members of historically underrepresented groups, including women, young professionals (age 35 and younger), and members of minority groups.

Additionally, TRANSED 2022 (Seattle - Sept 2022). The Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, with support by the U.S. Department of Transportation, invites your participation in the 16th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Older Adults and People with Disabilities (TRANSED), themed Inclusive and Accessible Transportation in Community and Regional Resilience. Call for proposals is now open - <https://trb.secure-platform.com/a/page/TRANSED2022/TRANSEDAbstractCall>

Review of Mobile Apps for Accessible Pedestrian Signal/APS

There are some new apps available that are intended to provide intersection signal information. These are mostly in trial phases, but some currently available through APS manufacturers in conjunction with infrastructure APS. A mobile app on a smartphone interfaces with equipment installed at the intersection sending information to the phone with the app open, informing the user of the upcoming intersection and the status of the signal. A button may appear which the user can touch to activate the pedestrian signal.

When the walk signal comes on the app may provide an audio and or vibrotactile cue that the walk signal is on. The app can have multiple other functions discussed below.

For example, a recent article in Public Roads magazine, Technology to Make Signalized Intersections Safer for Pedestrians with Disabilities [Public Roads](#), published by the Federal Highway Administration, highlighted development of an app called PedPal, described as "a mobile app that enables pedestrians to communicate directly with signalized intersections and actively influence traffic control decisions to enhance their safety" This is funded through FHWA's Accessible Transportation Technologies Research Initiative (ATTRI) program. The article is making the rounds of pedestrian advocacy organizations and some cities and traffic engineers and prompted discussion by the Environmental Access Committee of the Orientation & Mobility (O&M) division of AER (Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired).

We've seen several similar apps in recent years and have some concerns about these apps on iPhones or other mobile devices being suggested as "THE" solution for street crossing for individuals who are blind or who have low vision. We have also seen some of these apps combined with Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) to provide additional information. Those working on them have wonderful intentions and we encourage those efforts; however, we also wish for the blind community to be involved in all phases of development and testing. Too often, this is not the case. We recognize the immense potential of a traveler who is blind having access to this additional information, but would like to communicate our concerns to those involved as there are still many unknowns in this emerging technology. The list of pros and cons below is intended as information, guidance and questions for further development that O&M Specialists and individuals who are blind may wish to consider and share with others in their community looking at such devices. No members of the OM EAC have had personal experience with these new apps.

PROS:

1. There is no need to locate the pedestrian button—some ped buttons are in inconvenient locations and many intersections have no Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS). A mobile device apps has the potential to provide pedestrian signal information at EVERY signalized intersection. This could be a huge advantage.
2. [The App](#) can tell the user the names of the streets at the intersection, cardinal direction and potentially other helpful information such as intersection geometry. (If programed into the APP interface.)
3. [Some apps may](#) alert the user to veers outside of the crosswalk—another huge advantage.
4. [Apps](#) may have other helpful features such as communication with the traffic light and connected cars and potentially can extend the length of the walk signal if the person is not making it across in time.
5. If integrated with GPS, the app may involve a seamless experience for a pedestrian with vision loss.

CONS:

1. This type of App alone does not meet ADA accessibility for any given community because it excludes too many people. Many people do not have access to smartphone; bad weather can make use difficult or impossible, many things can happen that make a phone or other device inoperable such as a dead battery. A person may forget their smartphone or other device and still needs access to the pedestrian signal information. Such apps must be considered as a supplement to information available from infrastructure installations of APS not in place of accessibility of a device for a pedestrian with vision loss.
2. All of the above pros rely on accuracy. Does the accuracy depend on satellite or cell tower reception? What can interfere with the signal and thus accuracy and what does the app do when those conditions occur? Intersection information Apps must be at least as reliable as existing hardware, which are not 100% reliable as they can be inoperable, but no information is better than wrong information.
3. The App information can be a distraction to the traveler. The Public Roads article states that individuals crossed more slowly when using the app, and attributes that to more comfort and confidence about the time to cross. But, could it reflect cognitive load instead?
4. Standards, such as the speech message about the status of the WALK signal, should be the same as the language determined to be used for speech messages of APS, as standardized in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
5. EAC members expressed concerns about the testing in various environments and types of intersections. To date, testing does not appear to be adequate for the pedestrian information Apps

that have been developed. There must be trials at various types and sizes of unfamiliar intersections with blind and vision impaired travelers of various abilities.

6. Where does the liability fall if the app malfunctions? With the city/state who installed it? With the manufacturer who developed it and updates were lagging? With the client running the app? These are concerns also.
7. For some of the apps, people with vision loss and O&M Specialists have not been involved in the development and testing.
8. Testing of the Apps does not seem to have taken place at intersections with APS, in conjunction with the APS information. Combination of the information from such devices needs to be included in testing.
9. So far as we can tell, each App has relied on particular traffic signal controller, or system, or on additional control boxes that have been added to the controller. There are many types of controllers used in the US and for any kind of universal applicability, there would need to be coordination with traffic signal controller manufacturers.
10. It appears that at least with some of the apps, the phone must be held in the hand and pointed in the correct direction to give accurate information.

For more information check out the following articles or reports about similar devices to one described in the recent Public Roads articles:

Ivanchenko V, Coughlan J, Shen H. Real-Time Walk Light Detection with a Mobile Phone. 12th International Conference on Computers Helping People with Special Needs (ICCHP '10); Vienna, Austria. July 2010. [[PMC free article](#)] [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]

Liao CF. Using a Smartphone App to Assist the Visually Impaired at Signalized Intersections. Report no. CTS 12–25, Minnesota Traffic Observatory Laboratory, Department of Civil Engineering, Univ. of Minnesota; Aug, 2012. 2012.

Polara PedApp Smart Phone App <https://appadvice.com/app/pedapp/1462460931>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5Thqk2rOb4&feature=youtu.be>

The EAC welcomes additional comments on your experiences and/or suggestions in working with these devices.

**Notice of Proposed amendments for 11th Edition
of Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices/MUTCD**

EAC members will be commenting on the Notice of Proposed amendments for 11th Edition of Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices/MUTCD. It is now available for public comment in the federal register at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/12/29/2020-28494/national-standards-for-traffic-control-devices-the-manual-on-uniform-traffic-control-devices-for>

The MUTCD for Streets and Highways is incorporated in Federal Highway Administration/FHWA regulations and recognized as the national standard for traffic control devices used on all public roads. This document covers many areas that impact pedestrians who have vision loss and how we teach in the complex street and pedestrian environments. Many definitions cover, crosswalk vs. high-visibility crosswalk, APS, Crosswalk designs, signal timing, work zone barricades, etc. Traffic engineers and planners, use the MUTCD to justify their design decisions.

Meg Robertson COMS EAC Chair Mobilnymeg@aol.com

EAC Committee Members:

Janet Barlow	Beezy Bentzen
Gene Bouquin	Raychel Callary
JoAnne Chalom	Lukas Franck
Jen Graham	Melanie Hughes
Laura Park Leach	Claudia Libis
Linda Myers	Elizabeth Robertson
Dona Sauerburger	



FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTORS

District 3

Maggie Winn, COMS District 3 Representative

Illinois

Second Sense

Make sure to check out the upcoming events for clients at Second Sense at 65 E. Wacker Place Suite 1010 in downtown Chicago.

<https://www.second-sense.org/calendar/>

Indiana

Indiana AER

For information on the upcoming 2021 Indiana AER conference, follow the link below to receive updates.

<https://www.in-aer.net/2121-conference>

Michigan

Michigan AER

Motivation. Access. Excellence. Resilience.

The Michigan AER 2021 Annual Conference is online! All speaker presentations will be on-line, some live, others recorded, and vendors will also be participating. There will be opportunities to watch sessions after the conference for ACVREP credits.

April 22, 2021 to April 23, 2021

8:00 am – 4:00 pm EST Open to all! Online Virtual Conference.

Conference Fees:

AER Member \$125

Non-member \$150

Parent/Retiree \$75

Presenter \$75

WMU-BLS or Consortium Student Fee \$0

Student – Not Attending WMU – \$50

Vendor Not For-Profit \$25 Vendor For-Profit \$125

<https://michiganaer.com/conference/>

Any questions email michiganaer@gmail.com

Leader Dog

LEADER DOGS FOR THE BLIND SUMMER EXPERIENCE CAMP

Camp dates: Tuesday, June 22–Tuesday, June 29, 2021

Application deadline: Thursday, April 1

This free program combines fun activities like ziplining and tandem biking with leadership skills training and building friendships with peers facing similar challenges. Campers receive a free HumanWare GPS to help increase their travel independence and spend a day with our guide dog mobility instructors and Leader Dogs in training to learn about living and working with a guide dog. Open to teens ages 16 and 17. Application details can be found at <https://www.leaderdog.org/programs/summer-experience-camp/>.

For more information email clientservices@leaderdog.org or call 888-777-5332.

Minnesota

Minnesota AER

AER is looking for members to serve as Chapter President, Treasurer and Secretary for Minnesota. If you are interested, please send an email to aer@aerbvi.org.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin AER Collaborative Vision Conference 2021 will be held Saturday, April 24, 2021 from 9AM-4PM. There will be 8 Virtual sessions.

To register follow the link below

<https://aerwisconsin.org/program-and-registration/>

District 4

Claudia Libis District 4 Representative

The Orientation and Mobility specialists in District 4 have been attempting to have a Zoom call monthly. Upcoming Zooms will be March 3 and April 7, 2021. These meetings are very informal, and anything may come up for discussion. As an example, some notes from January's meeting.

The Northeast Resource Center for Vision Education out of University of Massachusetts Boston (NERCVE) is offering mini workshops on topics of interest to the O&M field. Their website is www.nercve.org

On a National level, the Department of Transportation is proposing legislation to make autonomous vehicles accessible to disabled people. Please note that this is a proposal only and has not been passed.

The MUTCD (Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices) is undergoing many changes for a much anticipated update. The process is a long one, and this newsletter should have some further information.

The O&M department in Vermont has purchased a sonar smartband the Sunu band for an exploration of useability and applications within the State. A conversation revealed that the MA Commission for the Blind is using the Band with deaf blind clients successfully. Another has found problems with the interface. It is noted that you must have a phone to use this tool. One suggestion, the Buzz Clip from iMerciv. may be a better product for our use.

Another product of interest is the new LiDAR sensor by magicplan, a phone app used with iPhone 12 PRO. LiDAR is a scanner that could be used to create maps. Other applications were not known yet.

In Portland, ME, Way Around buttons are being used, mostly for tourists, to locate landmarks. They are also used in Boston. Perhaps the technology could be expanded for use with blind pedestrians as well, if the city planners are already finding them valuable.

A similar tool Blind Square is being used at some transit (we call them T) stops in Boston. You pay for it, and use it with your cell phone.

Rhode Island and Boston are providing monthly workshops for professionals and clients in the vision community.

A valuable program/app for IEP goals and objectives is LIVE BINDER. Worth a look.

The Transportation Research Board's Annual conference has now come and gone. It was a massive undertaking to put such a large conference into a remote format, and the results had pros and cons. Others will elaborate more than I, but suffice to say Janet Barlow, Beezy Bentzen and Lukas Frank have paved the way for a much improved reception for our field at this conference, and a much higher level of respect for the needs of our clients than we used to encounter.

District 6

Valery Kircher COMS/TVI District 6 Representative

In Virginia, O&M instructors are continuing mainly with virtual learning. Some instructors are offering limited video training, mainly for basic cane techniques commented Melanie Hughes, COMS with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. Ms. Hughes stated that learning techniques such as holding the long cane, swinging the long cane and in general becoming comfortable traveling in their home using the long cane are important activities to keep up with skills. Also, O&M instructors may be providing description of cane techniques on the phone and following up with sending resources that describe O&M concepts. Concerns for clients in this pandemic are that individuals who may/or may not have acquired a long cane are attempting to cross streets with minimal instruction. There are few realistic solutions to the above scenario, and O&M instructors everywhere are dealing with this situation. Providing resources to clients and families may be a way to deal with this scenario – but not a permanent solution. The O&M specialists for the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) host group conferences with clients and instructors to connect and share information with one another.

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Visit the O&M website for a list of Committees: <https://aerbvi.org/oandmdivision>

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Next deadline: June 1, 2021

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