

*Stories written and edited by the Authors with help from
KETRON Division of the Bionetics Corporation*

George Mason
University

TRANSPORTATION SUCCESS STORIES

EXHIBIT C-2 Disabilities

Document consists of 41 pages

- ☐ Entire document provided.
- ☒ Due to size limitations, the Cover; Intro; and Contents; pp. 9-10; 33-34 provided. A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775/684-682) or e-mail library@lecb.state.nv.us).

Meeting Date 2/04/01

A Project of
Easter Seals Project ACTION
Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation

TRANSPORTATION SUCCESS STORIES

EASTER SEALS PROJECT ACTION PROJECT NUMBER: 452-6115-01-710 TRANSPORTATION SUCCESS STORIES

The Easter Seals Project ACTION recognized that there was no collection of personal stories that documented the impact of accessible transportation on the life-choices of persons with disabilities. Its Request for Proposals stated:

As our nation approaches the thirteenth anniversary of the of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the transportation industry has made significant progress to meet the requirements of the law and increase the availability of accessible transportation for people with disabilities. While the last dozen years produced a great deal of research to monitor institutional progress, little has been done to document the successful personal experiences of individuals with disabilities and the positive impact the increased availability of accessible transportation has on their lives.

A collection of personal accounts will serve many audiences. Documentation of such testimonies would help transportation agencies better understand the needs of customers with disabilities. Individuals' stories would also serve as more effective encouragement for increased ridership among people with disabilities than institutional data and statistics. These narratives could also help to alleviate the concerns about public transportation often held by family members, caregivers, and community service providers who assist people with disabilities, as the success stories will come from the mouths of people just like their loved ones, charges, and constituents.

In its response, KETRON Division of the Bionetics Corporation (KETRON) proposed a team consisting of KETRON professionals John Morrison, Joseph Lofgren and Tionna Redd working with consultants Steve Jaffe of Transit Access and David Rishel of Delta Services Group. Nancy Crowther, Accessible Transportation Specialist at Capital Metro (Austin) and Susan Joseph, Senior Management Analyst at Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada supported the proposal. They offered to identify passengers with disabilities at their transit systems who might contribute stories. Steve Jaffe offered to recruit transportation success story authors by contacting persons with disabilities who monitored transit quality for his company. Jaffe, Rishel and Redd offered to assist authors to prepare their stories, acting as story coaches and editors. Jaffe, Rishel and Lofgren also offered to photograph authors in their homes, neighborhoods and using transportation.

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This publication is dedicated to the many thousands of persons with disabilities whose life choices have expanded since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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Donna Stark's Story

I was totally dependent on family members and paratransit before I started using fixed route transit. I became disqualified to use paratransit due to my ability to get around in a wheelchair and was faced with a new reality. Despite the weakness in my legs, my wheelchair and a near-by bus stop gave me no excuses about why I could not use fixed route transit. I knew little about the bus system and I was not happy that I would be forced to use it.

In fact, I was really afraid to use fixed route. The last time I used public transit was when I was a child. The only thing I knew about it was what I had heard over the years – and that wasn't positive. It wasn't until I started mobility training that I discovered how much fixed route transit has changed and how much handicapped accessibility has improved. I was amazed to see ramps and wheelchair space on all public transit vehicles.

Mobility training is what convinced me. Being able to ride with someone a few times before doing it on my own eased my mind and made me feel comfortable and confident. The more I used the fixed route to go to and from dialysis, since that was what I was doing the most, the easier it became to go other places. Now, instead of having to schedule a ride every time I need to go somewhere, I just go out to the bus stop and I am on my way.

Besides making it easier for me to get around, using fixed route transit has also improved my life financially. Living on a fixed income can be difficult. So when the fare for paratransit was recently increased, I was appreciative for my ability to use fixed route. I can purchase a monthly pass on fixed route for a fraction of what it would cost for me to use paratransit.

Public transit has truly made transportation easier for me and has lifted the burden on my family members. I am proud to have my independence and I am especially grateful to have a flexible ride whenever I need one.

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Robert and Carol Lee's Story

Between the two of us, we have over forty years of transit experience. I am blind and have been using fixed route for twenty-five years and my wife, Carol, who is hearing impaired, has used it for fifteen years. Even though we're eligible for paratransit because we both have Cerebral Palsy, we use fixed route 99% of the time.

My fixed route experiences began when my ex-wife decided cabs were too expensive and that we should learn how to ride the bus. Since then, I have been able to teach Carol how to ride the bus as well. I advocate fixed route because it is so flexible and convenient. Yes, it may take a little more time to get somewhere, but I feel that it is worth it. I don't have to schedule a ride one, two or even three days in advance. Also, if I decide I want to go off and do something on my own, I can, and I don't have to tell anyone.

Carol really appreciates the fact that if we are in the middle of something, a meeting, shopping etc., we don't have to worry about being boxed into a window of time waiting for a scheduled ride. We have flexibility. If it takes a little longer or ends earlier, we just get on the bus that fits our schedule.

Today paratransit is available for people who need it, but when I first learned to use fixed transit, paratransit was not available in my area. When it became available, it only operated Monday through Friday from 8:00AM to 8:00PM, no weekend or holiday services were available. There is a definite advantage to learning and using the fixed route system. We feel it has made getting around and attending to our responsibilities so much easier. In fact, before moving to our home, I called ahead to make sure there was accessible transit in our new neighborhood. I even call ahead when we are traveling out of town.

Beyond our daily activities, Carol and I try to make a difference by getting involved in various organizations. I am a member of the National Federation for the Blind and the Disabled Rights Action Committee (DRAC). I have also participated in a variety of national organizations and committees for the disabled including an advisory committee to the President of the United States. We are able to attend meetings and be active members with these organizations because transportation is accessible to us. Without fixed route, it would be incredibly difficult to get around and volunteer in the number of programs that we do.

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