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Highlights of the Department of Transportation's Comprehensive Plan of Action

- FTA will conduct on-site investigations and spot-checks to determine transit compliance with the ADA
- DOT will develop publications for riders with disabilities about their rights to transportation
- DOT will change rules to require transit agencies to post notices on all vehicles and transit property of rights to file complaints with the FTA
- DOT will engage in regular consultation with the disability community through listening sessions and small groups in order to improve its ADA enforcement
- DOT will partner with universities to educate students in architecture, city planning, public policy on the benefits of accessible transportation and design
- DOT will convene a Summit on improving transportation for people with disabilities, especially as it relates to employment
- DOT will conduct training for its regional FHA staff and city, state and local fund recipients on guidelines for accessible pedestrian travel
- Prior to the reauthorization of TEA-21, DOT will collect and analyze data on a wide range of transportation areas, including use of fixed route vs. paratransit, use of human service transportation for work, use of private vehicles vs. public transportation, and curb cut and bus stop accessibility
- DOT will conduct ADA training for all FTA, FAA and FRA staff with ADA-related enforcement duties
- DOT will establish a task force to conduct listening sessions with disability groups, transit authorities and federal agencies as part of a report to the Secretary on how to strengthen transportation for people with disabilities through current funding mechanisms
- DOT and HHS will expand the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility to include DOL, HUD, Education and will incorporate consumer input into all of its activities
- The Coordinating Council will have as a goal sponsoring regional workshops on local transportation coordination efforts to increase transportation options for people with disabilities.

Comprehensive Plan of Action to Remedy Lack of Transportation Services and Systems for Persons with a Disability

I. Introduction: President Clinton's Directive to the Department of Transportation

This Plan of Action follows the work done by The Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities ("PTFEAD" or "Task Force") in its second report to the President, "Re-Charting the Course: If Not Now, When?", issued on November 15, 1999. In Number 12 of its 14 recommendations, PTFEAD recommended that:

The President direct the Department of Transportation to work with the Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services, the Social Security Administration, and other relevant Task Force members to develop a comprehensive plan of action to address the lack of transportation services and systems for persons with disabilities.

Recommendation 12, as it has come to be known, was based on PTFEAD's observation that "the lack of available public transportation is a major employment barrier for persons with disabilities." Lack of public transportation has been "cited by many individuals with disabilities," at Town Hall and other meetings held by the Task Force "as being the major impediment to finding and keeping jobs." The PTFEAD opined that the Department of Transportation has been vigorous in addressing public and private accessibility issues for people with disabilities, and that Recommendation 12 would serve to concentrate Federal efforts through "interagency action," and ultimately to identify a plan that comprehensively addresses the lack of available transportation for persons with a disability.

In response then to the President's directive, the Department of Transportation ("DOT" or "Department") has consulted with the relevant Federal agencies and submits this five part Plan of Action. Part II contains a brief description of the problems inherent in the current U.S. transportation system, and how those problems affect the employment of people with disabilities. Part III provides a concise, but necessary background section. Part IV states explicitly the overarching goals that support the development of this Plan. Finally, the crux of this Plan is its Part V, in which the Department sets forth a comprehensive list of specific goals, or action items, which will transform the transportation system for persons with a disability traveling to and from work, to local meetings, on business travel, to interviews and employment agencies, to governmental offices, to banks and credit unions--in short, all of the destinations that make up

how we seek employment, travel to work, prepare for work on a daily basis, pay our bills, and return home again. Part V, in addition to each “Goal/Action Item,” specifies what operating administration, office, or other entity within DOT will be responsible for carrying out the goal, and what time frame is intended for implementation.

II. Problem Statement

Although the United States possesses one of the safest and most extensive passenger transportation systems in the world, the system is unable to provide optimal mobility for selected and growing portions of the population. These segments include people with disabilities. Transportation represents a major portion of consumer, business, and government expenditures, and in return, gives people the opportunity to access employment, goods, services, and activities. Access to transportation helps determine where people can live, work, travel for business or pleasure, go to school, shop, and recreate. Thus, access to transportation or the lack thereof, has had a major impact on an individual’s economic status, social status, and physical/mental well-being.

III. Background/Data

According to DOT’s Bureau of Transportation Statistics, “Transportation Statistics Annual Report 1999,” the percentage of transit vehicles providing accessible service under the ADA varied dramatically by type of transit, but was generally higher in 1997 than in 1993. About 68% of buses were ADA accessible in 1997, up from 53% in 1993. Only 29% of commuter rail vehicles were accessible in 1997, but this was higher than the 18% in 1993. A relatively large percentage of heavy-rail vehicles were ADA accessible—78% in 1997— but there has been no improvement since 1994.

IV. Overarching Goals

There are two main objectives in transportation: mobility and access. Mobility is the act or ability to move from one’s present position to one’s desired position in another part of the environment safely, efficiently, and comfortably. Mobility benefits come from enabling people to more effectively participate in society as producers, consumers, citizens, and community members. Access is the ability of people to obtain desired goods, services and activities. Access is affected by the quality of mobility (movement of people and goods), substitutes for personal mobility (such as electronic communications and delivery services), and land use patterns. For example, access for non-drivers can be improved not only by providing better transit service (a mobility strategy), but also by ensuring that they can find suitable housing within convenient walking distance of services such as stores and medical facilities, and that they are able to use the Internet and other communication technologies to obtain information and order goods and services.

Principles to increase the mobility of people with disabilities and/or expand their access to goods and

1. Availability: Transportation must be available if it is to be used to reduce immobility. For example, urban bus service can be enormously productive economically, and its curtailment, even in low-patronage, off-peak hours, can create added travel costs, income losses, and immobility that exceeds by many times the dollar savings to transit agencies from service reductions. See "Using Public Transportation to Reduce the Economic, Social, and Human Costs of Personal Immobility," Transit Cooperative Research Program, Crain & Associates with Ricardo Byrd and Omniversed International, 1999.
2. Equity: Everyone should enjoy at least a basic level of access, even it requires extra resources to accomplish.
3. Seamlessness: Transition between transportation modes should be accessible. For example, Project Action has noted that many existing transit stations have direct connections to commercial, retail, and residential facilities, but the route is often not accessible. Project Action proposes that the transportation agency should include language in agreements it has with the facilities that require or encourage the provision of an accessible route from the direct connection point into the connected transit facility.
4. Inclusiveness: Technology, housing, transportation and other aspects of community life should be designed to accommodate people with disabilities to ensure a more inclusive and productive society for all Americans.
5. Equivalence: Service for people with disabilities should extend throughout the general service area and operate during the same hours as the system used by the general public. Contrary to many assumptions, people with disabilities are dispersed throughout the general population and their ultimate travel needs are not significantly different from the general population.
6. Efficiency: We should explore strategies that will ensure access and full participation in society for the greatest number of people at the lowest and most rationally allocated cost.
7. Safety: Accessibility in transportation infrastructure should be safe, including for people with disabilities. Changes being contemplated in transportation infrastructure that may at first appear to be isolated from disability concerns may have such implications. Customer safety concerns extend to the passenger and user with disabilities in ways directly related to their disabilities. For example, The Access Board has noted that very preliminary and limited research suggests that roundabouts discourage pedestrian use and that they are a significant barrier to pedestrians with vision, mobility, and cognitive impairments.

Some safety issues for people with disabilities are not obvious. For example, in Oregon in 1999 it was found that many drivers hired to transport people with disabilities had criminal records.

Background checks had not been done. To this end, the Department of Justice has published "Guidelines for Screening Persons Working with Children, the Elderly, and Individuals with Disabilities in Need of Support," Publication Number NCJ 167248.

8. Reliability: Transportation should be reliable. All transportation infrastructure users want the system to be reliable. Yet, for people with disabilities, mechanical systems breakdowns may actually result in a complete denial of access. For example, out of service elevators and escalators in a transit system may be a mere inconvenience to nondisabled users, but may be an inaccessible barrier to users with disabilities.

9. Reality-Based: Plans for use of transportation infrastructure elements in the U.S. should be cognizance of the realities of technology at the current time.

V. Overview of Plan

The Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, the Social Security Administration and other Task Force members, developed this broad plan for accessible transportation in response to the recommendation by the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities. It is our goal to ensure that transportation is not a barrier and persons with disabilities can access and participate fully in all aspects of work, programs, and services.

Although the United States possesses one of the safest and most extensive passenger transportation systems in the world, this plan recognizes that more work needs to be done to ensure that the system provides optimal mobility for persons with disabilities. Listed below, in table form, are actions that we will undertake to support our goal of ensuring that the United States transportation system in the twenty-first century is inclusive in service, is accessible to all, and provides mobility to all users.

<u>Goal/Action Item</u>	<u>DOT Action Office</u>	<u>Coordinating Federal Agencies</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
DOT will partner with the District of Columbia and Mayor Williams' Office	OGC, DOCR, FHWA, FTA	Access Board	December 2000

to create a Memorandum of Understanding, initiating a "Model Curb Cut/Pedestrian Accessibility" initiative in DC			
DOT will ensure that ADA enforcement by the Federal Transit Administration will include increased on-site investigations and spot checks to determine compliance	FTA		Beginning October 2000
Based on these increased on-site enforcement efforts, DOT will increase referrals to DOJ where voluntary compliance cannot be achieved in an expeditious manner	FTA	DOJ	Beginning October 2000
DOT will conduct research on ways of reducing the costs of adapted vehicles.	NHTSA		Beginning October 2001

<u>Goal/Action Item</u>	<u>DOT Action Office</u>	<u>Coordinating Federal Agencies</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
DOT will explore rulemaking, requiring transit agencies to post notices on all main line and paratransit vehicles containing information on filing a complaint directly with FTA, as well as the transit property	OGC, FTA		March 2001
DOT will convene a Summit, addressing the issue of improving transportation for people with disabilities, especially related to employment	OGC, FTA, FHWA, DOCR	PTFEAD, HHS, HUD, DOE, DOL. OPM	January 2001

DOT will conduct ADA training within FTA, FRA, and FAA for all staff involved with ADA-related enforcement duties	OGC, DOCR, DRC	DOJ	Yearly, beginning in fiscal year 2001
DOT will collect and analyze data on the use of public and private transportation options by persons with a disability, including statistics on use of fixed route versus paratransit; use of private vehicles	BTS		Prior to reauthorization of TEA-21

<u>Goal/Action Item</u>	<u>DOT Action Office</u>	<u>Coordinating Federal Agencies</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
versus public transportation; use of human service-funded transportation for work; curb cuts and other accessible pedestrian features in various cities; and so forth.			
DOT will establish a task force as a part of its "Access" Flagship to conduct listening sessions with disability groups, transit authorities, and relevant Federal agencies, and develop a Report to the Secretary on how to strengthen transportation services for persons with a disability through DOT's funding mechanisms	DOCR, OGC, FTA, FHWA,	DOL, HHS	Report submitted June 1, 2001, prior to reauthorization planning for TEA-21
DOT will expand the "Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility", in conjunction with Health and Human Services, to	OST, FTA	HHS, DOL, HUD, DOE	Summer 2000

include additional agency representatives, at a minimum, the Departments of Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Education, with a goal of increasing strategies for			
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<u>Goal/Action Item</u>	<u>DOT Action Office</u>	<u>Coordinating Federal Agencies</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
persons with a disability in all initiatives and of sponsoring Regional Workshops on local coordination efforts for persons with a disability (workforce investment board representatives, transit authorities, private providers, metropolitan planning organizations, and advocacy groups) DOT will conduct training for its Regional FHWA staff and relevant fund recipients (city, state, and local levels) on accessibility guidelines for pedestrian travel, a potential barrier to employment (getting to and from work, business travel, etc.), including, accessible sidewalks, curb cuts, information devices (e.g., traffic signals), pedestrian crossings, traffic calmers (e.g. traffic circles and roundabouts), based on	OGC, DOCR, FHWA	DOJ	Beginning upon issuance of Volume 2 of "Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access"

technical assistance and best practices in FHWA's "Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access," Vol. 1-2			
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<u>Goal/Action Item</u>	<u>DOT Action Office</u>	<u>Coordinating Federal Agencies</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
DOT will partner with one or more universities to educate students in engineering, transportation planning, urban planning, public policy, architecture, and other relevant disciplines on the need for and benefits from accessible transportation and design: teaching, internship programs, co-publication, clinics, and information programs	OST, OGC, FHWA, FTA, FRA		First partnership by December 2001
DOT will explore ways of encouraging the use of accessible fixed-route buses rather than the use of paratransit vehicles (and other lower cost alternatives) while maintaining efficiency and customer satisfaction.	FTA		Beginning January 2001
DOT will develop publications for riders with disabilities about their rights to transportation services.	FTA	DOJ, GPO	By July 2001
DOT will engage in strategic planning and evaluation, involving regular consultation with members of the disability community through small groups and listening sessions, for improving	OST		Quarterly meetings or listening sessions beginning January 2000

its ADA and ACAA enforcement.			
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<u><i>Goal/Action Item</i></u>	<u><i>DOT Action Office</i></u>	<u><i>Coordinating Federal Agencies</i></u>	<u><i>Completion Date</i></u>
DOT will work with other federal agencies, states, and local governments to create a means of reducing duplication in human service agency transportation services and to effectuate a more cost-effective use of resources.	OGC, FHWA, FTA	HHS, DOJ	Beginning March 2001