

Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
Transportation Task Force
2012 Annual Report

2012 in review

The Transportation Task Force continued advocating this year for programs and supports that increase the mobility for people with disabilities, playing a role in significant legislation passed through Congress and advocating with the Obama administration on key priorities. Our primary areas of work were the following:

- 1) **Federal Surface Transportation Funding Reauthorization** – SAFETEA-LU, the Federal legislation that provides for funding for all regionally significant surface transportation projects, was up for reauthorization this year. The Transportation Task Force weighed in on some important grant programs for people with disabilities, specifically the New Freedom and Section 5310 programs, which both fund improved transportation services for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, these two programs were consolidated and cut significantly under the new legislation. The final bill – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (or MAP-21), initially advanced with some proposals on the House side that would have potentially led to severe cuts in public transportation programs by eliminating dedicated funding for transit. The Transportation Task Force included comments against this measure in its letters to the House and Senate committees, and fortunately, dedicated funding was restored.
- 2) **Appropriations** – The Task Force weighed in with appropriators in support of increased funding for targeted transportation programs serving people with disabilities.
- 3) **Over-the-Road Carriers** – The Task Force participated in meetings with the Department of Transportation regarding accessibility of over-the-road bus companies (which include long-distance bus companies such as Greyhound or BoltBus). Regulations requiring that larger carriers be fully accessible come into place this next year, but smaller carriers are not required to provide an accessible bus without 48-hours advance notice, and larger carriers are not required to be fully accessible without notice when they contract with smaller carriers to carry passengers to more remote areas. The Task Force worked with DOT and carriers about how to properly notify passengers that they might not have immediate access to an accessible bus in some locations.
- 4) **Amtrak accessibility** – The Task Force continues to participate in meetings with Amtrak, continuing to respond to their slow progress toward greater accessibility and to encourage Amtrak toward greater compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act in quarterly meetings. The Task Force has also been monitoring litigation in areas around the country, regarding lack of accessibility of stations in Pennsylvania, Florida and Michigan.
- 5) **Air Carrier Access Act** – The Task Force has been in early discussions with Congressional offices about fixing the lack of an individual remedy in the Air Carrier Access Act, and will be looking for ways to continue to pursue this over the next year. The Task Force also provided comments on regulations regarding airline website and airport kiosk accessibility.
- 6) **Survival Craft** – The Task Force sent a letter to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation regarding impending regulations that would require out-of-water accessibility for all passengers in survival craft. An amendment in the House of Representatives, passed on the urging of the passenger ship industry, will now require a study of this requirement and would place a delay on enactment of the requirement. Although the Task Force commented against this provision, it was included in the final bill.

2012 Priorities

Because MAP-21 only reauthorized surface transportation spending for the next two years, the Task Force will monitor its implementation over the next year and watch for improvements that might be made in the reauthorization in 2014. Reauthorization of Amtrak will also be a major issue over the next year, and the Task Force will look for ways to require Amtrak to move more quickly toward compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and continue to meet with Amtrak to pressure them in other ways. The Task Force will also monitor appropriations and look to ensure increased or at least level funding for the new Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility program. The Task Force will also look to explore a bill providing for an individual right of action for violations of the Air Carrier Access Act, and will also continue to build relationships with Congressional staff and key Obama administration officials.

Co-Chairs:

Jennifer Dexter – Easter Seals

Patrick Wojahn– The National Disability Rights Network