

Eliminating Boundaries

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When President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 1990, I was working as an intern for an Indiana state disability organization. As a result, I knew about ADA but nothing about transit, other than the routes I rode each day.

I joined the transit industry in 1993 and, since then, I have worked in and around accessible transit and paratransit—first as a planner working on rail system accessibility, then in the bus and paratransit industry. Today, I am a business developer for Veolia Transportation, but whereas I spend my time writing proposals, I devote my passion to the development of accessible transit and paratransit services—after all, I still ride buses every day.

When I began my career, many people in the transit industry felt that ADA would never change a thing, but of course, the act has changed everything. Today, wheelchair lifts and ramps must work; drivers must announce stops; seniors and persons with disabilities must be given priority for the front seats; and web sites must be accessible. Moreover, paratransit must be provided for those who need it.

Best of all, we are using new tools and technologies to make fixed route transit and paratransit services even better so more people with disabilities can enjoy unfettered access to their communities, and that is what ADA is all about.

Despite this progress, a lot remains to do. Personally, I'm an optimist, and I can envision a time when the transit industry sets aside the notions of fixed route, paratransit, and other service models in favor of a single, wholly integrated model that serves all people, regardless of their needs or limitations. The result will be an industry that fully embodies the spirit of ADA—namely, a world without barriers or boundaries.