

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired



## Orientation and Mobility Division Update

Fall 2021

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Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired  
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### From the Chair:

Hello Orientation and Mobility Division,

Members of AER, the Orientation and Mobility Division, the Environmental Access Committee, and our field were saddened to hear of the passing of Janet Barlow. We would like to express our heartfelt condolences to her family.

Janet expressed her kindness, and steadfast belief in making the built environment a more accessible place by mentoring countless individuals in the art of building bridges between orientation and mobility specialists and traffic engineers. I was one of her many mentees. Over a decade ago, I started becoming more involved with the Environmental Access Committee (EAC). I was a relatively newly credentialed COMS and still very much on a learning curve, somewhere between novice and starting to get my footing.

When I joined the EAC, I didn't know what I didn't know. Janet shared her encyclopedic knowledge of legislation, environmental access to the built environment and a unique ability to knit together a working relationship between two not-always-agreeable professions, orientation and mobility and traffic engineering. I feel fortunate to be the recipient of her knowledge and doubly fortunate that she would answer my endless inquiries and questions.

I remember the first time I attended the Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board. All of the EAC members in attendance needed to wake up at around five-thirty in the morning to use public transit to arrive in time for early morning meetings. Janet was

committed to waiting for the right moment to say something like these words, “How does this impact people with visual impairments?” or asking a question and purposefully including the word blind.

Janet was chair of the EAC for many years. When EAC members agreed to attend TRB, they knew this was not a conference for members to sit back and leisurely attend plenary sessions. We had skin in the game, under our layers of winter clothes. We were strategically assigned committee meetings, plenary sessions, and networking events where we could advocate for greater accessibility to the built environment, whether it was a three-hour committee meeting, asking a leading question at the end of a presentation, or strategically attending a networking event.

Our meal ‘breaks’ included reviewing which committee meetings and other scheduled events we would attend. If we were not attending a late-night meeting, we gathered to debrief, strategize for the next day and take a few moments to reflect on the work being done. We are small in numbers but with a big voice!

Janet helped me adjust to the sheer quantity of people in attendance and size of the event. Other meetings and conferences that I have attended had at most a thousand attendees, this one on average has twelve thousand attendees from all around the world.

At one early morning meeting, a presenter was discussing gateway treatments and mentioned a ‘pork chop’ island which is a triangular raised island placed between a right-turn slip lane and through-travel lanes. Its a kind of pedestrian refuge. I had no knowledge base of a ‘pork chop’ since that was not part of my upbringing and still is not part of my diet today. She explained the shape of a ‘pork chop’ and helped me understand the relationship between this triangular raised island and something from a grocery store.

Janet was a fluent polyglot, she spoke orientation and mobility, traffic engineering, and had the ability to explain complex terms and concepts to the general public.

Janet was the lead author for the chapters in *Foundations of O&M* on environmental access and on teaching travel at complex intersections. Along with Diane Fazzi, she wrote the second edition of *Orientation and Mobility Techniques: A Guide for the Practitioner*. Janet conducted research on numerous topics related to environmental access, including Accessible Pedestrian Signals, detectable warnings, or truncated domes, and making roundabout crossings accessible, resulting in numerous articles published in peer-reviewed journals, as well as reports of research. Janet was a frequent

presenter at conferences, including transportation engineering conferences as well as conferences related to blindness, on both research and on general O&M topics, like integrating people who are blind into a marching band.

To honor her legacy, we will continue her work. I would like to paraphrase from one of the many articles she wrote--plant a seed and ..... get involved in your local communities. "There are a lot of new street designs being proposed and implemented. Some of those may negatively impact the travel of individuals who are blind or who have low vision without careful consideration during the design phase. Most street projects have public outreach meetings." Addressing accessibility concerns early and often can help make the project develop into one that is accessible and equitable. We appreciate the abundant seeds of advocacy that Janet planted and see the garden of greater accessibility to the built environment that has grown.

Thank you for being a part of the AER Orientation and Mobility community and working together to learn and grow. If you have news related to the division to share, please reach out to Meg Robertson, Newsletter Editor at [mobilitymeg@aol.com](mailto:mobilitymeg@aol.com)

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

JoAnne Chalom COMS

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As mentioned above, the OM Newsletter has a new editor, Meg Robertson. Any errors are the responsibility of the Editor. A special thanks to all the OM Newsletter editors from the past, especially Susan Langendonk for all her work as the last newsletter editor! A newsletter needs news, so if you have something that you wish to share with the OM members, or ideas for the newsletter, please email Meg at [Mobilitymeg@aol.com](mailto:Mobilitymeg@aol.com)

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

**Newsletter next deadline: January 1, 2022**

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## Division Announcements

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**Environmental Access Committee Report:** This is very sad report to write. Janet Morgan Barlow was the long-time chair of this committee, passing the mantle to me last fall. She was planning on remaining on the committee continuing to pass her knowledge and expertise to us. With her sudden passing, the field and our EAC committee have a hole that no one can ever fill. As mentioned in the OM Chair's report, on social media postings, listservs, and below remembrances, she touched more lives, than she could have imagine. She connected the silos between our field with planners, traffic engineers, and pedestrian groups nationally and international. During our July EAC meeting, she continued to guide us, with no one ever expecting this would be the last time we would talk to and learn from her. After her passing, I attended a number of presentations, on public access and pedestrian safety, not related to OM, and each presenter mentioned Janet's name and how she raised awareness of the needs of pedestrians with vision loss to the presenter with her death being a loss to their fields. There is not enough space to include all the wonderful notes/comments sent to include. We will be gathering all these notes to send to her family. Below are some of notes, describing Janet's impact to the OM field and to all who worked with her or attended one of her presentations.



Photo of Janet and her family after being honored with the 2008 Lawrence E. Blaha Award, the highest award in the field of orientation and mobility, in recognition of her exemplary behavior in the field of O&M, outstanding contributions to the profession, and dedication to serving people with visual impairments. Her husband and children celebrated with her.

Edited announcement written by Beezy Bentzen, Lukas Franck, Bastian Schroeder:

*Janet's contributions to the field of visual impairment are almost incalculable. Janet spent many years in the practice of orientation and mobility (O&M), on the street, teaching vision disabled people to travel independently, most notably at the Center for the Visually Impaired in Atlanta. Her practical experience prepared her well for her next career, researching techniques to make the built environment more accessible to vision disabled travelers. Janet was President of Accessible Design for the Blind (ADB), a small research organization started by Beezy Bentzen. Under Janet's leadership, ADB became well-recognized for human factors research related to environmental access. Major topics that Janet investigated included accessible pedestrian signals, roundabouts, and tactile walking surface indicators such as detectable warnings and guidance surfaces. Janet was also first author of two chapters in Foundations of Orientation and Mobility, the authoritative textbook on the theory, research, and practice of O&M. She authored many papers and was a sought-after speaker at conferences and workshops.*

*Few individuals have had as profound of an impact on a profession as Janet, and hardly any have had such impact on two. In addition to O&M, Janet's impacts on the transportation engineering profession have arguably been at least as profound, albeit less celebrated and recognized. For well over two decades, Janet has attended countless meetings and conferences – often listening for hours to the conversations and discussions of committees and panels, only to speak up at the right moment to draw attention to the needs and civil rights of persons with disabilities. Those comments were often celebrated, sometimes dismissed, but always had an impact! Janet participated in countless national and international meetings of the Transportation Research Board and its various committees, the Institute for Transportation Engineers, the National Committee for Uniform Traffic Control Devices, and many state and local events. Her impacts live on in the written words of journal papers, research reports, and guidebooks, as well as in the memories many in the two professions have of Janet, her passionate debates, and her field demonstrations to countless professionals of accessibility challenges under blindfold.*

*Janet was a tenacious and deeply knowledgeable advocate for people who were blind and visually impaired. She was a mentor, a role model, and a leader, and we will miss her dearly. She cared deeply about so much and so many of us, consumers and professionals alike in transportation and in the blindness field.*

*We all leave holes in the lives of others when we pass, Janet leaves a crater in two professions, and in the lives of professionals throughout the United States and in fact the entire world. At the same time her monuments are making streets and sidewalks*

*accessible across the United States and Canada. Janet's competence, knowledge and work ethic were legendary. Her joy and passion for her chosen work and for her family and friends were a fire that warmed so many of us. Her contributions will live on, and we will miss, remember and celebrate her as we travel through the environment that she helped to shape.*

*Janet was a true friend to those who knew her. As more details on ways to honor Janet's life become available, we will share these with anyone interested.*

**Al Kaufman:** *When I graduated from Western Michigan some 25 years ago, I applied at a few places and got job offers. I mentioned them to one of my instructors, Dave Guth. "Oh, go work with Janet," he said immediately. Thank you, Dave. It was one of the best decisions I ever made.*

*Janet Barlow took me in like a long-lost friend. She built a family at the Center for the Visually Impaired in Atlanta and she was the loving but no-nonsense mom. Her husband, Doug, gave me one of his famous hugs when I first met him, and her daughter even babysat my new daughter while my wife and I moved into our Atlanta apartment.*

*I learned more about O&M my first six-months there than I did my whole time at grad school (sorry, Western, you were great, but you weren't Janet). I was there less than a year when she informed me I was going to be presenting at the national conference on our public transportation rail system, something I was not even confident teaching to my students at the time. I was terrified, but got through it, and have been presenting ever since, mostly because Janet just expected me to. Janet didn't want us to just be teachers. She wanted us to be part of a community; to get involved; to fight for change; to be good citizens. It's the only way she and Doug knew how to live. Her tireless work in the blind and visually impaired community has changed laws and ensured that traffic lights, sidewalks, and intersections are accessible to all. In her private life, she and Doug were always active in their communities, both in Atlanta and in Asheville, NC, ensuring there were greenscapes for everyone. She was a pragmatic hippie, an idealist who was not afraid to wade into the miasma of bureaucracy to get the job done. She was a special blend.*

*She was not just my first, and greatest, supervisor. She was my role model. As a new father, I constantly looked to her for advice, which she always gave in a reassuring, never overbearing, way. I would tell her a concern I had about my baby and she'd say something like, "Oh, Bekah did that. It was a pain, but she got over it." As her kids grew and she became a grandmother, it was a joy to see her put as much energy and passion*

*into making gingerbread houses with her ever-growing family as she did in pedestrian and accessibility issues. Those houses were museum worthy. Watching her with Doug and her daughters and, later, her grandchildren, I knew that that was the kind of family I wanted to strive for. So much love and respect among everyone. She and Doug had a love story for the ages. I learned so much about how to be a good father and husband just by watching them interact.*

*And it wasn't just me. The whole staff went to her for advice. There seemed to be no problem she could not solve in her caring but pragmatic way. Janet was a larger than life person in a 5'4" frame. There are still times today that I want to take the easy way out and don't, because I know Janet would not want me to. Janet Barlow has made me a better person, as she has done for countless others. I'm just honored that I knew her and was able to call her a friend.*

**Liz Robertson, MA, COMS/EAC Member:** *Janet's impact on my career is more than she'd ever know. I met her only 2 years ago when she came to provide a hands-on intersection training with my team in Colorado - ah, the good ol' pre-pandemic days! Janet's presentation on complex intersection design, protected bike lanes, and APS forever changed the way I think about built environments. It is through this interaction with her that I became fascinated with universal design and physical accessibility of built environments - simply put, equity for all. Janet was more than just an expert in O&M - she taught me how to advocate straight at the source so things are done the right way, the first time, for all people. Whether she realized it or not, she modeled what it means to be a strong professional woman who shows up, gives her all, and gracefully demands a better world. I am so thankful that our paths crossed, if only for a short time. As I step into several advocacy and leadership roles in my local community and career, I always ask myself, "What would Janet do?"*

**Claudia Libis COMS/EAC member:** *The fields of O&M & Pedestrian Travel were stunned to learn of the recent death of Janet Barlow. Along with her professional partner Billie Louise (Beezy) Bentzen, Janet was a pioneer in the struggle to make streets, vehicles and other pedestrian environments accessible to blind and visually impaired pedestrians amidst increasingly dangerous barriers to safe travel. Janet & Beezy have been the first to conduct valid research proving time and time again that modifications to the environments used by visually impaired persons were critical to their safety. In the Northeast, as representatives to the AER Access Committee Meg Robertson and I have spoken with other O&Mers and traffic engineers, we have seen over the years the deep and growing respect that the engineers have developed for Janet. On a personal level, if I am speaking with a group of traffic engineers about a project in their municipality I may get blank stares, but when I remind them that this is the work of Janet*

*Barlow, they suddenly sit up and begin to listen. Publishing in journals articles significant to traffic engineers was a novel approach piloted by Janet & Beezy that has made all the difference in the world and made Janet's (and Beezy's) name known in many circles. She has laid a strong groundwork, and we must proceed without her guidance. She will be sorely missed. Our hearts go out to her husband, daughters and grandchildren.*

**Valery Kircher COMS:** *This news article is bittersweet for many in the O&M community because of the loss of Janet Barlow. Janet was an advocate for people who had a vision loss and dedicated her life to her profession as an O&M Specialist. I did not have the pleasure of meeting Janet Barlow personally. However, she was one of my O&M "idols/stars" in the field. I first saw and heard her speak at the SOMA conference in Chattanooga TN when I was a fairly new COMS. I was hooked, and I followed her works and when possible, attended her sessions at professional conferences by AER. I recently re-read her book, written in conjunction with Diane Fazzi, the revised Hill and Ponder book Orientation and Mobility Techniques A Guide for the Practitioner, Second Edition, AFB Press (2017) and appreciate the thoroughness and easy to use format that the book is written in. Janet will be missed by many in the field, as well as those no longer practicing O&M, a "star" lost to soon.*

**Meg Robertson COMS:** *I have been overwhelmed by the loss of Janet's passing. Her death has impacted me so much. During my times at the Annual TRB meetings, I was able to get to know Janet on a more personal level, hearing about her family and reunions at the beach during the summer. I was always in awe how she was able to connect all the dots between O&M and the fields of Pedestrian/Bicycles and traffic engineers/designers. If I sent an email asking for a clarification on a law or issue, she would get back to me within the day. She was amazing and so patient with us "Newbies". At these times, poetry and music comfort me. The below are lyrics from "Good" (musical Wicked), which I will now will remind of Janet every time I hear it. She changed me and the field for good.*

*"I've heard it said, that people come into our lives for a reason  
Bringing something we must learn and we are led to those who help us most to  
grow, if we let them and we help them in return  
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true, but I know I'm who I am today, because I  
knew you...because I have been changed for good, so much of me is made of what  
I learned from you..." and we all learned so much from her.*

**Becky Davidson, Chair, American Council of the Blind EAC:** *My heart is heavy, too. As a longtime advocate in the pedestrian safety realm and especially as a blind pedestrian I'm so grateful for Janet's incredible work and the passion she brought to it. She has given us much and a legacy to carry forward.*



## The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center September newsletter:

<https://www.pedbikeinfo.org/>

*“Colleagues at PBIC are saddened to hear about the passing of a leader and valued colleague, Janet Barlow. As Janet's many peers and friends reflect on her work and contributions to the field, PBIC would like to add to the memory of her life by celebrating her impact through PBIC. As President of Accessible Design for the Blind, Janet was a national leader in helping people who are blind and visually impaired travel independently. In a recent PBIC webinar series, **Enhancing Mobility, Access and Safety for Pedestrians**, Janet eloquently advocated for people who are not always considered in transportation decisions. A few years prior to this series, she participated in a webinar on **Accessible Pedestrian Signals** and spoke to methods of travel by blind or low-vision pedestrians and ADA and MUTCD standards. Janet was also instrumental in providing direction and guidance for the PBIC webpage **Access for Individuals with Disabilities**. Her passion and care for the people she committed her life's work to carries on through her papers, presentations, and many other contributions to the field. We are honored to have had the chance to work with Janet and know she will continue to inspire us in championing the needs in accessibility and universal design for all, always.”*

Below is a list of many resources Janet, created or edited. Please check them out at AER's website <https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/orientation-mobility-division/resources/>

[About Accessible Pedestrian Signals](#)

[Detectable Warning Surfaces](#)

[Guidance through Construction Areas](#)

[Design Guidelines for the Visual Environment](#)

[Shared Streets: Impacts for Pedestrians with Visual Impairments](#)

[Considerations When Requesting an Accessible Pedestrian Signal](#)

[Need for Accessible Pedestrian Signals When Leading Pedestrian Intervals \(LPs\) and Exclusive Pedestrian Phases are Installed](#)

[Sample Letter Requesting an Accessible Pedestrian Signal](#)

[List of Accessible Pedestrian Signal Manufacturers](#)

## EAC July Meeting: Floating Bus stops Presentation Summary:



Photo of a floating bus stop in Boston MA. Sidewalk, bike lane, bus island, street. This bus stop has been placed by an intersection with wheelchair access to the bus stop, near bus shelter on island not at the intersection crosswalk area.

During our July EAC meeting our guest speakers discussed *“Floating Bus Stops: Lessons Learned from Montgomery County Maryland”*. Floating bus stops are transit/bus platforms separated from the sidewalk by a bikeway or other travel way. These types of transit stops are appearing around the country and will impact teaching O&M when trying to locate a bus stop. Usually, they are installed along a protected bike lane. The bike lane runs next to the sidewalk, with the bus stop on the left of bus way, next to the street side. A pedestrian will need to cross a bike lane to get to the bus stop. Not all bus stops will be near intersections, so locating one may cause orientation issues. There are no national standards for these designs. Takeaways from this presentation include:

- Educate yourself learn the terminology of the traffic designers and engineers
- Form a relationship with the traffic engineers and street designers
- Educate the community, municipal leaders and staff at the department of transportation on the unique needs of pedestrians with vision loss and what is best design practices
- Invite engineers, community leaders, consumers and the community into the field with you, either to highlight a specific intersection or to participate in a walk audit (a good idea for White Cane Safety Day!)
- Educate consumers/students on terminology and the impacts of designs
  - Teach them and yourself how to report problems
  - Teach advocacy skills how to explain the impacts to pedestrians who have vision loss.

Thanks to our presenters:

James Elliott: Senior Planner, [elliott@tooledesign.com](mailto:elliott@tooledesign.com);

Matt Johnson: Planner from Montgomery County in Maryland,  
[Matt.Johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Matt.Johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov);

Marybeth Cleveland: COMS, [mbcleveland@fastmail.net](mailto:mbcleveland@fastmail.net)

They presented a similar session at the Association for Pedestrians and Bicycle Professionals Conference held this past August which was more geared towards Engineers and Street Designers. <https://www.apbp.org/>

Toole Design has been working on a document for Montgomery County called *“Planning & Designing Streets to be Safer and More Accessible for People with Vision Disabilities: A Toolbox for Montgomery County & the Metropolitan Washington Region”*. It should be released sometime this fall. <https://tooledesign.com/>

***Pedestrian Resources to Help Talk the Walk:*** Over the past decade, state departments of transportation (DOTs) have worked to fulfill a federal U.S. DOT policy to incorporate “safe and convenient walking and bicycle facilities into transportation projects.” If, for instance, you want more bus riders, you have to consider pedestrians. The quality of walkways for reaching a bus stop along with the amenities there show measurable differences in transit ridership and customer satisfaction. Go to <http://www.trb.org/main/blurbs/181588.aspx> for resources that traffic engineers and street designers use.

The Environmental Access Committee of OM division AER meets on a regular basis. Please contact the Chair or your local EAC member for more information, issues or how to participate.

#### **Members of EAC:**

Meg Robertson, Mass./New England- EAC Chair: [Mobilitymeg@aol.com](mailto:Mobilitymeg@aol.com)

Beezy Bentzen, Alaska	Janet Barlow, North Carolina	Gene Bouquin, New York
Raychel Callary, Washington	JoAnne Chalom, Florida	Lukas Franck, New Jersey
Jen Graham, Michigan	Melanie Hughes, Virginia	
Laura Park Leach, Missouri	Claudia Libis, New Hampshire/New England	
Linda Meyers, California	Elizabeth Robertson, Colorado	
Dona Sauerburger, Maryland		

## District Director Reports

**DISTRICT 1:** Loana Mason: [loanam@nmsu.edu](mailto:loanam@nmsu.edu) (Alaska, Alberta, Arizona, British Columbia, Colorado, Hawaii, New Mexico, California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Northwest Territories, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Yukon Territories) No Updates

**DISTRICT 2:** John McAllister: [jwmcallister@ualr.edu](mailto:jwmcallister@ualr.edu) (Arkansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Manitoba, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Saskatchewan, Texas) No updates

**DISTRICT 3:** Margaret Winn: [margaretkwinn@gmail.com](mailto:margaretkwinn@gmail.com) (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario and Wisconsin)

**Illinois: Second Sense has upcoming events for clients 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>

**Bosma Enterprises** has a position opening for an Orientation & Mobility Specialist. Applications can be submitted online at [Bosma.org](http://Bosma.org) or by mailing a cover letter and resume to: Bosma Enterprises, Attn: Human Resources, 6270 Corporate Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46278

**Michigan AER 2022 Annual Conference:** April 21 and 22. The in person, or perhaps, virtual conference will take place at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Kalamazoo Conference Center and is a place for professionals to share their expertise, effective practices, innovative programs, employment strategies, and research results with their colleagues. <https://michiganaer.com/conference/>

Leader Dogs for the Blind/Rochester MI is accepting applications for O&M and Guide Dog Training. For current application information contact Client Services at 888-777-5332 or email [clientservices@leaderdog.org](mailto:clientservices@leaderdog.org) or apply online at <https://www.leaderdog.org/apply/>. Leader Dog is also offering free virtual learning opportunities for prospective clients, graduates, family, friends and ACVREP Vision Rehabilitation Professionals, go to the website at [www.leaderdog.org](http://www.leaderdog.org)

## District Director Reports continued....

*District 4 Claudia Libis: [clibis13@gmail.com](mailto:clibis13@gmail.com) Northeastern US and Eastern Canada. (US: Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island & Vermont: Canada: New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, & Quebec)*

Greetings! I have been in the O&M field 42 years, entering my 43rd year of service to children with visual impairments. As frustrated as I get with national and educational politics, this dynamic field we have all chosen keeps me energized. There's always something new to discuss, a better way to accomplish a goal with a student.

Conference updates: New York State AER will have a virtual conference in October. Contact NYS AER [newyorkstateaer@gmail.com](mailto:newyorkstateaer@gmail.com) for more information. The NEAER conference (New England states and Canadian members) will have a virtual conference during November 4-5, planned by our Connecticut members. Sessions will be recorded, but only be available with registration for a short while following the conference. Registration information should be available sometime this month. It should be a fantastic conference. For more information go to <https://www.nercve.org/ne/aer-2021-conference>

Best wishes for a fun-filled and meaningful autumn. On a recent lesson I pointed out the autumn leaves, my student was walking on, became crunchy when they died. She said "Oh! So, they don't turn black?". She was under the impression that everything turned black when it died and was quite surprised that autumn leaves do not. This was a reminder, there is always a teaching moment, for her and myself, realizing what our students are still missing concepts and making assumptions which are not quite true.

**DISTRICT 5:** Amanda Stolz: [argordon08@gmail.com](mailto:argordon08@gmail.com) (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, Tennessee) No updates

**DISTRICT 6:** Valery Kircher: [valeryherring@yahoo.com](mailto:valeryherring@yahoo.com) (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virgin Islands, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington D.C.)

The DC-MD Chapter of AER will have an in-person, with a virtual option, TogetherAER Again conference coming on Friday, October 22, 2021. For more information go to <https://sites.google.com/dcmdaer.org/dc-mdaer/home>

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## O&M Updates

**O&M Contracting Rates Survey:** The Orientation and Mobility Specialist Association (OMSA) in partnership with researchers, through Western Michigan University, North Carolina Central University and the Orientation and Mobility Division of AER, are gathering information about contracting rates and requirements being applied for O&M contracting work performed in the United States. If you perform O&M services for a school, government agency, private agency, non-profit, or as an individual contractor, please consider taking about 5 minutes to complete the anonymous survey by following the link.

We previously sent out an invitation to participate in a survey of individuals providing O&M service through contracting. In order to include as many participants as possible, from as many states as possible we are opening up the survey for **another two weeks**. The survey will close on **September 17th**.

**We also want to provide further clarification about issues which have surfaced:**

The term portal to portal is defined as travel from home to the location of the learner and back. The survey wants to know if you are paid an amount to cover travel or are paid according to the mileage that you travel.

If you are provided different payment rates for service in different geographical areas, you can pick the most common rate you receive or you can complete the survey an additional time for each rate that you receive.

Those who have already responded, need not respond again. Thank you!

[https://wmich.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eDKIM2SC8NBHE6q](https://wmich.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eDKIM2SC8NBHE6q)

Susan Langendonk, COMS  
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Orientation and Mobility Specialist Association

Robert Wall Emerson, PhD, COMS  
William Wiener, PhD, COMS  
JoAnne Chalom, COMS  
Rikilynn Layher, COMS

Western Michigan University  
North Carolina Central University  
AER Orientation and Mobility Division  
Saginaw Intermediate School District, MI

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### Vote on Position Papers from the AER Orientation and Mobility Division

The AER Orientation and Mobility Division has reviewed comments from the open comment period, addressed them, and has prepared the following position papers for a vote on these final drafts.

If you would like to review the comments for any of the position papers listed below please reach out to Raychel Callary at [Raychelcallary@gmail.com](mailto:Raychelcallary@gmail.com)

The division recommends approval of the position papers listed below.

- [The Orientation & Mobility Specialist's Role in Low Vision Driving](#)



- [Orientation and Mobility in Natural Environments](#)
- [Orientation and Mobility Assessments for Students in Education and Life Skills Settings](#)
- [Teaching Street Crossing at Streets and Lanes Where There Is No Traffic Control](#)
- [Teaching O&M Through Individual and Group Lessons](#)

Members have ten working days to vote on the approval or rejection of these position papers. The voting period will end on **September 20, 2021**.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OandMPositionPapers>

The many other AER O&M Division papers that were included in the open comment periods are being revised or changed to address the comments received from members. They will be presented for a vote at a later date. Thank you for taking the time to vote!

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The team at the Vision Impairment and Rehabilitation research lab at the University of Montreal is inviting you to participate in a new study.

If you are an O&M specialist who has practiced in the US or Canada sometime since March of 2020, you are invited to complete an online questionnaire to share your experiences with or opinions on the use of remote intervention in O&M. Results from this study will help us better understand what is needed to improve the quality and accessibility of O&M services.

The following link will direct you to the survey: <http://ls.sondages.umontreal.ca/422122?lang=en>

Thank you in advance for your participation. Please do not hesitate to contact the research team at the email address below with any questions or comments you may have.

Joe Nemargut, COMS, PhD Co-investigator: [joe.nemargut@umontreal.ca](mailto:joe.nemargut@umontreal.ca)  
Assistant Professor, École d'Optométrie, Université de Montréal

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### **International White Cane Month Activities**

International White Cane Day October 15th falls on a Friday, this year. Below are a number of scheduled events, that I know of. Please send photos and/or a summary of any event that is happening in your Community for White Cane Day. ROCK the CANE! Send to O&M newsletter Editor at [Mobilitymeg@aol.com](mailto:Mobilitymeg@aol.com), right after your event!

The Mass. Commission for the Blind will have a Virtual White Cane Day celebration on Friday October 15, at 12 noon. For more information, please contact Ally Bull COMS at [Allyson.Bull@mass.gov](mailto:Allyson.Bull@mass.gov) or go to the MCB website at [www.mass.gov/mcb](http://www.mass.gov/mcb) to locate the Zoom link.

Rhode Island will be celebrating White Cane Day on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 3-5 pm with an in-person outdoors event at Garden City Center, Cranston RI. For more information contact <https://in-sight.org/>

Texas School for the Blind will be celebrating their White Cane Day on Wed. October 13<sup>th</sup> 9-2 in Austin. It will be an in-person event with a virtual live broadcast. [www.TSBVI.org](http://www.TSBVI.org)

Wisconsin will have a White Cane Day in Milwaukee for more information contact [WisconsinWCD@gmail.com](mailto:WisconsinWCD@gmail.com).

Ideas for White Cane Outreach Activities: (Please send more suggestions)

Encourage students to write a letter to the local paper or send a press release educating them on the State White Cane Law, O&M training and/or pedestrian issues which impact individuals with vision loss.

Develop a presentation to present at a local Lions Club meeting.

Work with local/state blindness agency to organize a White Cane Walk or activity during the month of October or on White Cane Day.

Invite engineers, community leaders, consumers and the community into the field with you, either to highlight a specific intersection or to participate in a walk audit.

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### **O&M Assessment Resources**

Compiled by Valery Kircher: [valeryherring@yahoo.com](mailto:valeryherring@yahoo.com) District 6

For many O&M specialists in the field, finding the right assessment tool and the amount of time for direct and consult ties with students is sometimes a difficult task. I have included links to both assessments and time determination forms to use in your everyday practice. These are free to use and are great resources to add to your toolbox!

#### **O&M Assessments:**

**NMSBVI the Research Edition is valid and reliable**

<http://www.nmsbvi.k12.nm.us/ominventory.html>

**The Michigan Severity & Rating Scale**

<https://mdelio.org/sites/default/files/documents/BVI/SRS/OMSRS%20Revised%208.15.2017.pdf>



**The Michigan Rating Scale Plus** for children with additional needs

[https://mdelio.org/sites/default/files/documents/BVI/SRS/OMSRS\\_Plus\\_3\\_18.pdf](https://mdelio.org/sites/default/files/documents/BVI/SRS/OMSRS_Plus_3_18.pdf)

**Inventory of Purposeful Movement** for children birth through 6 years old

[https://www.tsbvi.edu/attachments/379\\_purposeful-movement-inventory.pdf](https://www.tsbvi.edu/attachments/379_purposeful-movement-inventory.pdf)

**Individual Sensory Learning Profile** for infants and young children

[https://mdelio.org/sites/default/files/documents/BVI/ECC/OM/Individual\\_Sensory\\_Learning\\_Profile.pdf](https://mdelio.org/sites/default/files/documents/BVI/ECC/OM/Individual_Sensory_Learning_Profile.pdf)

**OM VISSIT**-this is a form which may help determine O&M services for direct and consult, once of course proper assessments are completed by an Orientation and Mobility Specialist

<https://www.tsbvi.edu/images/vissit/OM-VISSIT-with-instructions.pdf>

### **O&M Recruitment resources**

Many of us discovered this field by knowing a person with vision loss or after meeting a vision professional. A lot of people haven't had the opportunity to discover our line of work yet, and so it is important that we all do what we can to recruit new professionals and to inform people about the availability of services so that they can make people aware who would benefit. I find it challenging to speak in-depth about related professions but would still love to spark interest in joining our field in any of its branches. Several years ago, [flyers](#) were created to describe the various careers. They can be found on the AER website with a search for "Become a Vision Professional". These materials present some of the typical tasks, positive attributes, and a credentialing route. As we become more able to connect, I hope we can spread the word about services, careers, accessible design, independence with vision loss, and other areas in which we have important knowledge to share. Wishing you a wonderful fall season!

Raychel Callary, COMS, O&M Chair Elect

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### **Moving On and Updates**

**New Staff Changes.** (If you have an update on OM staff changes, or retirements please send them along to Newsletter Editor)

The Mass. Commission of the Blind has a new Director of O&M, Ally Bull. Prior to this role, Ally worked in Lawrence Public Schools as a dual certified Teacher for Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) and a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS)

from 2016-2021. Ally also has experience with Lowell Association for the Blind (LAB), where she worked as the Youth Program Coordinator from 2013-2016. She continues to serve as the Vice President on the LAB Board of Directors. In 2018, Ally was awarded her M.Ed. in Vision Studies from UMass Boston with dual certification as a TVI and COMS. Congrats to Ally on her new position! Her email address is [Allyson.Bull@mass.gov](mailto:Allyson.Bull@mass.gov). Ally replaces Meg Robertson COMS, who recently retired after 34 years at Commission for the Blind.

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Congrats to Chris Tabb who has been appointed to become a member of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Panel SA-54 on "Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety in Bus/BRT Corridors," which is being conducted under the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Synthesis Studies. The main objective of projects under this program is to synthesize existing information on a topic of relevance to transit objectives. Synthesis publications have proven to be useful and authoritative reports on transit problems and practices.

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### **This and That**

#### **September is Falls Prevention and National Preparedness Month.**

Vision Aware is having a FALL webinar on the linkages between vision loss, fear of falling, decreased muscle strength, balance and social isolation. Check out APHConnect & VisionAware.org for information on the training.

To learn more on how to be better prepared for the next natural disaster go to <https://www.ready.gov/september>. Free Preparedness webinars and resources on how to: *Make a plan, Build a disaster kit, Develop a communications plan* are just some of the different resources provided by FEMA at Ready.gov.

October is National Shake it Out Month (<https://www.shakeout.org/>) and has a national Fire Prevention Week (<https://www.nfpa.org/fpw>).

Much of emergency preparedness public outreach information is not accessible to individuals with vision loss. This population is rarely not included in planning or designing of accessible information, shelter needs and especially around transportation issues. Individuals with disabilities are often left out because it is believed, that they have someone or an agency who is responsible for them. As vision professionals, we need to learn how to be better prepared for us and our families. When we are personally prepared and aware of the hazardous in our communities, we can better

inform and support the individuals we work with, work with local governments, educating them the needs of residents with vision loss.

An additional resource to check out is ***“Personal Emergency Preparedness Workbook*** produced for individuals with disabilities by the Mass Office on Disability [www.mass.gov/mod/prepare](http://www.mass.gov/mod/prepare)

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**Guide Dogs for the Blind and The Seeing Eye, Inc.** have joined forces to create a training video to help airline and airport employees better assist travelers who are visually impaired, with a special focus on how to address the social distancing guidelines during the pandemic. <https://vimeo.com/547734281> If you would like a copy of this video's transcript, please contact [marketing@guidedogs.com](mailto:marketing@guidedogs.com).

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***Practices for Selecting Pedestrian and Bicycle Projects:*** For those looking to understand priorities of decision makers in local traffic engineering departments, the document linked below can be helpful in understanding how to advocate. You can download it for free from National Academies Press by creating a free account. Searching for the word "accessibility" will help in locating relevant sections to orient to the large document.

[https://www.nap.edu/catalog/26177/practices-for-selecting-pedestrian-and-bicycle-projects?utm\\_source=NASEM+News+and+Publications&utm\\_campaign=265c8b54cc-What%27s+New+2021+05+10&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_96101de015-265c8b54cc-111006038&goal=0\\_96101de015-265c8b54cc-111006038&mc\\_cid=265c8b54cc&mc\\_eid=c199a3d9b9](https://www.nap.edu/catalog/26177/practices-for-selecting-pedestrian-and-bicycle-projects?utm_source=NASEM+News+and+Publications&utm_campaign=265c8b54cc-What%27s+New+2021+05+10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_96101de015-265c8b54cc-111006038&goal=0_96101de015-265c8b54cc-111006038&mc_cid=265c8b54cc&mc_eid=c199a3d9b9)

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Call for Abstracts - Papers, Slideshows, and Posters due October 28, 2021: **16th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Older Adults and People with Disabilities (TRANSED) & 5th International Conference on Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)** (TRB) will be held in September 2022, Seattle, WA

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#### Thanks to the O&M Division Executive Committee

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