

INCITEMENT INCITEMENT INCITEMENT INCITEMENT INCITEMENT

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HOUSTON TURNS OUT ADAPT Workshop a Success!

By Rand Metcalf

A group of over 20 Houstonians attended the second training which ADAPT of Texas held January 20th. Local organizers Rand Metcalf, Lee Sanders and Judy Ziegler had worked hard to assure the good turn out and their efforts had paid off. The group included several new faces as well as a number of folks who had been battling METRO for years. After a brief history of ADAPT, a film highlighting past efforts to promote mainline accessibility in Houston's METRO system was shown. The film, made by CBFL, clearly showed the issue of mainline access was not new to METRO or Houston's disabled community.

The group was determined that their desire for change would lead to action. The afternoon session, which focused on organizing techniques, evolved into a strategizing and planning session for

ADAPT of Houston's first major action. The following statement to the board and the press tells the rest.

Press Release: January 22, 1986

You, the members of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, (M.T.A.) Board, have a great opportunity to provide the means of integrating the disabled into the mainstream of society. You, the members of the M.T.A. Board, are given the authority to purchase buses that will be accessible to the entire public. The question is, "Will be the disabled be permitted to ride PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION?" We, the members of American Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation (ADAPT) and Houstonians for Community Accessibility (HCA), want a written proposal from the M.T.A. Board to purchase only lift-equipped buses by the 4th of July — Independence Day.

The M.T.A. Board formed an Advisory Committee of the Disabled and the Elderly to investigate the feasibility of accessible mass transit in Houston. This committee was to make recommendations about the future transportation plans for the disabled. Does the Board need the recommendations of a powerless committee to justify 100% accessibility? Does the M.T.A. Board need the recommendations from a powerless committee to justify the continued practice of isolating the disabled from mass transit? The right to move freely in Houston usurps the recommendations of any committee.

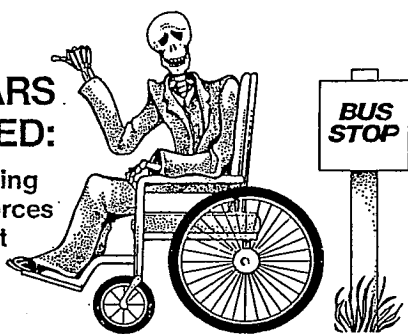
The 4th of July is a most appropriate deadline for M.T.A.'s decision to purchase only lift-equipped buses. Independence, as a nation, was declared over two hundred years ago when people stood up for their convic-

tions. On February 12th, Abraham Lincoln's Birthday, the disabled people of Houston will declare their own emancipation proclamation. On this date, a rally to support 100% accessible buses will take place in front of the M.T.A. building at 500 Jefferson. Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, eliminated the institution of slavery. You, the members of the M.T.A. Board, must decide to eliminate the barriers that make the disabled slaves to the only object of segregated transportation, METROLIFT.

Two hundred years ago, the cry for liberty was "Taxation without representation." Well, a population that pays its fair share of sales taxes are not being represented on the mainline buses. Today, the cry for liberty will be "We Will Ride."

FOR NINE YEARS WE HAVE TRIED:

Persuasion and Talking
Studies and Task Forces
A Limited Paratransit
UTA Agendas and
Meetings and
Meetings and
Meetings...



Now it is Time to Board the Bus!!!



ADAPT Workshop Set for Alamo City

San Antonio will be the site of the third ADAPT organizing workshop. Saturday March 1, ADAPT of Texas will meet with interested local disabled persons for a down to basics introduction to ADAPT and organizing-for-action techniques. The workshop, which will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., will be held at the Ruble Center, 419 E. Magnolia.

This is not ADAPT's first visit to San Antonio. A little less than a year ago San Antonio was host to the APTA (American Public Transit Association) Southwest Regional Conference. ADAPT was there in force for three solid days of demonstrating and protesting APTA's refusal to address the issue of mainline access and San Antonio's segregated transit system. On the third day of protests ADAPT met with Mayor Cisneros and negotiated several concessions supporting mainline access. The Mayor agreed to write the council of Mayors asking them to consider the issue of mainline accessibility in their transit systems, he agreed to set up a task force of disabled citizens to consult on access to VIA by disabled

citizen, as well as agreeing to meet several other ADAPT demands. He also agreed to inform ADAPT of his progress. To date the great civil rights Mayor has done none of the above. Wayne Cook, VIA Director, is one of the staunchest opponents of mainline access for persons with disabilities. He claims VIA Trans does a great job for the disabled citizens of San Antonio. (So does the Mayor, who points to his father as an example. Question: If you ran a city's transit service what kind of service would you give the Mayor's father?)

San Antonio's disabled community is getting tired of the double talk VIA keeps giving them. The VIA PR people keep talking about VIA TRANS' great service. Disabled riders know better. The VIA PR people keep saying 'our disabled folks don't want to mainline, they love paratransit.' Numerous disability groups call out, again and again, for MULTIMODAL transit.

The time for action has come. ADAPT appreciates all the local support in outreach and coordinating this event.

APTA and Civil Rights

By Jim Parker

It's '86 and already ADAPT's avowed enemy in the fight for accessible public transportation — APTA — has given us a GIFT for fueling our fight for access. In all their wisdom in dealing with this "small, vocal group of disabled people" (APTA's own words), APTA has finally opened the doors to its own downfall. The old guard has issued a policy statement and a very detailed Issue Paper dealing with the rights of all of us to utilize publicly financed transit.

APTA's position is that disabled people do NOT have a "civil right" to use regular fixed-route transit. Rather, it is up to the local policy makers to determine such access. It may be fine for Chicago to determine that only para-transit is needed in Chicago, but what does that mean beyond Chicago? It simply means that only those on the system ride and if you are from Texas, bring some wheels or forget being able to enjoy the fruits of the city . . . it means that just because you are disabled the mass transit system is not for you!

That is pure, polyunsaturated bull!

Here is the nation's organization for PUBLIC transit telling the public that certain members of the public are not really part of the public, that because we're disabled we must be taken care of, and that society at large (and APTA in particular) knows best how

to spend public tax dollars, even to the exclusion of disabled taxpayers . . . yes, you pay taxes even if you subsist on SSI, SSDI, a pension, or work for a living. This organization — APTA — is the lobbying arm for some 300-plus transit operations across the U.S. and Canada. Their policy positions on transit issues and operations set the tone for their members. APTA lobbies long and hard in Washington for monies to fund and help fund transit operations.

One great question that haunts me is how APTA can push for local option in determining the availability of transit for disabled people, but ask for a national commitment for dollars for mass transit? There's the rub! It might sit better if APTA recommended a general policy for all transit systems that if the buses aren't at least half full once a day in every section of a city then all half empty routes should be discontinued. After all, people in River Oaks (Houston) don't ride buses, only their servants do. Hell, disabled people don't even have a choice in Houston, or any other metropolitan area in Texas, save Austin and I'm not sure about Austin.

APTA seems to feel that disabled people will not instantly ride; and APTA is right. It's ludicrous to expect quick solutions (high ridership) for a complex problem. The freeing of disabled people from the bonds of institutionalization,

from societal repugnance and indifference, and from the slave-like mentality of a large percentage of our population does not evaporate once the bonds have been broken. As the black population has learned and the white population is still having trouble understanding, the prejudices of past injustices run deep and wide. Disabled people's problems are much the same, despite the fact that disabling conditions cut sharply across all lines. Prejudices and injustices remain deeply rooted in the attitudes of disabled and able bodied alike, in family, friends, foes and even ourselves.

APTA finally has provided an opening for ALL disabled people to rally around with its issue paper and policy statement on "Civil Rights and Public Transit". APTA wrote itself into a solid trap that disabled people must spring with moral rightness and the dictionary definition of civil rights (that APTA quoted): 'civil rights are rights that guarantee to ALL citizens equal opportunities, regardless of race, religion, sex, or national origin'.

It's no fault of disabled people that society as a whole has demanded that we live; but it is the responsibility of society to make damn sure that the society is accessible to ALL. We must be the harbinger of that attitude change! WE WILL RIDE!!!

Beyond Advocacy — Disability Pride

As disabled people we are conditioned to "be nice," to accept our lot and if we are very good maybe we will get a bone or two thrown our way in the form of a social program, an access adaptation or better awareness of our "special needs" by the general public. We are taught, as everyone is taught, our disabilities are the problem, and since it is pretty impossible to differentiate ones self from an aspect of ones body and psyche, in a sense WE are the problem. To make it in this able bodied world we must overcome our disabilities by being as close to normal as possible and helping others forget our "difference". In order to do this most of us try to minimize our demands on society, try to ignore our differences, try not to rock the boat by asking for too many bones and to be sure they know we are grateful for each one we get.

Culture dictates what is normal. What we think of as "the way it is," is to a great extent simply the way we are tacitly agreeing to run our lives. Culture is often

considered as unchanging and static, when in reality cultures adapt to changing situations just as the people that invent and maintain them do.

"Being nice," when boiled down to its core message, means knowing your place and staying in it. It is in the best interests of the people on top of a social situation to keep things the way they are, and change is scary since we are never sure of what the end result will be. Wanting to be liked is one of the most deeply ingrained messages we pick up and "being nice" is tooted as the best way to be liked.

But, if everyone stays in their place and is nice, at best, change is slow to come. By buying into our culture's traditional means of dealing with disabilities, by "being nice" and trying our best to overcome our disabilities some of us may be able to carve out a comfortable rut in which we can hide or mask our disabilities, and ignore the fact that in a very fundamental sense we are considered misfits, not part of the public. But

there are hundreds of thousands of others who because of economic reasons, educational reasons, physical reasons and many other reasons are not even able to make or find a niche. These people are being incarcerated in institutions such as "state schools", nursing homes, prisons and hospitals. Some are being killed at birth, are not allowed to go to school, to marry, to make decisions about their lives — even in 1986.

The goal the disability rights movement constantly embraces is "to be just like everybody else." But how can we be just like everybody else when we do not even allow ourselves to be who we are? As long as we cooperate with a system that, at best, allows us to exist as long as we pretend to be something other than what we are, we are doomed to failure. Without the depth of our whole selves we are doomed to be imperfect surface copies of those who despise us, and chances are great we will despise ourselves. Who can respect you if you cannot respect yourself?

We must develop disability pride.

Radicalism is not in fashion these days, but radicalism is what is needed. Radical means fundamental, as well as extreme, and is related in its root to radius which connects the center and the outside edge. Disabled people are certainly considered to belong at the outside edge of society; some consider us at the outside edge of humanity. By changing the perception of disability as acceptable we will be changing the center or core of society's perception of itself, of "normal". And we must not kid ourselves, there are other radical forces at work now changing our society in ways that will fundamentally worsen our options in life.

What is ADAPT

ADAPT is about taking a stand. With the statement "We Will Ride", ADAPT is saying we will be included and we will be respected for who we are, not in spite of it. ADAPT's demonstrations have two sides to them. On the one hand we are saying to the transit directors and to the public we are serious and we are willing to take steps with real risks to make ourselves understood. On the other we are saying to ourselves we are ready to take ourselves seriously, we deserve to be treated as part of the public and we are willing to fight for this. We will no longer cooperate with a system that routinely ignores our existence and our rights. ADAPT is moving toward disability pride.

ADAPT is about fundamental social change. The action of stopping a bus is a simple action, but a profound one. In a sense anyone can roll out in front of a bus, but in another sense it takes a special person since a great deal of risk is involved. You are not "being nice" anymore. You are stepping out of line. A great deal of attention is called to the person who blocks a bus, much of the attention is not very friendly. The action may involve arrest; it may involve media; it may involve getting the public angry; it may involve getting hurt. It is often a scary thing. But it must be scary for the other side also. At each action ADAPT has held there have been about four police to each disabled person. Why does it take so many cops to get us "back into line?"

ADAPT is about equality. ADAPT is seeking equal stature in the public and integrated transportation, but ADAPT is also seeking equality among its membership. Because the act of stopping a bus is a simple one, you do not need a college education in rehabilitation, in computers, in business administration to do it. You do not need to know the ins and outs of the regulations developed from some haphazardly enforced law. You do not need to be an expert in independent living skills. You need to believe you are the equal of other members of society and entitled to the same treatment as anyone else.

ADAPT is addressing the problem of the professional disabled person who "represents THE DISABLED" but has lost touch with the basic issues in her/his efforts to work within the system. Anyone who has attend a national ADAPT action can attest to the wild conglomeration of individuals participating.

ADAPT is about community. Those attending an action can also attest to the beautiful, lumbering process of the group deciding on a course of action. Anyone interested is involved and all comments are heard. And the community takes care of its own: making sure everyone is fed, finding funds for as many as possible to travel to and from the actions (sometimes 10 or more to a van, but getting there none-the-less), seeing to attendant care needs with folks who are part of the community and finding places for everyone to stay. At the actions community comes from members sharing the freedom of choosing not to cooperate with a system which denies us our right to equality.

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From National: ADAPT Does Dallas

In the true style of Debbie, ADAPT did Dallas. End to end!

After eight hundred miles on the road, ADAPT of Denver met with the new and improved version of ADAPT of Dallas on January 13, into the late hours of the evening, strategizing and planning the events of the next two days.

ADAPT united on the fourteenth of January at the monthly DART Board meeting and delivered the demands of ADAPT to Director Ted Tedesco and Board members. Stating that if the DART Board chose to continue to ignore the mandate of the public, which was that fifty percent of its fleet be lift-equipped, then ADAPT was declaring a moral war against discrimination by DART. Any bus that was not equipped with a lift and in use was subject to being stopped and held until DART could replace it with an accessible vehicle. This practice will continue until the DART Board complies with the demands of ADAPT and the public mandate. The message was delivered by Dallas ADAPT members George Cooper, Kathy Thomas, and George Johnson. The message was echoed loudly by Joyce Tepley and Carol Corsey, also of Dallas ADAPT. "We will ride!" was chanted so that the Board meeting could not continue until ADAPT had completed its demands. The coup de gras was a shower of play money for the Board members representing our missspent and unrepresented tax dollars.

The following morning we were greeted with front page headlines proclaiming our demands. By no coincidence was it Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. ADAPT chose a most appropriate manner to celebrate his birthday — in the streets!

In a matter of minutes, downtown Dallas's arteries were blocked off and traffic was at a stand-still. Buses were strewn all over the streets and intersections. At last count there were fifteen disabled people and seventeen buses clogging the streets of downtown Dallas for six hours. We had as many media persons as buses held captive.

After six hours of negotiations, the police, DART, and ADAPT were

at a stand-still. With great fanfare, seventeen protesters were arrested and carried off in special vans. It was the first arrest for Kathy Thomas and George Johnson of Dallas and Kathy Vincent of Denver.

ADAPT could not have chosen a more appropriate way to celebrate a civil rights leader's birthday than to fight in the streets for the civil rights of people with disabilities. ADAPT intends to continue its assault on Dallas and the DART system. We will return until "We can ride" in Dallas.

Chicago ADAPT, in conjunction with the state of Illinois Department of Human Rights, are holding public hearings which began on February 20. We wish them well.

Washington, D.C. ADAPT has forced the DC bus system to commit to making fifty percent of its fleet accessible to persons who use wheelchairs. Keep up the good work!

Austin ADAPT has just forced their system to purchase 100 lift-equipped buses. A sweet victory!

The newest ADAPT group — Houston — blocked buses on February 12, Lincoln's birthday. The eyes of Texas are upon you!

Cincinnati is shaping up to be a pivotal confrontation between APTA and ADAPT. The Cincinnati independent living center's board of directors won't permit them to be associated with our action there because "we engage in illegal activities!" Where have we heard this rap before? Cincinnati must be a powerful action because APTA is showing a public split in its ranks over our issue — Los Angeles is threatening to drop their very expensive membership. We must keep the pressure on. ADAPT organizers will be working in Cincinnati at the end of March to lay the groundwork for the national action and to meet with disabled individuals who will not have their jobs threatened by the ILC's board.

ADAPT meets APTA May 17-22 in Cincinnati. ADAPT members need to meet on the 16th — call us if you can go, need assistance, etc. Just 50 good people can accomplish our goals in Cincinnati — letting APTA know we have the power and will win our right to ride!

That's What I Want To Hear

By Phil Ochs

*Oh you tell me that your last good dollar is gone
And you say that your pockets are bare
And you tell me that your clothes are tattered and torn
And nobody seems to care*

*Now don't tell me your troubles
No I don't have the time to spare
But if you want to get together and fight
Good buddy that's what I want to hear*

*And you tell me that your job was taken away
By a big old greasy machine
And you tell me that you don't collect no more pay
And your belly is growing lean*

*Now if I had the jobs to give
You know I'd give them all away
But don't waste your breath
Calling out my name if you don't have nothing to say*

*And you tell me that you don't have nothing to do
And you keep on wasting your time
And you say when you want to get your family some food
You got to stand in a relief-line*

*No it's a sin and a bloody shame
The way they're pushing you 'round
But when you decide not to take no more
Then I'm putting my money down*

*Cause I've seen your kind before
And I'll see them many times again
But you know every bad thing that's happened to you
Has happened to better me*

*So don't explain that you've lost your way
That you've got no place to go
You've got a hand and a voice
And you're not alone, brother
That's all you need to know*

*And if you're still wondering what I'm trying to say
Let me tell what it's all about
Now nobody listens to a single man
When he's walking round down and out*

*So if you're looking for an answer
He's right by your side
And you'll never really know how far you'll go
Till you stand together and try*

At Long Beach Boulevard & Pine Street, They Stopped the Buses

Marty Walton, in a wheelchair, and Frank Lozano, with his white cane, were in front of a city bus. The bus had turned off its engine. People had gotten off, and were milling about on the sidewalk and in the street. Many were angry.

"I don't think they should hold up the buses," a large, burly man yelled, from the sidewalk. "They have free medical care already."

Ronald Paulinsky was mad. An "installator," he called himself, at nearby Ranchos Los Amigos rehabilitation hospital, Paulinsky took turns taunting Walton and Lozano and shouting his opinions to the gathered knot of people.

"More than half the buses have lifts already.

"You ride free, don't you? You in the white cane there!" he yelled at Lozano, who stood, quietly, in front of the bus. "Don't you think you've made your point?" Paulinsky demanded.

Then, more to the crowd than to the protesters, he jeered, "I bet you don't got a wife at home to come home to."

"It costs \$30,000 a lift," Paulinsky continued, taking another tack. "A lotta guys at Ranchos Los Amigos don't want this." Walton and Lozano said nothing.

"I'll move your ass!" Paulinsky shouted, after a pause. But he did nothing. He stayed on the sidewalk, pacing and shouting.

"How long you gonna be here?"

a high school boy asked the two. "I gotta get home. I'll get a spanking if I don't get home."

Other high school kids pleaded with them to release the buses. "I'll even bring out an extra chair and sit with you" one said, if they'd just let the bus go so they could get home.

"Do you think holding four buses here will really make a difference?" a bystander said.

Paulinsky again, to the crowd: "Don't you think we do enough for these people already?" Then, to Walton and Lozano: "My taxes are paying for your care."

"If I were in front of the bus, people would kick me," Paulinsky told them, loudly. "We can't kick you."

Finally Lozano spoke. "Your anger," he said to Paulinsky, "makes you as blind as me." Wallace Nolen, of Long Beach, stood a little ways back, observing it all. "The only way you can get public opinion swayed," he said, "is by demonstrating."

Fifty-one people were arrested by Long Beach police, the largest group of disability rights demonstrators ever arrested in this country. Later, those arrested were released on their own recognizance.

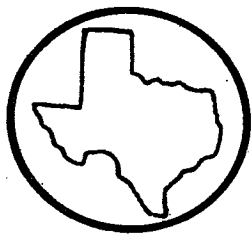
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ADAPT

WE WILL RIDE

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Around The State

Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi has recently voted in a new transit authority and is in the process of designing their new and improved service. But improved for whom? Lack of public transit was cited as one of the biggest problems at a public forum held by the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities earlier this year.

Austin

By Stephanie Thomas

100% mainline access for off peak hours is the plan for the July service improvements for Austin's Capital Metro. Over 50% mainline access is planned for peak hours as Austin's 100 lift equipped buses, ordered last year, finally arrive. Austin ADAPT members should be proud as their efforts have brought their system one of the most accessible in the country — at least temporarily. Another innovation slated for the July improvements is timed transfer service. With this kind of service, buses from different routes would meet at appointed places and times allowing passengers to transfer and change directions without having to go all the way downtown or to some other central location. Capital Metro is also getting ready to re-up its taxi service contracts, an expensive piece of the Special Transit service budget.

Houston

By Rand Metcalf

Houston disability activists forced the METRO Board to face the reality that the issue of mainline access is not dead by any means.

A street action was held February 12, Lincoln's birthday and testimony on accessing transit was given at the city council meeting that same day. Local support for ADAPT was strong. More next issue.

Dallas/Ft. Worth

While others remembered Dr. King's birthday with services and ceremonies, ADAPT members took to the streets of Dallas to fight for the civil rights of disabled people on January 15th. Blocking several main thoroughfares in downtown Dallas, ADAPT members took to the streets and held buses for over five hours to demonstrate their frustration with the broken promises and separate and unequal transportation offered by DART. The local activists and national organizers were cheered on by passers-by as the nearly day long vigil continued. National as well as local media covered the event.

At about 4:30 the police moved in to arrest, just an hour after their negotiators had agreed to let ADAPT hold the buses until midnight, as a symbolic statement, in return for ADAPT's promise to leave Commerce street open. Seventeen people were taken down to the jail in Handy Ride vans (which gave the police excellent service) and booked on charges of obstructing traffic. Police gave media persons the protesters' birth place as the place they were from, thus giving the impression the protestors were just a bunch of outside agitators.

ADAPT members also attended a DART board meeting the night be-

fore voicing their demand for 100% mainline access. Calling for an end to go-nowhere studies, to rubber stamp committees, to broken promises and to segregation ADAPT protesters threw a shower of paper money at the board saying "here's our tax money you take from us while you give us nothing!" Many other disabled people were there to testify against DART's arbitrary decision to cutoff service to persons with mental retardation, visual impairments and epilepsy. The Board finally decided not to stop serving people with these disabilities.

Meanwhile litigation continues in Fort Worth as their transit authority tries to weasel out of providing mainline accessible service with the lift equipped buses they own.

El Paso

By Jim Parker

El Paso still does not have a rapid transit district; the second election failed. However, the City commitment to transit did not! There is a new transit board, which has yet to meet, to further work done by the last transit board. There is talk about an election in April of '87, as that also is the date for local election to City Council. Such a date would heighten the positions for the voters to decide which council candidates support what.

Also, an '87 date will give El Paso an opportunity to feel the possible deep cuts in Federal dollars for transit — up to 40%. One local transit person, when asked the potential impact of Reagan's proposed cuts, replied, "I just don't know. But, I do know that when we were cut 3%, we cut back our service 10%." Guess what 40% will do!!!

We have a new director of transit. He is Mark Dorfman from Saginaw, Michigan. Michigan is one of two states which have a state law mandating purchase of accessible public transit vehicles. Our local transit committee will have had a meeting with him before this issue is mailed, but will relate the follow-up.

Currently, we have money allocated for an additional 20 para-transit buses, which would bring the fleet to 35. Transit may sell 5 of the buses and keep a fleet of 20 buses operating, with 5 in reserve.

The good news is that our transit committee is beginning to press for activation of the 30 lift-equipped buses currently owned by SCAT. With activation of the 30 buses, we could have accessible weekend, evening and off-peak service. We will press for two additional routes to go with the accessible one now working to provide some connecting points. We will be in action should there be backward steps from moving toward accessibility. Adios from El Paso!!!



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