



Example 35 **Toy Accessible Buses and Toy Wheelchairs with Dolls for Raising Awareness**

City (country) **Helsinki (Finland)**

good practice for people with ...	kind of vehicle	kind of measure/approach
... motor impairment ... visual impairment ... hearing impairment	city bus regional bus	engineering/technology approach awareness building

**Project description**

In the future, all public transport in Helsinki must be totally accessible to people with disabilities. Therefore, all future buses and trams must have a low floor, with wide doors and ramps to enable people in wheelchairs to board these vehicles easily. The platforms of the bus stops will also be raised.

Educating the general public plays an important role in guaranteeing acceptance of the daily challenges that face mobility-reduced people. To achieve maximum success it is necessary to begin educating children at a very young age. Good places to provide such education are children’s institutions like kindergarten.

Mrs Maija Konkola, who has partial vision in the corners of her eyes, is still able to design with the use of a computer and has written a storybook about an accessible bus. The story is used to promote accessible buses in Finland. It is published by the public transport company in Helsinki, reflecting the positive attitude of the bus companies towards accessible public transport.

In collaboration with a public transport provider and a manufacturer of low-floored buses, the National Association of the Disabled launched an awareness project in Helsinki that teaches children the challenges facing people with impaired mobility. To do so they have designed a toy accessible bus and two toy bus stops. There is also a toy wheelchair with a doll designed by Maija Konkola. These toys are circulated among kindergartens in Helsinki, together with abovementioned storybook. Children in kindergartens play with these toys, adding their own "passengers" like teddy bears, dolls and others, and drive the bus from one stop to the other.

The idea is to let them learn from a very young age first that people should use public transport, and second, that all kinds of people, including those with disabilities, should use the same public transport. In essence children learn that providing accessible transport systems all over the world should be self-evident. In kindergartens, for example, these toy wheelchairs can go a long way towards instilling a more positive attitude towards disability in children, towards showing them that disability is not something to be feared.

Maija Konkola says that accessibility is a must. A transportation system that is accessible to people with disabilities would serve everybody better, she says.

Source:  
 DPA: Interview with Mrs Eeva Maija Konkola (1995), Accessibility in Helsinki, Finland, Integrator, Vol. 6. No s. 2 & 3 - 1996  
 MITA(P)No: 039/07/95, <http://www.dpa.org.sg/publication/dpafall96/contents.htm> (24/10/2007)