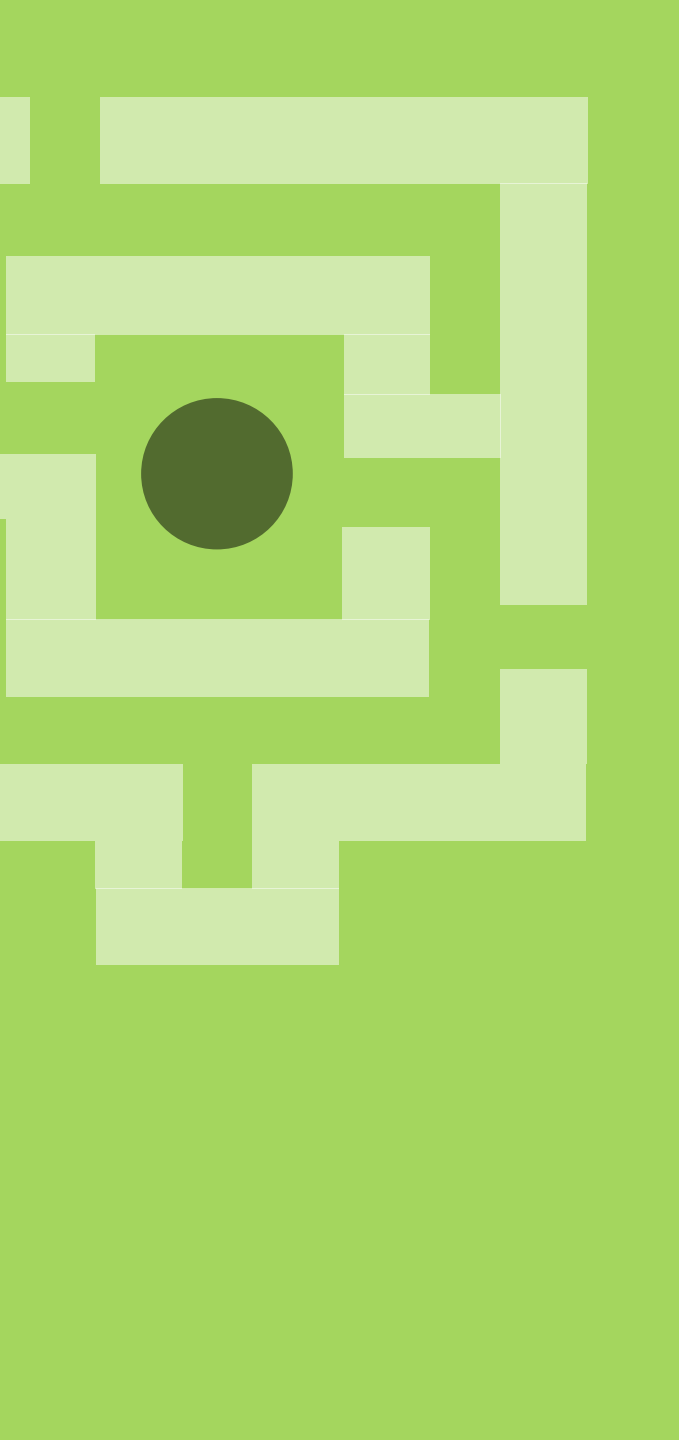# Starkloff
Disability Institute
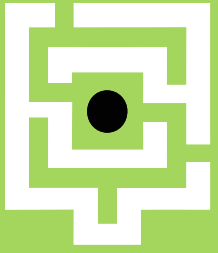
Proud partner of

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Greater St. Louis

DISABILITY INCLUSION IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

STARKLOFF DISABILITY INSTITUTE

TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

1. Who are people with disabilities?
2. What is their experience with public transportation?
3. How does the way we think about disability impact our riders?
4. How can incorporating Universal Design help us improve?
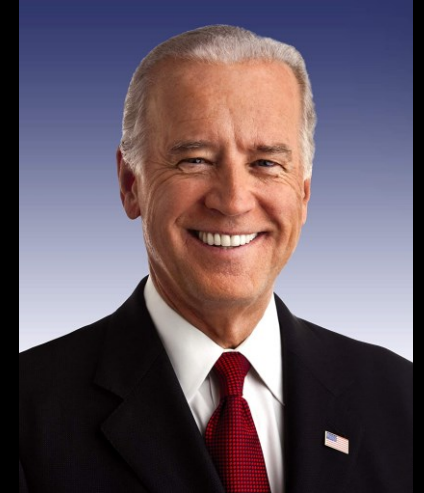5. What can individual operators do?

WHO ARE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

- 27% of the U.S. population
  - Centers for Disease Control

- 20% are born disabled – 80% acquire

- About 80% are not obviously disabled

- Higher rates in impoverished and BIPOC communities
  - Both underdiagnosis and overdiagnosis
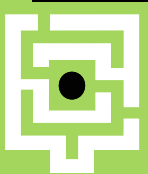
Tammy Duckworth

Joe Biden

Oprah Winfrey

Simone Biles

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

- The Americans with Disabilities Act prevents discrimination based on disability.

- Both public and private transportation providers must comply with ADA requirements.

- Regulated by the U.S. Department of Transportation

- Adequate info on accessibility features
- Adequate time to board
- Service animals.
- Priority seating
- Operator training
- Stop announcements
- Destination information on vehicles
- Illumination, contrast, slip-resistant surfaces
- Turning room, handrails, pull cords
- Lifts, ramps, securing straps, info in accessible formats

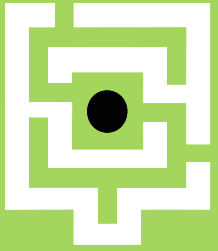Learn more at the ADA National Network: **adata.org/transportation**
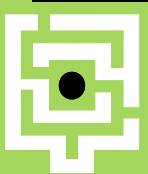
DISABILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSIT

- U.S. Department of Transportation, 2022
  - 25.5 million Americans have travel-limiting disabilities.
  - Less likely to travel, be employed, and live in a household with a vehicle
  - Take fewer trips
  - Cite health problems as the top reason for taking fewer trips.
  - Live in lower income households

- As of 2020, 25% of transit stops were not ADA compliant
  - Department of Transportation

- 45% of Americans have no public transportation access
 - Public Transportation Association
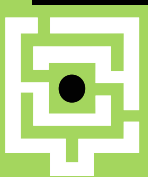
MISSOURI DOESN'T SPEND ENOUGH ON PUBLIC TRANSIT

- Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, 2023
  - Missouri spends less on transit than 46 other states.
  - Illinois spends over 1,000 times more on transit than Missouri

- Missouri Public Transit Association, 2023
  - "transit providers across Missouri get less than 3% of their annual operating budgets from the state."

- Lack of adequate transit keeps disabled Missourians isolated, impoverished, and at higher risk for health issues.

DISABILITY TRANSIT HORROR STORIES

- "I got on the bus with my friend who has cerebral palsy and walks with two canes. The driver asked us, "Are you two going dancing or skiing?"

- "I missed my bus because the bus station only has one curb cut, and it was blocked by a construction crew. There's no shelter at the stop, and it was over 100 degrees."

- "A driver refused to let a wheelchair user on the bus because there were two others on the bus already."

- "My wallet was grabbed out of my hand as I was getting on the bus. Nobody tried to help."
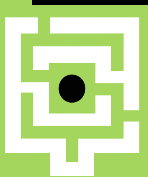
MORE HORROR STORIES

- "A driver told me I was on the wrong bus. I said I was going to work. He thought I was going to the mall."

- "I have to wear sunglasses outside. A man accused me of 'looking at him funny' and almost attacked me. There was no guard on the train or the platform."

- "I've been yelled at for sitting in the accessible seat more times than I can remember. I've also been refused the seat because I don't look disabled."

- "Every time I ride the train, I worry I'll get into an emergency. There's no way for a Deaf person to use the emergency call button."
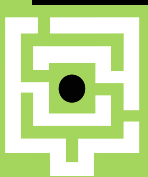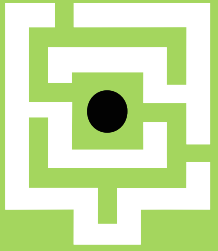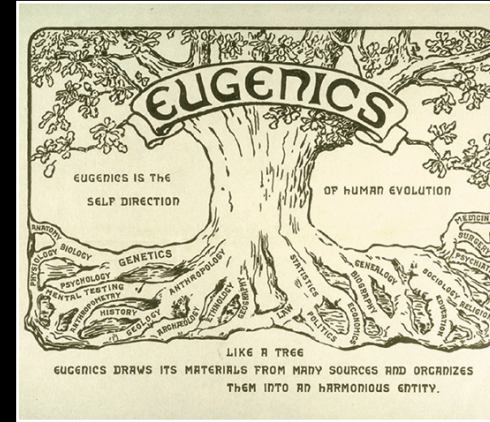
HOW DO WE THINK ABOUT DISABILITY?

Moral Model

- The disabled aren't trying hard enough.

- "Why don't you move closer to the bus line?"
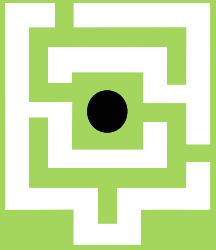
Medical Model

- The disabled are sick and need to be "healed."

- "We only put the ramp down for wheelchair users."

Social Model

- The disabled live in a world that wasn't designed for them.

- "Our app allows you to report emergencies through voice, text, or video."

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

|	
Equitable Use	Is it useful to people with different body types and abilities?
Flexibility in Use	Does it accommodate a wide range of preferences and abilities?
Simple and Intuitive Use	Is it easy to understand regardless of knowledge, experience, language skill, or concentration level?
Perceptible Information	Does it communicate necessary information to the user regardless of their sensory level?
Tolerance for Error	Does it minimize the adverse consequences of accidents or unintended use?
Low Physical Effort	Can it be used comfortably with low fatigue?
Size and Space for Approach and Use	Can it be approached and used regardless of body size, posture, and ability?

SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENTS

Accessible stations and shelters
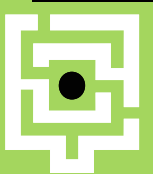

Accessible information
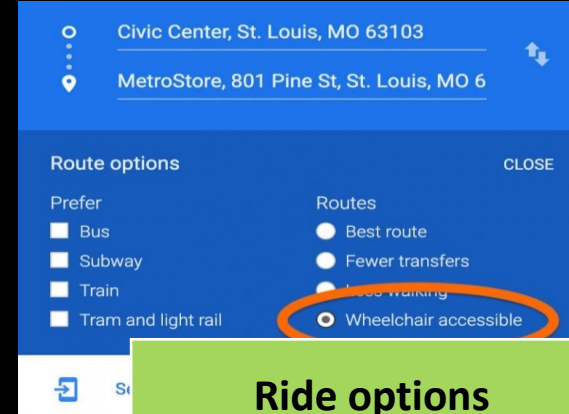
Ride options

Ride safety

Operator training

Accountability

INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

Dignity — Treat others like you want to be treated.

- Speak directly to the person, even when using an interpreter.
- Don't assume people with them are nurses or support staff.
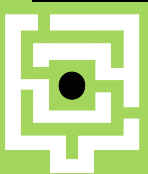
Autonomy — The person owns their body *and* their disability.

- Don't talk about disability as a curse or a superpower.
- Do not touch adaptive equipment without permission, especially service animals.
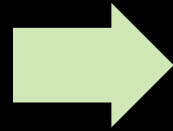
Privacy — Ask before helping.

- If the person says they don't need help, listen!
- When helping, follow instructions carefully.
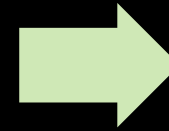
FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

Neutral language

- **No** connotations – "suffers from…" "survived," "afflicted with…"
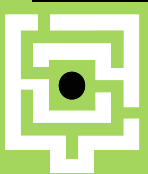- **No** euphemisms – "differently abled," "special needs"
- Just use **"has."**

Community Language

- "Person with a disability" or "Disabled person"
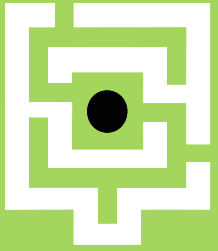- Deaf instead of "deaf"
- Neurodiversity and Neurodivergent

Personal Choice

- "When I'm talking about you as someone with X, what do you prefer?"

RESOURCES

- Job Accommodations Network – askjan.org

- Department of Justice – ada.gov

- ADA National Network –adata.org

- Federal Transit Administration –transit.dot.gov

- National Center on Disability and Journalism – ncdj.org

- Web Accessibility In Mind – webaim.org

- Starkloff Disability Institute – starkloff.org
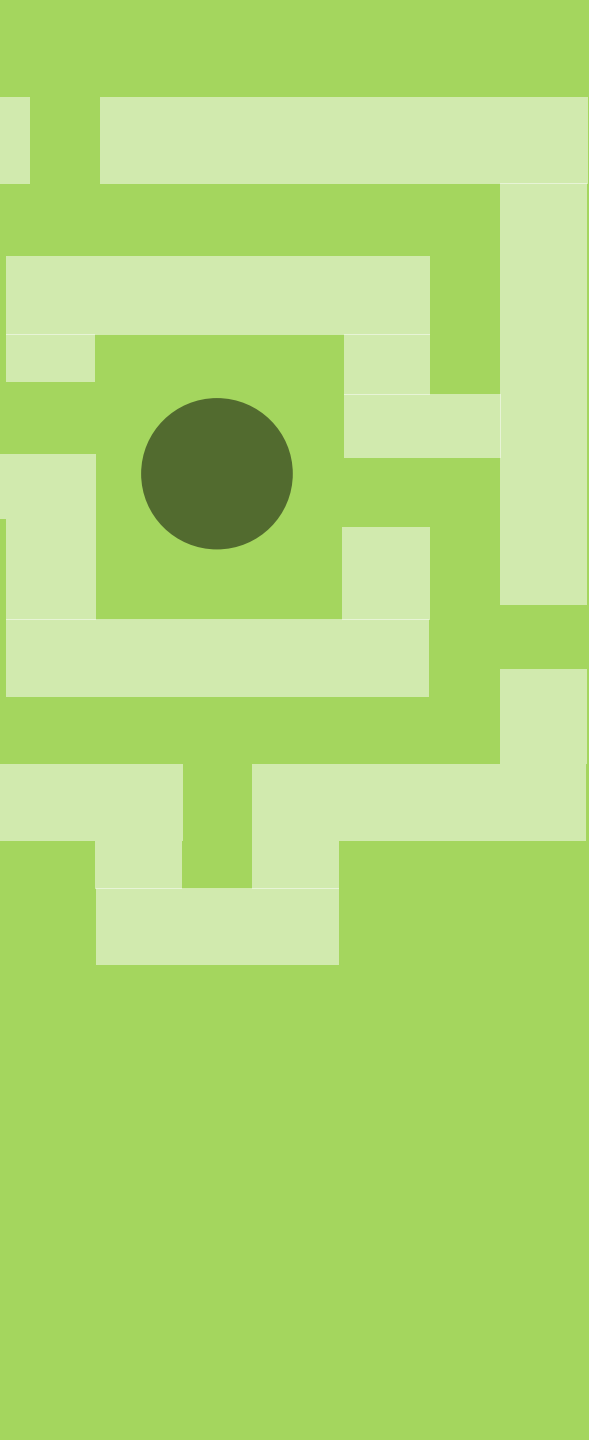
THANK YOU

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