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Able Trust - A Townhall on Florida's Accessible Transportation Future

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>> Welcome, all, we will get started in just a minute.

Thank you all for joining us. In just a minute I'm going to toss it over to Guenevere Crum.

>> We appreciate your patience as we are trying to figure out like the rest of the world how all this technology works. So, thank you so much for joining us. It's going to be a great day. This is too soon. Guenevere, I'm going to turn it over to you. One second.

>> Thank you, Jill, if you will turn it over to Guenevere, we will get our program started.

>> All right. And recording.

>> One second.

>> Not yet. Let me --

>> I will I have good a second here.

>> Spotlight you, Tony.

>> Hello, and welcome to the town hall on Florida's Transportation Plan. Assuring an accessible transportation future. My name is Guenevere Crum, senior vice president, I'm glad you joined us, we will kick it off in just a few minutes. This discussion is being recorded and will be posted to the Able Trust website, streamed on to the Able Trust FaceBook page and replayed on the Florida channel. Captioning is available today and can be activated by clicking on the CC button on the tool Zoom bar and choosing to see subtitles displayed or the transcript on the side of the screen. Speakers are limited to -- so can hear from individuals (inaudible). Most importantly -- be sure to set your settings to reply to all. Take a moment to introduce yourself with your name and your organization if you are representing one today.

There are three ways to participate in public comment on accessible transportation. On the chat box here, but also on social media. Post your comments, suggestions, questions and stories with the hash tag to connect with us. We invite you to participate by e-mail as well, use the e-mail address info@abletrust.org until September 30th to provide comment. Everyone listening live on September 2nd or on a replay, please know that we want to hear from you.

Today's event is brought to you by the Able Trust, the Able Trust is dedicated to creating employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities and advancing the mission of the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Since created by the Florida legislature in 1990, we have partnered with thousands of organizations, businesses and individuals to create a stronger, more diverse and inclusive workforce, empowerment, education, and employment are the root cause and outcomes for the activities, partnerships, grants, and programs we support. The Able Trust has provided over \$42 million in direct grants over the years. And this has been made possible by the generosity of the State of Florida, other foundations, community leaders, and individuals that have decided to invest in the future by supporting career development, and employment placement for individuals with disabilities. To find out how you can also make an investment to support the work of the Able Trust and to connect with all of our programming and resources, we invite you to join us on-line at [Able Trust.org](http://AbleTrust.org). Today we invite you -- with questions and comments on-line, tag your comments with the hash tag # Able Trust. We are collecting these comments until September 30th. I invite today's anchor and Able Trust president and CEO, Tony Carvajal.

>> A recognition that everyone should have access to all that is available. In many ways, this also signals woo we live in a

world -- there is more we can do to plan for and ensure an accessible world and (inaudible) as step in that direction, we have assembled a -- who will share a small slice of their transportation story, admittedly none will have enough time to (inaudible) we hope that the comments and advice of the presenters and those participating via live chat offer good guidance for (inaudible). But I also bet that it won't be long before you hear another clear message. This is not about special treatment but about working together to create -- that enables every Floridian to live, work, (inaudible) prosper (inaudible). A bit more than (inaudible). (lost audio) .

>> We will get reconnected with Tony's audio in just a moment.

>> When a colleague said that only two things made her disabled, biases and transportation. These two hurdles were hard to address because (inaudible) independence, these barriers were erected and maintained outside of (inaudible).

Professionals and organizations commit to overcoming barriers by ensuring education, empowerment and employment for individuals with disabilities. The Able Trust leverages grants, gifts, sponsorships and -- vocational rehabilitation, help the organization that (inaudible) peer to peer business leadership exchange the Able Network, we help companies enhance accessibility and prepare to offer meaningful and sustainable

employment with those with visible and invisible disabilities. Transportation like employment is a (inaudible) community, connection, purpose and independence. As a close, let me issue this challenge. Every time you see this sign, no matter where you are, evaluate the environment and its accessibility and all it took to get there and all it will take to move on. Don't just think about the parking spot or the bathroom stall, but about the entire commitment to mobility. Yes, ask you could cross the street or (inaudible) if it was a short trip, ask for pathways and sometimes you relied on with short notice to get there. If you traveled far, what networks are possible -- or not to get across the street or to an urban or rural -- or just across the county line. Consider how the environment would be for someone with challenges seeing or hearing or mobility, language or sensory or processing issues -- to work, school, shop, recreation or home. What could we plan differently to ensure -- that allows the abilities and quality of life of every individual to be maximized. A successful transportation plan is not about designing for the disabled, but rather for all. Whatever you -- (inaudible) tourists or business owners, whatever commitment we make, motorists, plan -- are create for mobility -- access or innovation, each of these should be -- greater independence and opportunities for all Floridians and visitors with or without a disability. Everything in our -- world is a choice, what we must ask for the planning and execution

stage, do we care enough to build for all or do we continue to choose to segregate. I want to thank the transportation steering committee to have the -- voices that follow tell their story and we look forward to -- Floridians with disabilities so that they can live, work, learn, play, (inaudible) and raise families here, now let me welcome Allison to tell us more about the FTP.

>> It's an honor to be here amongst you who are so committed to making our community more accessible for everyone, and I'm just thrilled to be able to listen today to some of your feedback and how we can make transportation more barrier free for everyone to have access. I think Tony's opening remarks were excellent. And he is such a champion for the, to improve our accessible climate and make sure that we have access for everyone to get where they need to go. Today I'm going to talk about the larger picture of how we get there, and that's FTP. Hopefully this will run smoothly.

>> Did you know in the past -- years, (inaudible).

>> Did you know in the past eight years, Florida's population has grown by more than 3 million people? And in the next 20 years, another 5 million people will join them.

>> Where are they all go to live?

>> How will we get to work, school, and where will we go on the weekends?

>> And how about the 126 million visitors to Florida every

year, that's sixth times the population.

>> We better be ready.

>> That's why we need you.

>> And the Florida Transportation Plan.

>> The FTP is the transportation plan for all of Florida. It provides a vision for Florida's future and guides the transportation decision making process.

>> (inaudible) the FTP is much more.

>> Let's talk about a smarter Florida. Right now there are over 800,000 college students like me enrolled in a Florida college or University.

>> Sharing ride, using new ways like bike shares and scooters and adopting technology.

>> Technologies, (inaudible) not just with people but will change businesses to deliver goods and services with greater safety, efficiency and reliability.

>> Tragedies happen or hurricanes strike, the plans you make now will help us rise up to be our best for each other and for Florida.

>> With the FTP that you make know isn't just about transportation, it's about our communities.

>> So many people living in and visiting our state, we have (inaudible) for Florida -- everyone and everything.

>> Be a part?

>> (inaudible).

>> And give us urban best, because in 25 years, you just might be sitting where you are right now. And something tells me that Florida will still be the best and brightest America has to offer.

>> (music) .

>> So, I don't know, that just gave me chills, I'm so excited to be part of this vision plan so that we can improve our transportation system. But I want to tell you a little bit about what you just heard in the video, and that the Florida Transportation Plan is a plan for all of Florida, it's not just for the Florida Department of Transportation. I know that you see us working on it diligently, but really this is a plan for all of Florida. And it's about making sure that we get input from you to make sure that we are making the transportation system from our road ways to our ports to airports to our transit facilities. This is our long range plans, our vision and guiding principles, and we work into more detail plans, I will get into that in a second, this provides a policy guidance for all transportation partners, not just the department but also our local government and regional planning councils and MPO's, they are all working to improve transportation for everyone. This vision plan is the umbrella for all of those different agencies, this establishes that policy framework for how we spend our state and federal dollars so that we are putting our money right where our goals are. Next slide, please.

>> So, we work with a very large steering committee, and you can see that there's a huge number of stakeholder, 34 members on the steering committee who provide input from a variety of different interests and areas. And we have three subcommittees within our steering committee that focus on the transit impact, safety, how technology is impacting us through the automated collected and share vehicles and how we can become more resilient as a state. These subcommittees are members, a subset of the fuller committee. We encourage you to join as a friend so that you can keep informed and provide your comments and input.

Next slide.

So, there's four different pieces of the Florida transportation plan, and it starts with the vision element. This was just recently approved over the summer, and we are moving into the policy element now. This is where the rubber is going to begin to hit the road as we move to implementation. We are collecting comments and trying to get the policies right today so we go into implementation starting at the beginning of next year. Another part of the whole plan is how we perform, are we doing what we said we did? We measure that also and we report that back out. Next slide, please.

So, as you can see, the vision element we just recently completed. And if you want to get a copy of this, they are

available. And you can go on to Florida transportation plan.com, and be able to download a copy. So, I encourage everyone to take a look. It really has all of our guiding principles, I am going to go into that.

Next slide. The goals of the Florida Transportation Plan, and you can see them here, there are 7 of them, we have a vision and target of zero fatalities and serious injuries on our corridors and or transportation system, we work together to make sure that we can achieve that. We want to provide more efficient and agile transportation system, meet the needs of our growing and changing population as you heard in the video, increase transportation choices that improve accessibility and equity for all, enhance the quality of life of the environment, and Florida's communities, which we are all a part of and make our economy more competitive. Next slide.

So, what will we do with your input? So, today we are, we can't create this plan without you, your input goes extremely important to informing how the policy documents and how we will implement the Florida Transportation Plan and how it will be drilled down into your local communities. We can't reflect your needs without you telling us if we are not doing a great job, so this is a good opportunity for us to listen and hear from you. So that we can make sure that the things that you valued are incorporated into the plan. So, all input is received and

organized by subject matter and then given to the steering committee and incorporated into the plan as we move forward.

So, since all input is considered is really important for to you speak up and let us know what you are thinking and how we can make our transportation system better for all users.

So, with that, just want to give you a little bit update on the time frame and then I want to turn it over to the listening session so that we can hear from you, and then I think we follow up with the end with questions and answers. So, we are in the policy element, as I said, the vision element has been completed. We are still in the draft policy element. We are getting public comment now all the way through November. And in December we will finalize the policy element and move into implementation.

And with that, Tony, am I turning it back over to you or, asking questions at the end?

>> Throughout the day, if you will post questions in the question and answer feature, if you are watching on this FaceBook live or any other rebroadcast, you can send us a message to transportation@ableTrust.org. Thank you so much, Allison, Jill, I actually have (inaudible) Horace on the screen, and then we will go to David Darm.

>> Horace, thank you so much, the floor is yours.

>> Thank you, Tony, I appreciate you for allowing me an opportunity to be here today. As you all mentioned so much

before transportation is such a huge component of what we do here at vocational rehabilitation. We provide assistance and support to individuals with disabilities to find, help them seek and retain employment. And in doing so, we take the holistic approach to address every aspect to a person's securing employment. More specifically, transportation. In my experience as a consultant and as an administrator, I have seen community individuals seek employment opportunities but face challenges with feasible transportation. Some of the most common, some of those most common factors that I have noticed include unknowing what those resources are, limited bus routes, and also in some cases not knowing that transportation is available at all. Now, granted, there are some services that exist, you know, such as Uber and Lyft and so forth. However they do not provide that adequate accommodations to individuals with disabilities. I think the new transportation will help increase the awareness and I'm hoping for a user friendly transportation network that would allow us the users to customize and select accommodations as well as resolve some of the challenges facing transportation. Additionally, I do also include that strong advertisement presence, whether it's virtually on-line to inform the public of these services will be of great benefit to the general public, in close, I am eternally grateful for all the efforts by the Florida Department of Transportation and providing opportunities

for transportation for individuals with disabilities and I look forward to expanding this awareness and resource to community of vocational rehabilitation. Thank you so much. Back to you, Tony.

>> Horace, thank you so much for that, I appreciate that. Up next, looks like we have David Darm. David Darm, thank you so much, we will go to you and then after that, Freddy Valadez.

>> Thank you so much, thank you to the Florida Transportation Plan and all of you who are part of this transportation, it's important to be here. My name is David Darm, I'm the executive director of the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged. We are a statewide program, we support transportation and access. For those who have disabilities, low income or older adults who have no other means of transportation available to them to get to employment, healthcare, education, and everything else in the community. How we accomplish this, we work with organizations that are called community transportation coordinators or CTC, these entities are around each of the counties, they are assigned to support through our funding to support transportation for those who don't have any other means, such as Medicaid or the fixed route system or other program that are supporting transportation maybe for a specific activities but maybe not supporting other activities in the community. So we try to hit those gaps in the

system.

How are we going to accomplish that is kind of in tandem with the Florida Transportation Plan and the Able Trust and these other efforts to try to improve these opportunities, improve access. We have four goals, I would say. One is, number one, you heard earlier, we must determine first the needs of our customers and our riders, understanding that our system needs to adapt to those needs, those needs change and those needs shouldn't be conforming to the system as per se, the system should be adapting to those needs. So that's important hearing from the town hall today, these, that's a part of us understanding and a better way of adjusting to those needs. Second is innovation and being able to ensure that our system is constantly adapt to go the market changes as you have heard about Uber and Lyft and some of these companies coming in and changing the way that the services are designed particularly with a more on demand approach versus the month scheduled trips, we want to be sure that we are adapting to the changes and respond effectively as we go no into the 21st century. The third is promoted collaboration, which is a part of this discussion, ensuring we are working our CTC's and our partners are working with Able Trust, voc rehab and others who support our customers need, not just our program who need to be doing it all, we need a collaborative effort. The fourth goal is to try to promote the most

integrity of data and being able to use data whether it's these type of settings or hard evidence data to evaluate our efforts going into the future to ensure that we are continually adapting these changes. This is something that we are especially doing this year with our funding and allocating our fund based on hard evidence that we have in front of us. With that, thank you again for this opportunity. And I look forward to hearing what comes out of this town hall and continuing to partner with Able Trust and other organizations here today, thank you.

>> David, thank you so much for that. Up next will be Freddy Valadez and followed by Joslyn Escobar. Freddy, all yours now.

>> Hi, I'm Freddy Valadez with Project 10 which stands for the Transportation Education Network. We are a project funded through the assistant services based out of the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. There are five representatives as part of the project. I'm the one that covers West central Florida, region four from Sarasota all the way up to Ocala and some of the small rural districts, such as Hardy and DeSoto county. Project 10 is a project that helps school districts with training, technical assistance, publication and resources to help students with disabilities that are transitioning from high school into the adult world. The goal is we want every student with disabilities to have the opportunity to achieve their dreams in terms of employment,

continuing education, post-secondary education and training. Some of the challenges that we are hear hearing from our stakeholder, we also sponsor interagency councils. In my region I have 12 counties, there are nine active interagency councils, and they are some of the stakeholder that shared some of their concerns with me. Some of the stakeholders consist of students, families, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Children's Medical Services, the Agencies for Persons with Disabilities, the high school HighTech program, you name it, there's a stakeholder in our interagency transition Council. And some of the challenges they shared with me is the I-75 corridor right now, public transportation seem to be lacking where there is transportation, on the east side of I-75. Since the West side is so developed now, there seems to be a lot of public transportation there, but on the east side of 75, there's challenges in getting public transportation access for individuals with disabilities. Then the second thing that the stakeholder were sharing with me are the small and rural counties are having challenges getting opportunities for employment for their students when there is no public transportation in the small and rural district, they like the fact that those districts who have public transportation are able to either ride for free of their own individual with a disability or at low cost, that's one of the greatest gifts to those individuals. That's all I think I have, in terms of the concerns. They did also want,

as was expressed earlier, more marketing and maybe some travel trainers that could partner with the school system on helping train individual students with disabilities, high school students that are about to exit on what's available in terms of public transportation. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much. So, we will turn it over to Joslyn Escobar and follow that with Kent Carroll.

>> Hi, everyone. My name is Joslyn. I have a short announcement today before I get started, I want to let you all know that I'm so happy to be with you here today, thank you so much for including me in your town hall for accessible transportation. It means a lot to me.

My remarks today are going to be relating to the Deaf community and my experience growing up. And really need -- access to public transportation.

>> One second. We will get this fixed in just a moment.

>> Actually, Kent, if you will be ready to go, what I will do is I will re-queue the Joslyn video and Kent Carroll, are you on the line? Give me one second here. So, I think that all of us have learned over the last few weeks that Zoom is either our friend or our foe, but lots of great things that we can learn from this whole process. And one of those things is that I'm probably not going to be a production specialist in my next life. So, let's see.

>> Looks like it's on unmute. Can you hear? Are you on

the line, Kent?

>> Kent, I don't see a microphone there. So --

>> I'm happy to stand in for Kent. Can you hear me, this is Kirsten.

>> Kirsten --

>> Can you hear me? Can you see me okay?

>> I can, thank you so much. Appreciate you standing by.

>> You guys are doing a great job. It's -- I don't know how to do Zoom or I would have helped you. I'm so sorry, my hands were tied.

>> You are fine.

>> Kent is having technical problems. But I want -- I first want to honor -- I want to honor your work, Able Trust, I want to honor your work that you have done since I met you. You guys are working so hard. Horace Brown has been so kind to me. I have been able to learn from him to help Kent. And I didn't have this meeting planned. So I'm sure no one cares, right? Give me applause like this.

I'm just like you.

>> We will come back to Kent this just one second, if you would like.

>> If you could give him a minute. He has worked very hard, Tony, I have been working closely with him this year and there's so much a we are doing getting prepared for what's to

come for our future with transportation for Florida. And Kent is dynamic, I don't want to you miss a call. Hopefully he is here.

>> Give us one second, then. I will tell you what the lineup is --

>> I will -- if I need to, okay?

>> I will, if you will go ahead and turn off your video and your microphone, I will tap dance for just one second as we figure out a the next steps are here. Let me go ahead and give you the line up for those of you who are speaking next.

One is next up will be Danielle McGill, followed by Jeff Johnson. And then Paul Edwards. Danielle, I will be right back with you in just one second. I think we have got Joslyn back up with us, let's try this again.

>> Hi, everyone, my name is Joslyn. I have a few short remarks for today, but before I get started, I want to let you all know that I'm so happy to be with you today. Thank you so much for including me in your town hall for accessible transportation. It means a lot to me.

My remarks today are related to the Deaf community and my experience growing up. And really, really need to access with public transportation. In my opinion, everyone needs access, right? So, I think it would be great if we could provide free public transportation, free buses for anybody who needs to get to work, to school, really anywhere that they need to go. But the problem

is included in that population is the Deaf community. And when you ride public transportation, there are constantly speakers glaring, there are announcements being made, and the Deaf community needs access, whether it be captioning or something else.

And lately it's become worse because of COVID-19. And the reason that it's become worse and why it's affected the Deaf community is because it's so difficult to try to communicate with somebody if they are wearing a mask. If you want to ask somebody how much is the bus fair and they are bearing a mask, it's so difficult to see what they are saying so I won't be able to read their lips. That's really been my experience lately and really growing up.

I just feel that we really need that support for captioning effort, the Deaf community to have equal access. We want to make sure that we have a level playing field with hearing people. So I really hope that we are able to make some improvements based on what we discussed today. I really appreciate all of your hard work, trying to understand what it is that we go through and what we need so that we can have equal access. I really hope this makes a difference. Thanks for watching.

>> All right. Thank you so much for your patience, all. We are almost caught up. Now what we again, as we have figured out is that we never know what is coming up next, but I think we

are going to go to Danielle McGill, if that's okay. Jill, if you will spotlight her and I will get her slides up.

>> Hi, everyone. Thank you for having me., to be a part of this conversation. I would like to share some states and some research that was conducted by the -- center around under the FDOT section (inaudible). When it comes to the end user and the rider and clients.

>> Drew, could you unspotlight me or turn me off? Danielle, one second as I figure things out here. Thank you so much. I think I have got your slides up.

>> Thank you. I appreciate it. Again, for allowing me to be a part of this conversation. And the Able Trust. And the CTD. And all the people that work together to make the transportation system more inclusive for everyone. As you know, I'm well connected in diverse transportation systems, is the key to community wide mobility. And inclusive transportation system is accessible, for all members of the community, regardless of age or ability. It begins and ends with the customer, rider, or client, like David said earlier.

The goal is to encourage communities to have visions and goals where the entire transportation network works together. The problem that individuals and families and community members see that that our system is very fragmented when it comes to paratransit. In regards to access to funding, and the

problem is, that there's a major disconnect between the service and the system. So, access to funding is the biggest barrier. Where to find the funding on a federal, state, or county level. Human services agencies are highly impacted due to limited or the lack of funding in operational dollars to operate a transportation service for the individuals.

Every county has different policies and procedures and eligibility requirements, which is what we found very confusing for individuals moving or traveling into other areas of the state. But we have seen urban and rural areas throughout Florida, many transportation disadvantaged populations experienced limited cross county mobility in transportation. In urbanized areas, such as the southeast area of our state, there's a lack of connectivity between, among various modes, which creates barriers for individuals with disabilities, or riders to make transfers safely.

Riders, we found in our research, sometimes feel stuck between using the different modes or the lack of knowledge that there are other modes that do exist besides the paratransit and the fixed route system.

Riders need more access and (inaudible) more often with the different services. There's a need for access to life sustaining activities as you all know, to gain and remain independent like employment -- services, secondary education and recreational activities. The increase of mobility helps

individuals with disabilities to break down the barriers of stigma, stereotypes by remaining active in society. In these past two years, their solutions and we have made progress on a state level through legislation and -- upped transportation network, as far as technology goes, and (inaudible) increase in transportation has been provided. Here are some of the solutions for accessibility and independence. (inaudible) create procedures that are consistent among all -- paratransit systems for region national parts of the state. Work together not in silos, but really work together for a common goal and find research in different agencies what they are doing and find out what works and what is similar and support those efforts. Promote and support programs that instruct individuals and encourage mobility by learning the various modes. Not just paratransit and fixed route. It's important for us individuals as riders to know that all transportation options that are available within our community with more choices, we could participate more in our community. Back what we found is that we want more freedom, more accessibility, and more options. That's all.

>> Danielle, thank you so much -- for being our super star and being there had I got in trouble and jumping straight on. Your personal notes will be noted in our testimony, and I appreciate your continued involvement.

>> I would like to say that the CTD is working on these, and

David Darm, like you said, the different goals, the innovative client first, (inaudible) finding different ways to update the technology and provide more on demand service. So we are on the right track, it's how do we get there.

>> Thank you so much.

>> Awesome.

>> All right. So, next up, I have Jeff Johnson. And then followed by Paul Edwards and Kent, whenever you are on, if you will just make a sound we will know which item to turn to and we will let you back in the cue.

>> I'm talking Kent's place.

>> Awesome.

>> I mentioned -- sorry to interrupt again.

>> I will be right back with you, then. Let's go to Jeff Johnson.

>> Good afternoon, this is Jeff Johnson, I'm the State director for AARP here in the great State of Florida. And I just wanted to thank Able Trust for holding this opportunity and the Florida Department of Transportation for listening and collaborating with us on so much projects, I want to make three quick points today, two of which are doubling down and expanding on the work that the department has already led. One is on complete streets, and I know in this time of the pandemic, we have come to recognize that the importance of a

really -- approach to mobility options and transportation as people are using sidewalks in ways they didn't before, people are relying on delivery trucks in ways they weren't before, people are using (inaudible) personal electric vehicles, as we look ahead to the today where we might be using autonomous vehicles, you are showing up (inaudible) as it has in the past and invest in bigger things as RV's as a way to explore transportation options. And while we are focused on the here and now, I would encourage the department to think about as we go forward really focus on how we make streets that are truly complete, not just for walkers, cyclists and cars but all the other form of transportation that we are seeing emerge during this time. I think the second thing that I would say, and this is really from -- perspective so critical, that the work that the department does with a the safe mobility for life, I know that -- has been the collaborator in this, we are really interested and focused on trying to provide people, especially those who have aged here in Florida or come here from someone else with a full set of understanding of what the options are to get around and stay connected to your community. I think for many generations, certainly the last couple of generations that have settled here in Florida, we have focused on one solution to all of our problems and that's a -- what we have forgotten and what I now need to relearn there are variety of ways to get from point A to point B -- we just need more education and more tools to help

people make those transitions as they decide maybe that big car isn't what they need at this point in their lives to think about what the other opportunities are and how to do it safely, which of course takes on a new meaning in this time when we are focused not only on avoiding crashes but will avoid (inaudible). I think the third thing that I will say is relatively new for AARP, but something that I suspect the department has knowledge of, that is how we do this in a way that is equitable. I think that it's no surprise that much of our transportation infrastructure is built in a way the disability community suffered from. And the wake of the death of George Floyd and others, one of the things that have come out in Florida are needs (inaudible) that come back to transportation infrastructure. We have heard protesters say we want to be able to cross the street as the nice parts of town. As leaders (inaudible) thinking about transportation mobility options need to assess where we have perhaps disadvantaged communities and how we work to make things better and right. Those are the three points I would leave. I know you have a number of -- again, are I appreciate the opportunity to (inaudible) continue to work with the transportation and the opportunity to work with Able Trust. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Jeff, Kent, Kirsten. I appreciate this. I know how hard Kent has been working on this because I know he has been communicating with us.

>> And he has also had the training this year, I can't get into all what he has to do, you know how that works.

First of all, I'm honored to represent Kent Carroll with the agency for persons with disabilities. He is a leader for our agency. He is someone that I admire and look up to.

(inaudible) coached me, that's all I'm going to tell you for now. My first thing that I would like to say without having a planned speech today, Joslyn, Joslyn, I would like to tell you that it's an honor for me to be on this call and listen to you today. It was absolutely that I wanted. We are grateful so that we can see what you are trying to say to us. It was -- it made perfect sense to me. And it did not fall on Deaf ears, and I want to thank you.

David Darm, I hold -- I have the utmost respect for. Please listen to him, we are not in the transportation business. The integrity is the worth that David Darm used and we need to hold tight to that. Jeff Johnson with AARP, as long as I can remember, unless things have changed, AARP has always had a great reputation I, I would like to meet with you in the future to learn more about what you bring to the tabling, if I may, with -- at another point. I think that you guys, if you are following Jeff's instructions, my keys to this conversation, where, when, how, it can't just be AARP. We need help in Florida. We can go to -- I'm happy to go places for Kent at any time. I would -- on vacation go and travel to Texas to meet with them about what

they have done. California has opened us with welcomed us with open arms. They are the kindest people. Oklahoma has opened doors for us so that we can learn from them. And we are grateful for everyone's help. So, from director Palmer for the persons with disabilities and representing Kent Carroll and the leadership of -- I am grateful to have this time and I'm humbled and honored to be here. Thank you.

>> Kirsten, thank you so much. What we will do is invite, if you don't mind, Kent, into our office and or at least through Zoom and we will get a video on as well. This is for everybody who is participating today, there will be lots of opportunities to follow up on this as we mentioned since we are about almost at our halfway point. You can continue to follow up with us by posting on social media using the hash tag Able Trust. We will also have an e-mail address dedicated just to your comments, if you would like to have comments sent to us that we would forward on to the Florida transportation plan steering committee, you can use [transportation@able Trust.org](mailto:transportation@abletrust.org). That's transportation@able Trust.org. We will collect your comments and forward them directly to the Florida transportation plan steering committee.

We are going to move on with our program now, and let's just make sure that everything is queued up here properly.

For many of our friends that are engaged in the communication world and you are now realizing that one of the

other things in addition to accessible transportation is accessible technology that we could all use here. I appreciate each of you who is working with us patients throughout their process, and especially the people that recorded comments. I'm going to turn it over to Peter O'Connell, and after that, we are going to turn to Paul Edwards, and I will come back to you Jill, after that.

>> I'm Peter O'Connell from, CEO for the -- (inaudible) I'm someone (inaudible) the entire state has (inaudible) yet when someone asks (inaudible) make this their home, (inaudible). We have the opportunity to realize our (inaudible) collective -- benefit will. (inaudible) economic opportunity for (inaudible) how do we make paradise even better? (inaudible) the opportunity for (inaudible). Anything I can say (inaudible). 48 hours in advance, and I would note -- (inaudible). (poor quality audio) .

>> We need to consider our -- transportation options and optimize them from maximum (inaudible) whether it be (inaudible) buses, paratransit, or even (inaudible). (inaudible).

>> Thank you, Peter. Okay. Let's see how we can make this start working. Hi, I'm Paul Edwards, I represent the Florida rehabilitation Council of the blind. We are in theory 22 member Council which represents folks who are blind and individuals who serve them. I want to raise really five issues in a fairly short period of time. The first of those issues concerns the population who are blind. We, unlike other populations, have no choice in

terms of transportation, we haven't yesterday persuaded Florida that would give us driver's licenses that would allow us to operate vehicles, which means that we are forced to use their public transportation or some other kind of transportation that will work. As in paratransit.

The second thing that that means is that the population of blind people becomes an issue. As people get older, they are more likely to go blind and in fact there are statistics that demonstrate that over the next 10 to 12 years in the State, the population of blind people is likely to double.

How are the transportation needs of this population going to be met in a transportation plan that's evolving for the whole population?

There are three issues that I would like the transportation plan to seriously consider: One of them is blended transportation, that is, making use of ride shares as well as other possible modes of transportation in conjunction with paratransit systems and perhaps in conjunction with public transportation systems as well.

The advantage of making use of these approaches is that there could be lowered cost for counties which would enable them to devote more of their resources to providing transportation to other individuals who perhaps couldn't make use of ride sharing systems.

Second thing, and the second to last thing that I want to talk about, is a growing problem that doesn't relate to intra-city transportation but instead relates to intercity transportation. Trains and planes and automobiles may be wonderful, but for the most part, they are going to less and less from city to city in Florida. It is becoming more difficult for blind people to move around the State. It is far more difficult for individuals who are blind or deaf-blind to be able to access transportation effectively and appropriately between cities in Florida. I don't know that I have a solution, but I think it means that it is really important to develop the kind of regional cooperation that was always considered in our transportation plan as a matter of importance.

The last thing that I want to say on behalf of the blind people of Florida is that there has been a lot of innovation demonstrated by the Transportation Commission and disadvantaged folks and others who are working on transit. I think, though, it is for the most part not finding its way down to local transit authorities who are tending not to be interested in innovation but are instead concerned with operating with the same old systems with the same old rules, with the same old oldies advantages. I appreciate the opportunity to have spoken with you, I hope we can take a statewide approach to take a top down approach that will create a more innovative transportation system that will better meet the needs of all of Florida's blind folks. Thank you so

much.

>> Thank you so much. Appreciate that, Paul.

So we are close to the top of the hour, and I want to thank each of who are participating, I want to remind you that you could pose questions to the webinar Q&A feature and we do have participants with the Florida Department of Transportation, there also will be other panelists that might be able to provide advice. There are also many questions and comments being submit through the chat feature. These are going to archived and submitted as well to the Florida transportation planned steering committee as we go forward, and I appreciate those comments there. Feel free to keep adding that. If you are watching this on FaceBook live or you happen to be watching a pre broadcast on the -- channel, thank you so much for your interest and participation, you can still commit questions by sending e-mails to transportation@able Trust.org. We appreciate so many of the great partners that have, that are sharing their ideas and their insights today. And next up is Sheila Gritz-Swift. I'm going to turn it over to you and appreciate you joins us today, after Sheila, we will go to Richanne followed by Denise Torres.

>> Thank you for the opportunity. I'm Sheila Gritz-Swift I serve with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council. A common thing that I have heard this afternoon is partnerships. I'm going to talk a bit about the partnerships that are so critical to

the work of transportation for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Council identified critical needs and developed a goal to address transportation within our current state plan that covers the time period from October, 2016, through September of 2021. Our work over the past four years has included greater collaboration with agencies and organizations that are charged with transportation in developing and implementing sustainable transportation solutions through the provision of technical assistance, resources, and information on the key issues.

And by educating key stakeholder on the unique needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities that will ultimately improve access to safe and affordable methods of transportation.

Our outcomes to date have included a successful transportation voucher model in Hillsborough County that was collaboratively funded by the Council and the Florida Department of Transportation. It has been sustained over time, and it will be replicated up to eight additional communities this year through Council funding. And we are hearing some very innovative approaches to truly meeting the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through some of these projects that are being proposed.

Partnerships with the Florida Department of Transportation

and the commission on the transportation disadvantaged to educate and share resources that are important for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Such as travel training and disability awareness resources.

Over a million leveraged through state appropriations, which was achieved through collaborative efforts that make stakeholder and legislators more aware of the critical issues that impact this population. Greater access to employment, post-secondary education, and the wider community by way of new options that also expand the service areas in hours of operation. With some providers now providing 24/7 availability. The Florida transportation's plan long range state goals are providing a more efficient and mobile transportation system meeting the needs of a growing and changing population, enhancing the quality of life, and environment of Florida's communities, and increasing opportunities for access to transit and other modes of transportation are well aligned with the transportation goal and the desired outcome of improving access to safe and affordable methods of transportation. Our work over the past four years has proven that greater collaboration among all partners with similar goals actually result in better outcomes. It our hope that ongoing collaboration among key stakeholders will be continued in all transportation efforts moving forward to make sure that the needs of Florida's individuals with intellectual

and developmental disabilities are considered and result in expanded access to safe and affordable transportation. Thank you so much for the opportunity to share this afternoon.

>> Thank you so much. So, we are going to go to Richanne, but I do want to note that I saw the Kent Carroll, so we are going to come back to you right after Richanne, if that's okay, Kent, if you are still interested, I will make sure that your comments come in, and then Denise Torres, thank you so much. That will be our upcoming order.

>> (inaudible). Available to thousands of individuals with disabilities across the state. The grant programs are vital to the lives and well-being of Floridians with disabilities. While we are still in a reaction and adjustment phase to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for specialized transportation programs customized to the needs of people with disabilities to not (inaudible). One quarter of Tampa Bay households include one or more residents with a disability which is higher than a state and national average. As we provide -- cautiously reopen here in Tampa and across the state, there are protocols which must be put in place (inaudible) make a safe return and (inaudible). By limiting the numbers of passengers in a vehicle, there is -- a little way to provide (inaudible) without retrofit to the existing vehicles. This is a unique opportunity for FDOT to provide critically needed funding and support (inaudible) for people with disabilities, we ask

FDOT to consider immediate flexible spending for (inaudible) so that riders have (inaudible) in shared vehicles. Service providers have been impacted by the (inaudible) and respectfully request the ability to modify our existing transportation (inaudible) including forgiveness and grace periods for vehicle maintenance and vehicles not in use. FDOT support to provide safe -- space for vehicles not in space may be secured until they return to service. In addition, looking at the impact of the COVID-19 and long term takeaways, we respectfully ask FDOT to consider providing grant recipients with the opportunity to purchase a wider variety of vehicles including those with entrances on both sides. (inaudible) are commit to improving lives of people with disabilities including the best ways of providing safe and reliable transportation. We appreciate the opportunity to share our recommendations and thank the Able Trust for the opportunity.

>> Thank you so much. All right. Kent, if you are on and want to turn on your camera, that will be my cue to turn to you, otherwise we are going to go to Denise Torres next. Let me know, Denise, if you are on and can turn on your camera, that will be my cue to come to you. Kent. All right. We are going to come to you. Kent, let me just tell you, I think -- not only your perseverance but my strong ability not to cuss once so far in the last hour I have been working through all this chaos, I appreciate you persevering through this. Kent, I will turn the floor over to

you.

>> Thank you for allowing me to have this opportunity. I have been having computer problems all day and I'm finally able to get through and I'm thankful for being on this call. My name is Kent Carroll, I'm with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. I'm the transportation coordinator there. I want to give you a brief summary of what we do at APD. We support individuals with developmental disabilities to live, work, and learn in their communities. We offer our clients a wide range of services, social, medical, residential, and behavioral services.

And right now we are providing services to about 32,000 individuals on our waiver, a total of 50,000 people all together. Transportation is one of many services that we offer at APD. Our agency itself does not provide services per se. We contract or have agreements with providers to provide various services. And with transportation, it is no different. Right now we are serving about 12,000 individuals in our program with transportation services. And for the most part those trips are to and from waiver services, home and community based waiver services.

Most of the transportation services that we provide, roughly 75 percent of those individuals are between the ages of 23 and 59. So that's the segment of our population that utilize transportation services the most. That is also a reflection of the general public, general population, that segment between 23 and

59 need transportation the most.

The folks that we serve, they are by definition transportation disadvantaged, so, therefore even when they are not utilizing our type of trips, waiver trips, they are eligible to utilize the coordinated system for transportation disadvantaged services. Over the years, one of the -- a few of the problems and barriers and challenges, I would say, that we have seen with the folks that we serve, is that you have a number of multiple funding sources that they have to navigate through. As an example, you know, you may have your waiver trips, you may have your non-emergency medical trips, you may have ADA trips, TD trips, so, all of these various trips from these various funding sources, I think, many times, are challenged to individuals who need these services, to be able to access to the community. And will especially your rural areas, you have limit mobility options and limited mobility transportation providers. We try to help our clients be able to access the coordinated system by fostering a relationship with the community transportation coordinators the system in any way we can to help them access the transportation system. We have waiver support coordinators. These are the individuals who work with our clients and coordinate the services for them, and also help them to access community sources, not just transportation, but all kinds of communities sources that are waiver based or generic or natural supports as well. So,

transportation is one of the things that we would like to be able to do more so at the waiver support coordination level to have those individuals be more informed about what are the transportation options are in the community, not just the waiver transportation that we provide through APD, but other transportation options that our clients have to access and utilize in the community. That's one piece that I think we can do a whole lot better in, improving on, to help our individuals access to our transportation.

Another issue, and we have seen this also, is, sometimes there's a lack of cross county or intercounty or intercity transportation options. Sometimes individuals in these rural areas have to cross county lines into urban areas in order to services and community resources, that's a problem as well.

But what we want to do -- another thing we want to do at APD, we want to foster a better relationship with our community transportation coordinators. I think right now there are about 48 community transportation coordinators spread out over the 67 counties in Florida. We would like to have more of a collaborative effort with those community transportation coordinators, encourage our waiver providers to have contracts with those CTC's as well so that we believe that that will be a win-win situation for our clients in the short term as well as in the long run. But at APD, we were really concerned about our folks not just having waiver trips and having those trips to be affordable,

safe, and reliable, but we also want to help them access other types of trips into the community as well.

I think that's about it. I also, thank you for this opportunity to share with you. Finally got on. Got through my computer issues. And I thank you so much.

>> Kent, it's a world that we all understand at the moment. Thank you so much for persevering, I appreciate that so much. Denise, I know that you have been waiting for a little while, Denise Torres with the Arc Jacksonville will be next and then we will go with Lori Lore Gussak. Denise, are you on with us?

>> I am. I am. Good afternoon, thanks so much for -- asking the Arc to have a representative. I do work for the Arc Jacksonville, I'm an advocacy specialist here. I'm in a very fortunate position because I work right by the hallway here and I see people arriving every single day before COVID, to come to work, to be participate in their jobs and day program coming and going. Our individuals at the Arc of -- (inaudible) they have a very robust life, and they get where they need to go, most of our -- (inaudible) use Transportation Disadvantaged, not because we are so far away from the bus stops, it's just such a dangerous area for them to try and get on those buses. So what I want to mention was, our population to get to work, the individuals that we serve, they can use the paratransit. But oftentimes it comes with calling for two hours before your ride, you have to be at work, and

staying at work for up to two hours after until a ride can come back to get you. It costs you money, but it's the most cost effective way if you are using the (inaudible) buses. If you are using Connection Plus, you might be a big spender, but you are not going any further than 15 miles. Our guys will double up and use Connection Plus because it will get them where they need to go within a half hour starting work instead of two hours or longer to get to work or to come home after work. Connections Plus has been a great addition to be -- to go to different restaurants and things like that. I wish that we could expand it for them, because I know that that's something that they love having that option. Uber and Lyft does the same thing, but more money. So really depends on their friend to be able to use those.

(inaudible) you decide to use the bus system, we have a (inaudible) which make it easier, but our transportation hubs are not necessarily in the best areas, even though there is a police station right there, it's not the best area, I wouldn't want my (inaudible) son who has autism diagnosis and intellectual disability to ride into the hub to change stations in order to go to the next place. He used to ride the bus all the time to work. Once he moved, that was no longer an option and I felt comfortable for him using, so he is using a paratransit.

Community transportation is like a lost art, having community shuttles that go back and forth in the neighborhood, that would be

amazing to have that. Autonomous vehicles are not out there right now, so, many of our individuals, they use good, old fashioned foot power on their bikes or on their feet. I have to tell you, in the three years that I lived at the Villages, we had two people hit by a car in a crosswalk doing it the right way, hit by a car, not paying attention. One was a staff member, and one was a client of the agency. Luckily neither was hurt badly, but people aren't paying attention to even foot traffic. And so I would say had considering transportation, just on my way to work today, the amount of people running red lights, I don't know, that's just stopping -- at red lights is not something that people do regularly anymore. There's always that guy that is going run the red. You have got to watch for the guy that's not paying attention. So, safety is a big issue with transportation for our guys. Red lights, like I said, we have had two people hit by a car. And multiple lanes of traffic to cross to get to on the (inaudible) bus stops, that's all dangerous for our folks who try to get here. Door to door works, but there's other options that are out there for them that they are utilizing, and if we are going to talk about bikes, we have also had people who have had their bikes stolen right up the road. I know it's part of transportation, but there's got to be better ways, safer ways for them to choose to use their bikes and to go up the road to do Their shopping and go to restaurants, because some of them will not drive and don't need a vehicle, but if you

have a bike, you should be able to lock it up securely and know it's going to be there when you come out. That should be part of it, too.

>> I appreciate your comments, and thank you so much.

>> Thanks.

>> We will see you in Jacksonville at some point. Thanks for your help. All right. We are going to turn to Lori Lore Gussak.

>> Hi, I'm so happy that we are including recreation in this conversation. (inaudible) with Florida disabled (inaudible) association for 20 years, we have seen recreation as the start of inclusion. It not only provides health and wellness benefits, but also is a fun way to learn about networking, socialization, and transportation.

That's why we are so glad that folks are thinking about recreation (inaudible). One important thing to think about is connecting pathways. Many people have a -- playground close to their home but there is no safe path like a sidewalk. Without the connecting path, the person using the mobility device may not be able to get to the (inaudible). So now you have a beautiful accessible recreation facility that you may not be able to get there.

Another thing to think about is who is using that pathway. It may be used by people walking, biking, electric vehicles, E

scooters, and even horses in addition to wheelchairs.

The design should accommodate this multi-use. Once we design the -- it's also good for someone pushing a stroller, family biking together, et cetera. You get the picture. Having alternative pathways throughout our city will (inaudible) to access a variety of resources but also reducing traffic on our road ways. It is simply better for everyone.

Education and signage are important to make sure that people are aware of the different types of transportation used on a path.

It's also important for the person with the disability to know who else might be on that trail so that they can make the decision for themselves if they feel it is safe.

Our off road trails (inaudible) obstacles, rest intervals, et cetera. (inaudible) the person deciding if the path is right for them. Once someone gets to the entrance of a park or facility, we need to make sure that there's a good path to get to the actual recreation facility.

We have seen beautiful, accessible supporting facilities for the wonderful parking lot, no way for someone using a manual chair or Walker to be able to get from the parking lot to the field.

It's you super important to have transportation that goes to our recreation facilities.

It is also important to consider the hours that the

transportation runs. We don't want to have a situation where you have someone that can get to the ballpark, and play an inclusive sport, but then the buses stop running so they have no way to get home.

When we think about transportation recreation, it's important to think about tourism. The number one question we get is about beach access and the availability of beach wheelchairs.

If we have recreation that is welcoming to family of all abilities, more people will visit our beautiful state. This may be a spouse or a child that uses a wheelchair, but it could also mean grandma that can't walk as far as she used to be able to walk. So many details to be discussed, we are happy that recreation is part of this discussion. Thank you so much for listening.

>> Thank you so much, Lori. We are going to go through a series of three videos here. If you would be patient with me, I'm hoping that it will be work well.

>> I'm the executive director FFAST, Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology. Today I'm wearing a magenta blouse, long dark hair, wearing glasses, I use she/her pronouns. That's a little bit -- I was born without my right arm and right leg. When I first began to drive, even though I -- on a regular (inaudible) my own was a right hand driver Jeep Wrangler with the pedals switched. My family thought not being able to reach over the steering wheel, they wanted the center console on

my left-hand side. They also wanted the guests that -- (inaudible) this actually didn't end up being an issue for me, though the vehicle did work -- to my favor, however, living in a right-hand drive world, (inaudible) it can be challenging to do any sort of drive-thrus, going through tolls, that's where I found transportation disadvantaged -- program. Which was a real life saver for me, I would have to climb into my seat -- it was a real burden to try to throw change in the toll booth. I actually -- the vehicle I have now is a regular every day run of the mill vehicle, I have considered getting my pedals switch, but they like to do a temporary where they put a gate over your regular gas pedal and extension, since it's my vehicle, I didn't want to do something temporary, I want to go more permanent. So I have not made that change. For the most part I just put my left foot over my right and I go for it. This is interesting because when I talk to a lot of other people who don't have right feet, they think that either they must drive with their prosthesis or get a totally adaptive vehicle and use hand controls. I have not found that to be the case for a lot of people. (inaudible) you may consider -- and no one recommends driving with their prosthetic foot. But this is something that I have had conversation with people, they are always surprised to learn that I drive with my left foot in just a regular vehicle. As far as our clients at FFAST, we have heard over and over again about reaching our services, is a challenge

for people who have transportation barriers. So when they are not able to come into the office (inaudible) cross county lines, it could be a challenge to get services from us. We are fortunate with the world going virtual, we do have access to people that way, however, not everyone has access to internet or knows how to use it. We still find that transportation as barrier even in this pandemic world. It's something that we are exploring, trying to figure out how we can get our services to more Floridians and reach them. We do have some people at our regional centers, if you don't know FFAST has six regional centers across the state in Pensacola, Tallahassee, Tampa, Orlando, Miami, in which we can visit. But if you are in the -- it's a challenge to get there. We are exploring options and are open to suggestions, if you have any, you can contact me at WHarris@FFAST --.org. Or you can call our office. Thank you all for your time today and I look forward to hearing from everybody else.

>> Great to have Whitney Harris with us, somebody who has worked with the Able Trust in the past, and I have had the privilege of working side by side with her in a number of different situations. Actually truly a fire ball.

>> This is Jessica -- I'm with the -- an agency that provides services to people with disabilities seeking employment. We have been asked to share some experiences we have had with public transportation over the years and the clients that we serve.

The first one I would like to address is about the rural counties that we have served. Some of the cities include Clewiston and -- and Immokalee. There is no public transportation at this time in these areas. Also no transportation between the neighboring counties. Therefore, it limits the availability of positions for individuals in those areas to become employed. We have had people who live in Immokalee who will willingly go to Naples, unfortunately, the transportation is not adequate to get them there.

So, I'm not sure what the solution to that is, but I think it's something that should be taken a look at. These rural areas (inaudible). The second one is the Lee county bus line services. Although it's a good very service, there was a young man who lived in Fort Myers and wanted to work at the airport. The commute is hours by car. The bus able was able to get him here in two buses, which is unusual. Some have to take more than two to get to work. Unfortunately the commute was a two hour commute each way. Not only that, it didn't allow him to get there by 8 and leave by 6 to get -- I'm making a small proposal here that maybe serving can be done at the peak hours and maybe create some express lines for the major hubs in town, decreasing the amount of stops and increasing the ability for the bus to get -- faster and people to get to work quicker. The third is the -- service, the guidelines require that pickup and drop off be

within three quarters of a mile to the nearest bus stop. Again, a young lady whose mother -- and picked her up, this restricted the woman's independence, but it (inaudible) door to door service. I'm hoping that there's some discussion to be had here perhaps eliminating the 3/4 of a mile rule, and that would be to be able to utilize that service. I thank you for the opportunity to speak. Thanks, have a great day.

>> So, thank you all for staying with us. I want to let you know that in addition to the live broadcast and the -- broadcast that will happen on the Florida channel and the information that is being shared live over FaceBook, we will have the videos that are included in this project as well as additional videos from this particular town hall. Okay.

Let me give the line up so we know who is coming up next. JR Harding, you are next and followed by Molly Hullinger. JR Harding is not only a friend but a past board member of the Able Trust.

>> Thank you, Tony.

>> I'm going to turn it over to you.

>> Thank you for inviting me to be a part of the Florida Transportation Plan 25-year plan. My name is JR Harding, I have lived with quadriplegia for years. As a result, I will focus my perspective on the transportation disadvantaged community and really around the world. Some of my key focus areas will be a

universal design, community, environment, accessibility, businesses, choices, and of course, affordability.

I have international, national, and local transportation expertise as a planner, as an advocate and as an implementer. Our data shows Florida has about 9 million TD residents. Moreover, the world has approximately 1 billion individuals with disabilities, or 20 percent of the population.

As we reimagine Florida's future, one that better connects the individual, the business, or healthcare or leisure and our communities together, we should start with the basic premise of universal design and usability for all.

This means mobility for the 20 percent of people who are TD.

This is very personal for me and many others (inaudible) today. For my first seven years, I couldn't leave my house without the assistance of others. Barriers were everywhere. And especially in transportation. We all know the power of the Rosa Parks story, she had the courage to a change public transportation. Mobility in our communities, Florida, and this country is a right, not an economic privilege. Mobility choices should not solely be based on the size of one's individual checkbook, but rather building bridges and facilitating community business and leisure opportunities. Florida should be unafraid and unapologetic to expect that our mobility options are

empowering and not handicapping. This makes me think of the video that started this well-meaning Florida transportation plan. It does a great job highlighting our demographics, technology advancements, business evolution, but nowhere does it speak to the TD community or have sign language interpreting.

Florida's TD population needs to be built in from day one of any infrastructure. We spend too much time trying to put the 20 percent of us back into the box that had already been built. To avoid building unequal system, we need policies and standards that emphasize and reward universal access and usability.

Our current evolution of electric vehicles have not produced accessible charging stations and related performance areas that would enable persons with disabilities to have the same choices.

Our future systems incentivize and reward inclusion options. If I'm not building access into our plan, we will constantly be trying to play catch up rather than anticipating our mobility needs. Therefore, as we move forward with this planning process, let's make sure we learn from our past mistakes, maximize our accessibility knowledge, and reward and measure inclusive designs and practices. Only through awareness, accountability, and leadership from everyone in the community can we build and respond to our diverse mobility needs. Thanks for allowing me to participate and contribute to the Florida Transportation Plan.

>> Good afternoon, my name is Molly Hullinger, I'm Deaf. I'm here as a representative I have of the Florida vocational rehabilitation, I serve on a board that includes representation of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves, or unable to represent themselves.

The State rehabilitation Council was established in section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The State vocational rehabilitation has established a state Council according to the requirements of section 105 of the act. The Council works in relationship with the State vocational rehabilitation office. The (inaudible) Council's responsibilities include to review, analyze, and advise vocational rehabilitation and the performance related to eligibility, extend the scope and effectiveness of services. And functions which affect the abilities of individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcome. We advise VR regarding activities, a system preparing, a state plan, review and analyze the effectiveness of the program, and consumer satisfaction, prepare and submit an annual report, coordinate activities and other functions and determine appropriate -- that are determined appropriate and comparable.

(inaudible) effective transportation plays an important role in the success of an individual to achieve their work goals. The (inaudible) hard-of-hearing considers a different -- (inaudible). When taking a plane, the experienced individual has to depend on

the board to get information on the status of the flight and destinations. Most of the changes that are made are on the loud speaker. I once took a flight from DC to Dallas, indicating that Dallas was the first stop on the sign. At the first stop many people and the crew got off. When I inquired what was going on, I was told I could change my seat to wherever I want, at the second seat (inaudible) even though my ticket was clearly to Tulsa. No one thought to inform me when we arrived -- spent a great amount of time looking for me. I travel all around the world and couldn't understand how I had missed the stop. If there had been (inaudible) a plan to identify and accommodate individuals with disabilities, some non-visible disabilities, (inaudible). Another example is when a Deaf individual was a principle at a high school realized she had boarded the wrong plane when she noticed the -- was on the wrong side, she was traveling to the West instead of to the east. Traveling plans must always be checked -- individual on the airlines and at times this means waiting in a long line and (inaudible). Deaf individuals including myself have been informed they need to ride a golf cart from gate to gate. 10 years from now, we should have messages live and captions for all people to use. It would also help if there was sign language interpreters when we request travel. Emergencies happen, and we need to be aware of them, whether on a bus, train, or local transportation. New technology is helpful in

assisting people who are Deaf and individuals with disabilities (inaudible) who has a son at Arc village in Jacksonville, it's an amazing plays, his (inaudible) employment at the military base. His mode of transportation, Jacksonville transit authority -- giving himself (inaudible) he pays using a card which he could add money to on his computer if he (inaudible) family help him. Now has an application on his phone to assist him in getting transportation. JTA connector -- go to the movies and activities with his friends. JTA is a very successful venture with him. Thank you for permitting me to share my experiences and provide input to this important matter.

>> Thank you, Molly, I know that you are on the line so I appreciate you helping us out there. So, two messages, first the next two speakers are Lena Juarez, and I do want to remind folks that because we are limited on time during this town hall, you may continue to post public comments on the chat as well as submit questions through the Q&A feature on here. And in you are watching off line or outside of the webinar, send messages to transportation@ableTrust.org.

Lena Juarez, thank you, the floor is yours.

>> Good afternoon, I'm Lena. I worked as an advocate and lobbyist for the transit and paratransit agencies. I represent an association of transit providers -- my firm is engaged in policy -- legislators, staff, and agencies regarding the reformation

of the Transportation Disadvantaged, advocacy for the trust fund, as well as other funding streams. Over the years we have done a lot of coalition building. We have also done a lot of education regarding challenges faced by persons with disabilities -- to live their lives, this includes going to work, play, running errands, getting to their healthcare appointments. We continue to follow these issues today. Specifically this past session we followed bill that would have allowed TD providers to cross county lines, it passed the house unanimously but stalled in the last senate committee.

A few observations about the industry over the past two decades, there have been so many changes impacting the transportation disadvantaged community yet reform is still needed. Change in economic times have caused states, including Florida, to rein in Medicaid costs, yet innovations and technology like ride sharing platforms such as Uber and Lyft give access to plan ambulatory estimates to go to Doctor appointments.

I'm glad to see that the TD is tackling a new funding formula. I encourage you to review their new formula on the website. One variable is the square mileage of each county. This creates disparities this do not reflect the TD trips, another one is total county population, this pits the large counties against the small counties. The CTD is going through the rule making process

now, so there's public input opportunity. And the new formula proposes that county square mileage be replaced by center line Miles, which is the highway administrations public road mileage data, that the variable will be the actual mileage traveled by residents. The total number of county residence would be replaced by the TD population. She is change -- to the needs of the community. Believe it or not, at one point Florida was considered the best coordinator transportation system in the country. I encourage the Department of Transportation to rely on the locals to get the lay of the land regarding the needs of the transportation disadvantaged and to get input from the planning agencies around the State. This including the metropolitan planning organizations, the regional planning councils and city and county governments. I will just say that some are more engaged than others. The more the Florida Department of Transportation can do to be of a facilitator of transportation options for persons with disabilities, greater opportunity there will be for persons with disabilities to contribute to the economy, pursue education, engage in sports and leisure activities, and literally see the world.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my experience, observations and recommendations, I truly enjoyed this town hall conversation today.

>> Thank you so much for your participation. Next up will

be Cathy Matthews and Derek and --

>> Thank you very much. I'm Cathy Matthews, I'm on the board of directors for Lighthouse Central Florida. We serve the visual impaired, our son included, are considered transportation disadvantaged, which means door to door paratransit service is needed. We are very familiar with access links paratransit services and we would like to offer just a few considerations that I thought maybe able to help us moving forward.

Someone had been mentioned before, I'm sorry to repeat, but some of them had a twist on them, if not I think -- (inaudible). The first is integrating -- options for paratransit, we know that it's less expensive than what paratransit would cost, it would mean a considerable number of drives off of the vehicle load which means the paratransit riders who need those vehicles will have better service. It's a win-win in advocacy and cost. And they are also services, there are also services out there like common courtesy and go go grandparent that can help augment the program for those seniors and those that either don't have a smart phone or aren't comfortable using the apps, so we have a complete system that we can use. And most of the time when we hear that we can't do this, is regulations are quoted. And I think that at this time, Uber and Lyft are a disruption in the agency. The second I would like to mention is paratransit contracting. My experience as a systems engineer, I worked in R&D, I worked in acquisition, I

worked for government and in industry. And I have done contracting. So one of the things I think, my recommendation, is that we should look at contracting for what we want. What we want is safe, quality, efficient, timely, dependable rides for this community, and to give that incentive for the providers to motivate them to give us that quality ride instead of paying for the number of hours on the road or the number of Miles driven. So I really think that's important. And I'm going to talk about technology in a minute. But as we automate some of these assets we need in order to make -- more efficient, we also need to make sure we that we contract for the right data and be competitive for future contracts. The third and last thing I want to mention is technology, technology matters, there's truly -- we truly need to take advantage of the technology out there for the benefit of not only the riders but the transportation authorities and the providers. It will make life easier for so many people. There's way too many trips and buses per day to manually schedule changes, there are automated solutions out there, we need to figure out how to use them. I think there are many attempts, as Paul said earlier, it never trickles down to the user, and we need to make the -- to everyday use.

We need basic things like reader profiles and e-mail addresses, no way to mass mail the paratransit ridership, I think that information especially during times like COVID and

scheduled changes or policy changes really need to be pushed and we also need to get better feedback for the ridership and that access would be invaluable. I think sometime we don't want feedback because it's not (inaudible) but I think we need to be transparent and take to take the good, bad, and indifferent. I also think on the website there should be a big feedback button and we shouldn't make it hard to find, shouldn't make people work hard to get input and take it even when it's bad. I think with that, because I know that we are short of time, but thank you very much for your time, I appreciate it. And stay safe.

>> Hello, I'm Derek Carraway -- share some of my experiences on using public transportation. I live in Tallahassee and have been using the TD office in my area for I would say a good 12 or 13 years (inaudible) prevents me from being able to drive. I could say that my overall experience using -- ride as it's called in my area has been good and bad. I will start off by saying that I'm thankful for the services and it's good because I would be up the creek without it and (inaudible) but it is by no means perfect. Now, I first started using it, I would get there late, that is frustrating especially when I started having internships and holding down a job. (inaudible) into work late now, but on the same token, getting there 45 minutes early and having to sit and wait to clock in is not fun either. The big problem I experience now that they haven't gotten mastered yet is the return trip when

they come to pick me up from work. In the year I have been at my current since my office was -- I usually wind up sitting -- waiting anywhere from might have minutes to a handful of very frustrating occasions, over an hour. This is absurd. When I call the call center to check on it, they (inaudible). Some days my eight hour workday has turned into 11, trying to get there and back home. (inaudible) because they screw up so much, you know there's a problem. Major problem. She keeps saying they are (inaudible) 10 to 18 drives short -- when they screw up. If that's the case, I think there shouldn't (inaudible) on the city's website until they have an adequate number of drivers. Then they make me get reapproved every three years just to use the service. That gets a little annoying considering there's my situation isn't going to change because there's (inaudible) my vision problem. The just gets annoying and (inaudible) my situation is not going to change. And anyway, I could go on for like another hour because I have a whole list of -- since I have four minutes, I will leave it at that. The transportation disadvantaged service is good, but definitely needs improving. I hope everyone (inaudible) is watching and taking notes right now, because it gets very old and -- daily stress being forced to rely (inaudible) since the COVID pandemic, I have been fortunate to be able to work from home and haven't had to use that and (inaudible) it's my hope that by the time we start getting back into

the office and I have to start relying on them again, that things will be greatly improved. I'm honestly not holding my breath, though. Again, I'm -- Derek Carraway with the Family Cafe (inaudible) to learn more about what we do, visit -- (inaudible) like us on FaceBook. Thank you for your time.

>> Thank you. So, next up is Niki Germain, and then Paul. And I have to thank the 26 speakers that have spoken so far for staying close to on time. I think I'm the only one that has delayed us. Nick, if you are ready to go, I will turn the floor over to you.

>> Or Paul, if you are on the line, and you can turn our camera, whichever one turns our camera first, Paul, why don't you go. Nick, we will get back to you next.

>> Good afternoon, name is Paul Strobis, we provide ADA complement and transportation disadvantaged paratransit service. As public transit professional with 20 years of experience in the paratransit industry, both here and in Broward and in Boston, Massachusetts, it's very evident to me in listening to what's going on in this session, that Florida is ahead of curve when it comes to mobility management in coordination of transportation services throughout the State. The transportation disadvantaged program doesn't exist in other states. So choices that customers have, individuals with disabilities have, are very limited outside of Florida. And so I want to compliment FDOT and my peers throughout the State on the level of service that we

get to provide. Understanding that even exceeding a lot of the limitations, the requirements of the services that we provide, there are still a lot of limitations to the customers that use our system. And my main role here in Broward county is to try to expand services where I can to ensure that we can create a system that is available when the customer needs it. Understanding that paratransit customers generally don't have the ability to be spontaneous, to have trips ready when they are ready. Everything is pre planned. And so I ask myself as part of my local planning process, and I know that FDOT in their planning processes do the same thing, how can we break down some of those barriers with solutions. One of the things I have tried to implement over the last two years in Broward county is to provide choice to my paratransit customers. Providing them a on demand solution with our local taxis in Broward county that have many more vehicles than my paratransit service has. And allow them to book trips on demand when they need but also have paratransit there when they need it. We need to come up with ways to break down the complexities of our system in Florida to allow a more seamless partnership with public and private, public government can't do it all. And a lot of systems, that's all there is, the local public government. We need to work on at the state level things like insurance, private entities that don't operate 24 hours a day but have to pay exorbitant insurance cost to operate

transportation systems is unsustainable for small companies. There are many people that would love to become part of an overall system but they don't have the capital to be able to provide it. Better education on the 5310 grant program that provides capital funding for seniors, disabled transportation programs is key. And so as we move forward, I hope that we can expand those programs to provide an ability for public agencies like myself to partner with not just large transportation companies but also those smaller entrepreneurial companies and share information which has been a problem with some of the T and C's up to this point, but if the capital funding is there and it's available, and the local governments can work with them, I think we can create a hybrid transportation system that will do what we hope, that's to allow day-to-day activity, not just medical, but everything, as we have talked about, whether it's employment, social, education, that they can decide like anybody that may have a car in their driveway or have -- able to get on a public busker they can decide to transportation port whenever they want. I thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments on a future transportation system that value mobility for all throughout our state. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, and particularly on short notice. He just got the call the other day and he stepped right up. I'm going to try nick again, if you are available, go ahead and speak up and

I will know that your voice works, Niki. Otherwise we will move on to the next presenter.

>> Okay. Niki, keep trying, and we will try one more time, I'm amazed that we have gone two hours on Zoom with so little problems, Niki, let us know when you are on and we will come to you if possible. We will go to Joey Chica and then Niki, if you are available, we will end the program with you and turn it back to Allison after that.

>> Good afternoon, my name is Joseph Chica. First of all I would like to say thank you for giving me the opportunities to speak on a topic that is personal to me. As a blind person, accessible transportation is critical to my independence. When we talk about transportation and accessibility within transportation, we focus primarily on how do we make this transportation accessible and a lot of times it's easy to lose sight, efficiency, that's something I want to take a moment to touch upon. I give you an example, we can make the most accessible horse and carriage in the world, but at the end of the day I'm not going to take that to go somewhere, it's not efficient. I think one of the opportunities that we have especially in the kind of situation that we are in, is to increase our efficiency when it comes to transportation. Transportation industry as a whole is really undergoing mental transition from where we come from to where we are going, specifically in two areas, the first is autonomous

vehicles, I think autonomy and self-driving really pose a great opportunity for accessibility, but there are two pivotal steps that we need to take to get where we want to and how we can achieve our goals which is accessible transportation and efficient accessible transportation.

The first hurdle we need to overcome is, of course, the technology behind autonomy, and a lot of that, from what we are discussing now is that maybe something that we can influence but maybe something we can have a positive effect on by providing infrastructure and providing assistance in that direction, and then legislation, getting the discussion on how can we make that better so when it does come we are not spending another 10 years after we have autonomous vehicles getting into the -- accessible to people who are blind in my case or who have other disabilities that can benefit from the technology.

And the second and more present opportunity I that I we have to improving in this field is with ride sharing services and the way that we use them currently. So there is a reason why two companies, one is a household name, and multi- -- it's because they work and they are efficient. A lot of time what happens is, as a blind person, if you go to use transportation, it may be very accessible and -- bus or Metro rail, at the end of the day you don't end up where you need to go, you -- use a ride sharing service or some other form of transportation that maybe not so accessible.

If you can't beat them, join them. And creating some initiatives in Florida that would allow to take advantage of those opportunities that exist and collaborate that in trying to compete to make it possible to utilize these services that are ultimately efficient and they are working and that's why people are using them, to bridging that gap so that people with disabilities and who need access to efficient transportation can rely on something that we know is efficient and we know works. So autonomy and collaboration with ride sharing are the ways we can improve short term and long term in this industry. Thank you.

>> Thank you. I think Niki, we are going to trying one more time to see if we can access your mic. Are you there? Okay.

Then I'm going to turn to director Stettner, if you are available, your and I can have that quick conversation for some wrap up points. There are a number of public comments that have been submit on the chat. There are more comments that can be submitted afterwards if folks will send us messages to transportation@able Trust.org, I think -- I appreciate you offering us the opportunity to provide this and I know the Florida Transportation Plan continues to take input and feedback as we work through the planning process. Director, I know that we have gone for a little bit more than two hours.

>> Thank you for this opportunity. I found this really impactful conversation, we learned a lot. We have been taking

copious notes and responding to questions in the chat and thankfully we have the recording. I think we heard a lot of themes throughout the presentation and thank you for all of your perseverance and resilience in working with us. It is a work in process, and we want to be better, so that input that you gave us today is going to help us be better. I think that's important that we want to all grow and learn and partner with you. But I heard a lot about the need for more options and how much time it takes for everyone to make these travel decisions and how much that is disruptive to your life.

There's a lot of optimism and the technology that can help enhance our journey finding, make it easier for payment systems, and making -- choice a little bit easier to come by. I heard safety throughout most of the presentations today, a need for safe systems that are accessible as well, and safe and equitable and access was one of those common themes. We need to have more education on available resources and services so that we can connect back to the users. And this still remains to be a barrier, access continues to be a barrier, ADA continues to be a barrier.

And the department is committed that on every project that we improve our system for all users, not just vehicles, but everyone and every component is important to our system. So I want to say I heard some of that. I want to talk a little bit just

briefly, because funding is kind of that elephant in the room and how can we get more funding and more alignment to resources. And that is something that I think everyone struggles with. It's going to understand up working with partnerships, and affidavits in the communities and making sure we align our resources. It's going that -- I want to say from my personal perspective, I learned a lot more about the barriers that you experience every single day and that personally will make me a better planner and hopefully a better person. So thank you for letting us have this opportunity today and allowing us to be here.

>> Director, having served on past Florida transportation planning processes I know how open you are not input and it's not necessarily easy, but -- you and your team are approaching this, listening today, sharing time with us, Able Trust and all the partners to spoke today, I greatly appreciate that. I know there's a long way to go. And the FTP is not the budget document, it's not the individual local, regional planning document, but it is the vision for the state and the work that you and your team do on it is absolutely essential. So, thank you so much.

>> And if there's any unanswered questions and we will continue to get the feedback from you, that's going on on-line as well, and so that we can respond to questions and work with you to make sure that everyone has the satisfaction, a satisfactory response.

>> We will stay on the line a little bit longer as you heard some of the folks will stay on and listen to the questions, for the few hundred of you that are still on, you can submit comments through the chat feature, capture all of this. I will let you know that it's been a pleasure on behalf of the Able Trust to do this. I know that it is not a simple thing to manage so many people in so little time many I want to thank my good friend that he did all the cussing for me in the background. I appreciate that as well.

If there are additional comments that you would like to share, I want to encourage you to let us know. If you want to find out more about the Florida Transportation Plan, you can go to WWW.Florida Transportation Plan.com. This event has been made possible by the Able Trust, and we look forward on to working with you and so many other partners, there are more stories that we know that are out there and key can capture. In fact there have been folks that have been e-mailing me and texting me throughout this process, not just to give me encouragement but sending us note, all of this will be part of the record. If you approached your story, whether it's a video, if you will post your story, and use the hash tag # Able Trust, we will capture it and forward it to the planning committee. We will also improve our spelling. I noticed that I misspelled hash tag there. The other option, if you prefer not to use social media you can use transportation@ableTrust.org., you can continue to post to

the chat, we will probably keep the lines open for just a few minutes and continue to allow those companion testimonies. We added -- thank you for sharing your stories, thank you for asking your questions.

I do want to highlight that everything that was expressed today came from somebody's experience. It does not necessarily represent or reflect the official policy or positions, but there are a number of great story lines that we will use to build future plans.

We will leave the lines open and keep this telecast running for just a few more minutes. And thank you so much for participating in this. If you would like to reach us directly, you can reach us at info@AbleTrust.org. I will post this video or the link at AbleTrust.org. The entire two hours and 15 minutes of the presentation, I know that FaceBook live had its glitches as it started. And when I say that, it means the human error on my part. You can watch right from the beginning.

We will also be sharing the videos, capturing the comments that have been submitted from other individuals throughout this presentation, and we certainly hope that you will join us in sharing information on-line. You can again use hash tag Able Trust or e-mail us at transportation@abletrust.org. Thank you for joining us today in this important conversation. We look forward to working with you as we create a more accessible transportation

future for this great State of Florida. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, Tony.