



For Immediate Release

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**Vision Impaired Pedestrians Evaluate
Work Zones Devices for Effectiveness and User-Friendliness**
Maryland Department of Transportation Hosts Second ADA “Show and Tell”

Hanover, Md. – It may have happened to you.

You are walking a city street – in a hurry to get somewhere – and you encounter an urban work zone with a dreaded “*Sidewalk Closed*” sign directly in your intended path. It’s bad enough trying to navigate a city work zone with the sidewalk open or detoured, but now what?

Now, try to imagine that same scenario for a person who is visually handicapped, or has other physical disabilities.

Helping visually impaired pedestrians safely traverse urban work zones was precisely the desired outcome in a recent scenario created by members of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) at the Maryland DOT’s headquarters, located near the Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

Under a massive tent, ATSSA members set up their unique delineation products and devices to simulate pedestrian work zones in an urban setting. To help guide the visually impaired evaluators through the course were bright-orange barricades, devices that talked, smooth-edged handrails, and colorful raised rigid tile-panels that can be secured to the pavement.

“We wanted to provide the disabled community with more delineation and enhanced guidance through work zones, and improve these devices to help all pedestrians safely traverse urban work zones,” said David McKee, ATSSA’s director of membership, and the event’s overall coordinator.

McKee worked with the Maryland DOT, the U.S. Access Board, the Federal Highway Administration, the Maryland Department on Disabilities, and the Maryland State Highway Administration to build the event. A similar event, also coordinated by McKee, was held at the Turner Fairbank Transportation Highway Research Center in McLean, Va. in 2004. Some of the lessons learned from that earlier event were incorporated into products demonstrated in the 2007 event. Other exhibitors brought completely new innovations to this year’s event.

A total of 11 exhibitors were on hand for the event. Eight teams of evaluators and recorders from the U.S. Access Board critiqued each of the products on display, then provided feedback to the ATSSA members and others in attendance.

Michael Jackson, director of bicycle and pedestrian access for the Maryland-DOT, was delighted to partner with so many interested roadway safety organizations for the event.

Jackson said the Maryland-DOT was pleased to offer their facility to enable ATSSA members to share what they have developed with the users of their products.

“I found the whole event very beneficial,” Jackson said.

Patricia Beattie, chairman of the Environmental Access Committee, as well as a member of the American Council of the Blind and the Council of Citizens with Low Vision International, participated in both the 2004 and the 2007 “Show and Tells.”

“Both events were tremendous opportunities for the vendors to learn what I encounter with their devices. I give the exhibitors my honest feedback on what I experience with their products, and it’s a wonderful opportunity for all of us to interact,” Beattie said.

Peter J. Connors, president of Remcon Plastics, Inc., Reading, Pa., was an exhibitor at the event, who observed, “This was a great opportunity for new product development because you got very objective input from the very people the product is supposed to protect. The event was very, very valuable, and there were things the evaluators mentioned to me that I would never would have thought of when I was developing my product.”

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Environmental Access Committee Chair Patricia Beattie evaluates a pedestrian delineation device at the recent ADA “Show and Tell,” while a recorder takes detailed notes. The event was coordinated by the American Traffic Safety Services Association. (Photo and article by James Scott Baron. High-Resolution version attached.)