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NDRN- CCD-ADA 30 BRIEFING WEBINAR

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SPEAKER: All right I think we are going to go ahead and
get ready. Or get going. Thank you to everyone who is
joining us here on the 30th anniversary of the ADA. My
name is Sarah Malaier I'm with the American foundation

for the blind and the connoisseursip for citizens with disabilities is the organizer for todays briefing. We're really glad to have all of you here. CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advance federal public policy that ensures the self determination independence empowerment integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities and in all aspects of society. And we have three fantastic panelists here today who are going to share with you some experiences about transportation. So we are joining on the anniversary of the ADA. The ADA has played an important role in making sure transportation options are more accessible to people with disabilities. In particular public transportation is required to be accessible and that means that the rights of way, side walks and cross walks and walking options should be accessible that buses and sub ways trains all must comply with standards like having lifts elevators stop announcements and more that make each of these services better and more usable by people with disabilities. It also sets up complimentary transit services which is an origin to destination service that makes sure people with disabilities can by-pass some of the barriers that are involved in getting from one place to another. And

it also ensures that private transportation services shuttles private buses motor coaches on demand services and tax ease also provide accessible service or at least equivalent service to people with disabilities. So the after the accident DA has been really instrumental in setting the standards and spark changes to make vehicles stations ridership policy more accessible. But as we will highlight today there's still a lot, a long way to go until we get to a truly inclusive society that prioritizes transportation for all. So I want to introduce our panels and I will go in the order I see them on my screen. We are excited to bring Anna Zivarts who is the program director at read and writes which is a part of disability rights Washington. She is a low vision mom who believes in organizing and the power of narratives. She is currently working to build transportation mobility systems that are accessible equitable and that address our public and private health crises. Leroy more is an activist author poet rapper feminist and radio programmer and the founder of the Krip-hop nation an international movement that addresses discrimination against disabled artists marginalized because of the intersection of racism and ableism. Also founding member of the national black

disability coalition. And last but not least we have jen dear in water citizen of the Cherokee nation of Oklahoma she is bisexual true spirit multiple disabled journalist. She is a contributor at truth out and executive director of crushing colonialism. jens work can be found in publications such as rewire news and in these times to name a few. She's a coeditor of sacred and subversive and her work is included in the disability visibility and true spirits belong here. She's been interviewed for numerous out let's in her work and advocate named 2019 champion of pride. We are so glad to have all of you today. And I'd like to start it out by turning it over to you and so my first question for you today. Can each of you tell me a little bit about your experience with accessing transportation. And how do you see the ADA playing a role in that access. Is there someone who would like to go first?

SPEAKER: I'll go first. Leroy here. Transportation for me I live in Berkeley California. I take the sub way sometimes I take the city bus, usually only the sub way. I have to say that the last in the last five years I've seen a lack of -- I see it getting worse. I see the price going up. I see accessibility getting worse. Elevators

are out. Escalators are sometimes out. Yeah yeah so that's my experience. Especially on the sub way here in Berkeley it's called bart. Yeah.

SPEAKER: Well thank alee roy. Certainly I mentioned that elevators and other accessibility features are required to meet accessibility standards but we certainly see that they're not always functional and that really impacts peoples independence. Anna how would you say, what would you say that your transportation access and how do you think the ADA has impacted that access.

SPEAKER: Yeah so I grew up in Washington state outside of an area that was served by public transit. And so I relied a lot on family to give me rides and then I left I lived in New York for 15 years and the reason I chose New York was because I wanted to live somewhere where a lot of other people also didn't have drivers licenses and I would feel less isolated. And that was wonderful and then I had a kid and I moved back to be closer to my parents I'm back in Washington state now and you know I think things have improved a little since I left as far as access to transit. I've also chosen to live in an area that's pretty transit rich. But there are still

many parts of our state manytuants that aren't served well by transit. And so it definitely limits where I'm able to go. And you know even getting from where I live in Seattle to our state capital in Olympyeah there's no direct public transit out route it's multiple buses to get there which is also where my parents live. So it's frustrating to go from living in a place like New York where it was pretty normal to not drive as someone with low vision I felt a lot more included to a place where definitely back having to rely a lot more on other people and not feel like I can go everywhere I'd like to be able to go.

SPEAKER: That's pretty common experience. Jen you bring a little bit of perspective that's quite unique.

SPEAKER: Yeah so I currently live in DC but I grew up in rural Oklahoma. Public transportation where I'm from just in general is nonexistent. If you don't own a car, if you're not able to drive or have people who can drive you places then you're not getting anywhere where I grew up. But I've also lived in quite a few city's across the United States and I can say that I see a lot of the same problems. You know I lived in New York city I've lived

in the Boston area I've lived in Chicago Los Angeles anchorage Alaska like I've lived all over and I can say that I see a lot of the same problems. Elevators that aren't in service. If the elevators even exist chick say in New York city I think it's like only 30 percent of sub way stations even have elevators. You know if you can't get up and downstairs then public transportation has a lot of safety issues on public transit. Since I've started using a cane I've had people kick my cane out from under me. And some instances I think those were accidents but there were a couple times where I think that might've been on purpose. I've had people push me once again sometimes on accident sometimes clearly on purpose. You know people pushing me so they can get into the train or the bus first and then they take the seats that are at the front of the bus meant for people like me. You know those bus stops don't have benches or shelters and I have really bad chronic pain. So standing is incredibly painful for me and you know just a couple of minutes of standing sometimes it's not even possible for me. And you know when I lived in Boston I didn't have a car back then so I did have the para transit there and I had special ride to medical appointments through Medicaid. But the service there was horrible.

I missed countless doctors appointments because the rides would not show up or they'd show up so late the doctors wouldn't see me anymore. I have been at doctors appointments and then had no one come pick me up including after I had a couple of major surgeries when I was in Boston and I just got stuck places and back then I wasn't able to work I had to rely entirely on SSB I . I didn't have the money to take a cab or something you know. I mean there were times that I had to take buss and trains when that was a huge safety risk. You know where I get to live is based pretty heavily on accessibility and transportation was a big part of that for a time. I find even the financial division I'm able to have a car so I got a car because I just couldn't count on public transportation and disability accessibility services. And I've heard this from other native folks. You know we have native youth that needs to go to a doctors appointment today but her families car is broken and there's no medical transportation where she lives in North Carolina. There's an elder who lives in Oklahoma who if an exception wasn't made for him for their local medical ride service he wouldn't be able to get to dialysis. Another native elder that lives in Denver talked about also missing medical appointments because

the transit services there just don't show up or they show up really late. So I think you're going to hear a lot of common experiences but I also want to add before I pass it over a lot of our tribal land has no public transportation. No accessibility no accessible transportation. Some of our private lands don't even have roads or running water. So when you're in that kind of situation things like para transit or other accessible services you're not even ready to start those programs.

SPEAKER: Thank you to all of you. That really highlights the lack of service the lack of commitment to accessible infrastructure. The lack of inclusion in our nations transportation system. You know we are reflecting back on the 30th anniversary of the ADA and are there any stories that you have where you saw that in particular an accessibility standard or change in transportation has occurred because of having the right to access transportation written into the law or have your experiences largely been about the lack of access.

SPEAKER: This is Anna. I can share a story. So it's service still so much a work in progress. We just last

Friday here in Washington state there's a piece of missing side walk between the bus stop and one of the accessible voting election centers here we're mostly a mail in state which is great for voting but for folks who need to go in and use the accessible voting machines those are located there's one usually one location per county where you need to get to to do that so for a lot of blind folks or the folks who can't match a signature it's really important to be able to get to these locations and the one there's a missing side walk between the bus stop and where this place is and we finally got an agreement on Friday 30 years later that the city and the county are going to come together and build this. It's like a hundred feet of missing side walk but it's on a really busy Suburban road and it's super dangerous. You're asking people to risk their lives to get in to vote. Or to do other essential government services at this building. And you know I think the law is there but it comes down to is there the will is there the funding to build out the infrastructure to build the bus routes to make the changes that need to be made, should've been made.

SPEAKER: Leroy here. I think because I all I have in

the bay area I see -- all of a sudden we see accessibility. And in east Oakland where east Oakland has always been behind when it comes to accessibility, how you see curb cuts. Very few in east Oakland. And you see more buses. But on the back side of that although you see more buses you see less benches because -- don't want to say quote unquote homeless people at benches. So that affects people with disabilities because I think like -- then it's hard to use public transportation. So I say this because I see when gentrification happens in city's all of a sudden you get more accessibility but also we lose a lot of our rights.

SPEAKER: Yeah that's a really interesting perspective on the way that power and advocacy can impact the access to these rights that we should already have. Jen did you have anything that you wanted to add?

SPEAKER: Yeah. I've been pretty directly impacted by this even though I have a car. I have a home health aid and I have nine hours a day seven days a week of aid in home health aid care but in DC with transit being cut it's become difficult for the aids to get to work. I mean there are a lot of other issues besides transportation

but transportation has been a big issue I can say for my, for one of my aids. You know she has completely depleted her savings from trying to take things likeubers and stuff so she can stay off transportation. When she has to take public transportation that puts her at risk which puts me as an immune oh compromised person at risk of contracting COVID-19. So this is one area that I feel like the government from municipal up to federal has really dropped the ball in terms of COVID-19 related policy. They haven't made sure that home health care workers can actually get to the homes and be there with their clients. And you know for me I think about this also like native people have the highest disability and chronic and some of the highest chronic illness rates in the country. 22 percent of native people are disabled. And right now we have the highest rates per capita of COVID-19 and we've also had incredibly high death rate. Some of our tribes are facing literal extinction. So for me as a native person I don't want to get on public transportation. I don't want to risk my life that way as somebody who's coming from a community that even before a pandemic was less population because of a genocide. We need options for our home health aid and those of us who are chronically

ill need option that are safe for us to take.

SPEAKER: That's a great point about how COVID-19 has really exacerbated some of the transportation issues that people were already facing. A lot of what we've talked about today is showing that in the best of times people are disabilities and the people that they interact with and that they depend on and everyone in society has faced transportation issues. But COVID-19 has really exacerbated those impacts. Anna and Leroy have there been any particular impacts that you'd like to highlight as well.

SPEAKER: For me the cost keeps on going up every year. And the services keep on going down. So because of that I've been really using my bike more because the services are so bad and they cost so much. Dealing with that also with gentrification once again using my bike I see a lot of these bikes around is they take up most of the lots so it's hard to even park my bike when I take my bike you know. Buses getting smaller and smaller. Here in Berkeley and Oakland they cut like long services they cut them in half. So you have so many busses to get to your destination compared to a couple years ago you could

just catch one bus. Now you have to catch more buses and that means more money.

SPEAKER: Yeah this is an area we've definitely seen transit cuts here and I think we're going to see more in the future and that's just really a hard thing to look at. I think what concerns me about that is what I see as this push towards privatizing public transit. For a lot of reasons I think that's really a terrible idea having worked with folks who are supporting uber and lift drivers that's not a sustainable salary for people to be earning and there's so many access issues with on demand transit. You know that uber and lift have fought providing wheelchair accessible vehicles and also I'm a parent I have a three-year-old and as someone who can't drive ride hailing is actually really terrible for parents of young kids because you're expected to provide your own car seats and that's not feasible when you have a three-year-old and you're running errands you're also trying to carry around a 40-pound car seat it doesn't work. And these companies like uber and lift don't provide car seats. Companies like VIA transit which is a lot of public transit agencies are exploring partnerships with us we have one here in king county they provide vans and they have some wheelchair accessible

vans the wait times are longer but they don't work for parents because you are expected today have a car seat with you and you're expected to then take this ride hail van to transit but then what do you do with the car seat. And so I have a lot of concerns around what that means for access for people as well as what that means for the workers who provide the transility it services. I think there's also -- in this crisis and in this moment when people are being asked to quarantine makes sense the desire to bring food to them rather than going out into the communities but as a long term replacement for transit it also feels very isolating to me. I think it shouldn't be you know expected that people with disabilities are just going to stay home all the time and services will be brought to them because I think it takes away a lot of our abilities to participate in our communities. If we're not able to go out and make choices about what we want to do because public transit has been completely cut and instead can only request the things that society deems necessary to come to us. You know food or maybe we're able to get a ride to a medical appointment but you know what if there's other things places or other things that we need to do. Having other people place value on that because we have to request that service

and they're going to decide whether they're going to pay for it or not feels like gate keeping. So yeah. Those are my fears.

SPEAKER:

SPEAKER: Sarah you are muted.

SPEAKER: Oh I apologize I was muted. I'm going to ask my final question and in the mean time if you'd like to ask your own question you can put that in the chat box. Or press zero one on your phone to raise your hand if you're on the phone option. My final question to y'all is what do you hope to see in the future of transportation policy. What are some changes that you'd like to see?

SPEAKER: This is jen. I'll go ahead and answer the question first. I think some things have been addressed here by anna and Leroy. But some of the things that I would like to see personally as a native as a disabled native person is I want to see the United States government funding and following responsibility to our tribes. You know we are the experts on our lives and we are the one who's know what our communities need and that

goes along with things like disability, accessible transportation, but we can't do that if the federal government won't give us the money we need to do things like build roads on our land. You know another issue that we have that does impact things like getting a list or getting one of the bikes or the scooters or something is that we have a huge digital divide in Indian country. For both our rural and our urban based natives. In more rural areas there isn't often access to high broad band or for wireless phone service so even if you can get some of these services out in more rural areas how do you order them if you don't have Internet or cell service. And even for urban natives which 71 percent of us are urban based the poverty that we suffer is a big issue. We don't all have Internet in the phone, the gadgets to order these things and even if we do we have the money for transportation. Quite often no. You know I want to see transportation needs and accessibility needs being met and fully funded so that all disabled and chronically ill people have the transportation that we need and that it is free for us. We know disabled people are more likely to live in poverty. Transportation should be free for us. And just a couple of examples of things I'd also like to see are more train services across the US. You know

not everyone can fly but a lot of Amtrak trains and stations are not accessible. You know I would like to see better marketing campaigns telling younger people and able bodied people what to do on public transit so that they're not putting our lives and health at risk and so we don't have to worry about our safety. Hand sanitizers at train and bus stops like shelters and seating at bus stops. There's so much that could be done and this is just the tip of the ice berg on what I would like to see in transportation for the future.

SPEAKER: Yeah Leroy here. You know it's basic. I would like to see that the federal government -- fully fund. So really going against what our laws are. They don't want to implement it they don't want to fund it. Let's go back to the board and let's try to I don't know sue them or something. But our laws and our policy has been -- inaudible -- disability laws policies -- transportation. All political parties are guilty of not fully funding and implementing our laws. So that's what I want to see in the future. Really. I want the laws and fully fund the laws.

SPEAKER: This is Anna. I'll be quick I think what Jen

and Leroy said I second all of that. The piece I would add is I think you know we've seen such huge decreases in ridership on transit and the folks who are left are the folks that have no other choices. And I would love to see us rebuild the transit system that centers those people, that centers those of us who don't have other choices because I feel like if you build out that system rather than building or trying to chase after nine to five white collar workers you're going to build a system that ultimately is going to work better for all of us so that's my hope.

SPEAKER: And also in transportation I know it's a totally different subject but yeah airplanes are just disgusting when it comes to disability. So I know that's a whole different ball but I know that they need to change.

SPEAKER: Sarah you're muted.

SPEAKER: Sorry about that. Charles was there a question on the phone? All right I'm not hearing anything about that. But I do want to really thank you for being here today and joining us thank you so much to our panelists

to anna and jen and Leroy. It's been really great to hear your perspectives. Thank you for mentioning all the different modes of transportation. It's such a big issue and it's so important for getting people to be able to do what they need to do in their daily lives. It is a big part of inclusion in all aspects of society. We have a hand out that will be sent to everyone it includes more information on the ADA and transportation. As well as a few things that congress can do to take action to make transportation more accessible. Both the actual construction and design of the program but also making it more available to people. And you know shout out that service transportation is a great opportunity for that as well as the appropriations process and on into the future. But if you have any additional questions please feel free to reach out to the organizers the contact information is available in the chat or on the hand out and thank you for being here today and thank you to our collaborators representative Jim and Don young and senator tammy and as well as our panelists. Hope you have to a good day.