



NextGen Insight

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Publications Committee Chair: Greg Lindberg

Table of Contents

- President’s Message..... 1**
- Auction Recap 3**
- 2024 Durward K. McDaniel First-Timer Winner in ACB
NextGen 4**
- City Pop Fundraiser: Concessions for Convention..... 6**
- 2024 ACB Next Generation Midyear Meeting 7**
- 2024 Candidates Forum Announcement 7**
- 2024 ACB Conference and Convention Preview..... 8**
- 2024 ACB Next Generation Convention Programming
..... 11**
- Financial Assistance to Attend the ACB Conference
and Convention..... 15**
- ACB Convention Survival Guide 17**
- ACB Next Generation at the 2024 Brenda Dillon
Memorial Walk..... 20**
- You’re Invited: 2024 Committee Showcase 21**
- Cosmic Committee Corner: Membership Committee 22**
- Life Membership Update 23**
- KCBNG Update..... 25**
- Blog and Podcast Roundup..... 26**
- Finding My Way at CSUN: Tech Tools for Accessible
Travel..... 27**

Autonomous Vehicles – So Much More Than a Cool Date Night Notion.....	29
Want to Win a \$10 Gift Card?.....	38
Calendar of Events.....	39
ACB Next Generation Board of Directors.....	41
How to Reach Us.....	41

Title Page Image Description: Background - Black night sky with dim stars in a horizontal rectangle. Foreground - All text is in white font. NextGen spans the width of the image with the N and G capitalized. ACB is in capital letters above the word Next. A yellow star is shooting out of the top right corner of the letter x and hovering over the word Gen. Underneath and spanning the width of the word NextGen are the words Develop Lead Elevate (1/3 of the font size of ACB NextGen) with a dot between each word.

“Nothing is more terrible than activity without insight.”
– Thomas Carlyle

President’s Message

Greetings NextGen Framily,

Spring has finally arrived and we have sprung into action. If you are looking for excitement, you are in the right place. We have an exciting lineup of fun to kick off your summer.

Before we dive into our summer of fun, let’s recap some highlights from last quarter. The Leadership Linkup event captured quite a crowd. Twenty-one ACB leaders with diverse backgrounds and 15 NextGen members participated in this event. We are hoping to repeat this event in more intimate groups later this year. I am also extremely proud to announce that our auction raised a little over \$6,000. Thank you to everyone who participated, whether it was by donating an item, registering, or bidding. Your support means so much to us.

I am so excited to see you all in Jacksonville. Our Convention Committee is working extremely hard to put together another outstanding lineup of sessions. I am not sure which one I am the most excited about at this point. I always feel like if I choose a favorite session at this point

or even after the convention, it's like choosing which of my kids I like more. I am also looking for reconnecting with our members, meeting new members, and seeing the faces and hearing the voices behind all of our Zoom personalities this summer.

Who's got spirit? We do! The ACB Next Generation Allstars are gearing up for another amazing year. We will be walking into a brighter future this summer, and you are invited to join our team. Even if you are not able to join the physical walk in Jacksonville, you can still play a vital role in this fundraiser. Be sure to watch our email list for more information and our Neighborhood Facebook group for some engagement posts.

I am so excited that we will be hosting our very first Candidates' Forum. This will be an excellent opportunity to get to know the candidate's seeking election for both the ACB Board of Directors and ACB Board of Publications. It is so important for our members to get to know the future leaders of ACB, and I believe this will be a great start.

I am looking forward to spending an amazing summer with my NextGen Framily! Bring on the hugs, the smiles, the laughs, the handshakes, the connections, and most importantly, the joy. I want to wish all of our members a joy-filled summer full of warmth and good times!

Warmest regards,
Amanda Selm
President, ACB Next Generation

Auction Recap

by The Fundraising Committee

Happy spring, ACB Next Generation. The Fundraising Committee would like to extend our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you who donated to, attended, and participated in this year's second-annual ACB Next Generation "Spring into Auction" event on Sunday, April 7, 2024.

Your overwhelming support and generous bids made the event a tremendous success. Thanks to all of you, we made over \$6,000 for ACB Next Generation. It was truly heartwarming to see the community come together in support of our mission and vision. Your contributions will go a long way in helping us continue our efforts to empower and uplift the next generation of leaders within the ACB community.

Whether you donated, or you were there to bid on auction items, offered your encouragement, or simply lent your presence to the occasion, your involvement made a significant impact. We are incredibly grateful for your continued support and commitment to our cause.

Thank you once again for your unwavering dedication and generosity. We look forward to continuing our journey together and creating a brighter future for all. Stay tuned for more information about our City Pop fundraiser from June 3-9, Concessions for Convention!

2024 Durward K. McDaniel First-Timer Winner in ACB NextGen

We would like to congratulate ACB NextGen's own Cassie Trosper! She is the recipient of the 2024 DKM First-Timer Award from the West.

If you have been in our affiliate for the past three years, you most likely know Cassie and how hard she has worked within our affiliate and the Oregon Council of the Blind. This is Cassie's third year serving as co-chair of our Convention Committee. She has previously served as Secretary on our Board of Directors and as our Programs

Committee co-chair. In addition, she is the newest President of Veterans of ACB.

Congratulations, Cassie!!! We are all so proud of you!!!
Read Cassie's full bio below, courtesy of the DKM Committee.

Cassie Trosper, of North Bend, Oregon, is our 2024 DKM First-Timer from the West. Her willingness to serve has led her to various committees and leadership positions. She is currently Secretary of the Southwestern Chapter of ACB of Oregon, Secretary of ACB of Oregon, President of Veterans of ACB, and Board Director of Council of Citizens with Low Vision International and previously Secretary of ACB Next Generation. As a member of the ACB Mental Health and Wellness Committee, she helped to plan national convention programming.

This U.S. Army veteran is active in her local Am Vets Post with fundraising and event planning. She volunteers at her daughter's elementary school assisting students with their reading fluency and comprehension.

Within her local ACBO chapter, she works with the "Knit Wits" group to provide warmth and caring with hats and scarves to people in her community.

City Pop Fundraiser: Concessions for Convention

By The Fundraising Committee

With the ACB Conference and Convention nearing, the Fundraising Committee is excited to offer up its next fundraising event. And this one is pretty tasty!

From June 3-9, 2024, we will be holding our first-ever fundraiser through City Pop. This platform offers a variety of popcorn, candy, cookies, and plenty of other goodies to keep your appetite at bay during the virtual portion of the convention later in June and the hybrid portion in Jacksonville and virtually. Below is the fundraising link which will also be sent out again via the ACB Next Generation email lists and social media platforms.

https://citypopfundraising.com/collections/citypop-snacks?bg_ref=lwQu1yojOD

Keep in mind that the fundraiser opens on June 3 and ends on June 9. ACB Next Generation will receive 50% of the sales made during this event. There is also a bonus if we reach a certain amount.

Happy shopping and snacking

2024 ACB Next Generation Midyear Meeting

by Amanda Selm

We would like to invite you to attend a special midyear membership meeting to be held on Monday, June 3, 2024 at 8 p.m. Eastern, 5 p.m. Pacific.

This meeting will serve as an opportunity to provide a midyear update, recognize the hard work of our board and committees, and get everyone geared up for the ACB Conference and Convention. This year, we'll also be discussing and voting on a few amendments to the constitution we have received.

Be on the lookout for the Zoom information. We hope to see you there!

2024 Candidates Forum Announcement

by Amanda Selm

ACB Next Generation is thrilled to be hosting its first-ever Candidates' Forum. We are inviting candidates seeking positions on the ACB Board of Directors and ACB's Board of Publications.

The event will be held on Thursday, June 20, 2024 at 8 p.m. Eastern, 5 p.m. Pacific. It is very important for the younger members of ACB to get to know ACB leaders. This will be a wonderful opportunity to do just that.

Prior to the event, all current NextGen Members can take advantage of a special membership perk. NextGen Members will be the only individuals allowed to submit potential questions to be asked during the Candidates' Forum. Due to the number of positions up for election this year and the timeframe allotted for this event, no questions from the audience will be taken during the event.

We encourage you to watch our social media platforms and email lists for more details as the event gets closer.

2024 ACB Conference and Convention Preview

The 2024 American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention will be held July 5th through July 12th at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel located in Jacksonville, FL. Virtual components will be held via Zoom June 24 through July 12.

- The opening general session will be on Sunday evening, July 7th.
- Our banquet will be held on Thursday night, July 11.
- The exhibit hall will open on Sunday, July 7 and close on Wednesday, July 10th.

ACB is pleased to be collaborating with the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) with a joint opening general session. There will be combined programming sessions, exhibit hall, and additional opportunities.

Registration

Convention pre-registration opens May 13 for members, May 20 for non-members, and closes June 17.

Registration cost for members is \$45 and \$50 for non-members.

Hotel Reservations

The Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel is located at 225 E Coastline Dr in Jacksonville, FL. The standard room rate at the Hyatt is \$99 (single or double occupancy), \$142 (triple occupancy) and, \$149 (quadruple occupancy). The cost of a king room is \$109.00 per night with very limited availability. Room tax is 14.64%. Upon check-in a charge of \$40.00 per night for incidentals will be charged to your credit or debit card. To ensure you receive the convention

rate you must make your reservations prior to June 14, 2024.

For online reservations, visit:

<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/JAXRJ/G-ACOB>

For phone reservations, call: (800) 233-1234 and use code g-acob

Travel to Jacksonville

The Jacksonville airport (airport code JAX) is 15 miles from the hotel. Uber or Lyft will cost around \$25.00 from the airport to the hotel, a taxi is about \$10.00 higher.

Jacksonville is also served by Greyhound and Amtrak.

Visit <https://acbconvention.org/> for additional details.

Staying in Touch

Once again, this year the conference and convention announce list will be filled with information. To subscribe to the list, send a blank e-mail

to acbconvention+subscribe@acblists.org. If you received updates for the 2023 convention you do not need to subscribe to the list. For any convention-related questions, please contact Janet Dickelman, convention chair, at (651) 428-5059 or via e-mail at janet.dickelman@gmail.com.

Source: <https://acbconvention.org/>

2024 ACB Next Generation Convention Programming

by The Convention Committee

It's that time of year again! The 2024 ACB Conference and Convention is barreling toward us at a crazy pace. This year's convention theme is "Winds of Change." So many awesome programs are coming together nicely, and your ACB Next Generation Convention Committee is excited to share a quick glimpse into our planning world for this year's convention programming.

P.R.E.P for Successful Networking

Virtual: Thursday June 27, 2024 from 5:00-6:15 PM ET
Come join Chris Peterson, Swatha Nandhakumar, and Dianna Leonard as they help us ready ourselves for any networking event. They'll guide us through an interactive P.R.E.P session to learn how to plan, research, navigate an event, and pursue leads. Then join us at our in-person event on July 6th to practice what you've P.R.E.P'd, where various affiliate and ACB committee members will be in attendance to network with.

Match Wits with Next Gen and the Boomers

Virtual: Friday, June 28 from 5:30-6:45 PM ET

AAVL and Next Gen members are facing off. Trivia questions will cross generations as we try to stump each others' knowledge of the eras. Come join the fun -- even if you aren't a member of either group yet. Smirks to laughter are mandatory! Some will be pretty easy and some will break your brain.

Exploring New Worlds through Sensory Games

Virtual: Saturday June 29, 2024 from 2:00-3:15 PM ET

Whether you like audio or video games, this program is for you! Come learn how people with blindness and visual impairment create and play these accessible games: Brock The Investigator, The Last of Us, and Knight Manager. Join us for game demonstrations and lively discussion about present and future audio/video games.

Convention Pep Rally with ACB Next Generation and ACB Students

Virtual: Saturday June 29, 2024 from 5:00-6:15 PM ET

Who's got spirit? We do! Let's get fired up for the 2024 ACB Conference and Convention. Join ACB Next Generation and ACB Students for our annual Convention Pep Rally, where we'll party where the sun shines bright. Coach Kenneth makes a repeat appearance along with his

special guests, Leslie Spoone and Koni Sims, who will get us up and groovin'. Enjoy meeting new friends, and learn about all our convention events. Bring your favorite snacks and get ready to cheer, 2024 will be a great year!

Burning the Candle at Both Ends

Hybrid: Saturday July 6, 2024 from 2:30-3:45 PM ET

Do you feel like you're stretched too thin? Are things falling through the cracks and you don't know where to turn? Join us as we learn from the experiences of Greg Lindberg, Koni Sims, and John McCann how they manage and balance their personal and professional responsibilities.

Network Yourself for Success

In Person: Saturday July 6, 2024 from 4:00-5:15 PM ET

In conjunction with our June 2th P.R.E.P for Successful Networking program, we are pleased to host an in person networking event where you can practice what you've P.R.E.P'd. Come mingle with members of the ACB Employment Committee, ACB Government Employees, American Association of Blind Teachers, American Association of Visually Impaired Attorneys, Independent Visually Impaired Entrepreneurs (IVIE), and Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America (RSVA) among others and

join us for an evening of creating new connections. All are welcome, whether you attended the virtual event or not.

Discover, Connect, Thrive: Building Brighter Tomorrows

In Person: Sunday July 7, 2024 from 2:30-3:45 PM ET

Juggling essential tasks such as managing finances, whipping up quick meals, and fostering social connections can feel like an uphill battle. Accessible tools and strategies can make these challenges manageable and seamless. Don't let these roadblocks define your path; learn how to define your own path. Join Hindley Williams, Edward Shaham, and Rachel Pavone, who will offer tools and strategies to help you build and execute a future in which you can thrive. This is your chance to step out of the shadows of uncertainty and into a life where financial independence, health, and community are within your grasp.

Discovering Emotional Intelligence: How to Develop It, Hone It, and Practice It

Hybrid: Monday July 8, 2024 from 4:00-5:15 PM ET

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. This session is a discussion about what emotional intelligence is, how

we apply it, and how it influences our communication styles.

After-Hours Socials

Virtual: TBD

We will have a few prescheduled evenings during convention week where we host our After-Hours Socials via Zoom. These will not be a part of the convention programming, so watch for the announcements on the ACB Next Generation email list and social media platforms.

Financial Assistance to Attend the ACB Conference and Convention

by Matt Selm and Shane Aguilera, Membership Committee Co-Chairs

Are you ready for the biggest event of the year? The ACB Conference and Convention is coming up soon, and you don't want to miss it! Pre-registration opens on May 13 and runs through June 17, so mark your calendars and get ready to join us for an amazing experience.

The convention will be hybrid, meaning you can choose to attend virtually or in person. The convention dates are

June 24 to July 1 (fully virtual) and July 5 to July 12 (hybrid). Registration is only \$40 for ACB members and \$55 for non-ACB members.

But wait, there's more! ACB Next Generation is thrilled to offer financial assistance for 14 lucky members to attend the 2024 ACB Conference and Convention. We know that some state affiliates also provide financial assistance to their members, and we encourage you to check with your state affiliate first to see if they have such an opportunity. You can find your state affiliate information at <https://acb.org/state-affiliates>.

If you still need financial assistance, ACB Next Generation will cover the \$40 convention registration fee for 14 people who register first. All you have to do is send a copy of your receipt to treasurer@acbnextgeneration.org and to membership@acbnextgeneration.org after you register. Please note that we will reimburse you after the convention in August and only after we receive a testimonial about your convention experience. This reimbursement does not include the \$10 registration fee for ACB Next Generation, which we highly recommend you cover to have a chance to win some of our cool door prizes.

What's the catch? There is none! We just ask that you are a current paid member of ACB Next Generation for 2024 and that you share your experiences with us about the convention. You will be asked to participate in an interview about your experience as a guest on our Next Up with NextGen Podcast or to contribute your thoughts in writing for our ACB NextGen blog. Finally, we ask for you to attend and actively participate in at least one ACB Next Generation event to be reimbursed.

We can't wait to see you at the convention!

ACB Convention Survival Guide

by Hindley Williams

Whether the 2024 ACB Conference and Convention will be your first convention or you have been attending convention since the beginning of time, we hope these tips and tricks will help you get as much out of our time in Jacksonville as possible!

Set Your Schedule

There is always a ton going on at convention, from catching up with old friends, to attending sessions, to trying not to spend too much money in the exhibit hall.

Setting a schedule before you leave for convention will help you customize your experience. Of course, one of the greatest parts of convention is the spontaneity of it, but setting your schedule in advance will help you be sure to hit your high-priority musts.

Pack Comfortable Shoes

Even if you choose to stay in the hotel and not go on any tours, convention requires a ton of walking. You'll be feeling it badly by day three if comfortable shoes aren't on your packing list!

Pack Clothing for Hot and Chilly Weather

Florida is hotter than hot in the summer, but even so, air-conditioned hotels have a chill which reaches deep. Pack clothing for Florida's intense heat and for the cold temps you will surely feel during sessions.

Bring Sun Protection

That Florida sun is fierce, and rumor has it the hotel is equipped with a rooftop pool, not to mention all the other possible outside activities you may find yourself enjoying. Don't forget to pack your sunscreen, trusty wide-brimmed hat, or whatever your sun protection of choice happens to be.

Ensure Extra Space

Whether you bring an empty bag or pack your suitcase with extra room in mind, you never know what awesome items you will purchase or freebies you will get at convention. Ensure some extra space while packing so you have enough space to bring your spoils home with you.

Buy Groceries

Costs of restaurants can certainly add up, but you can ease the cost burden of eating away from home by purchasing a small load of groceries when you first arrive in Jacksonville. Having protein bars, water bottles, filling snacks, and the provisions to make sandwiches on hand can help you cut down your food bill.

Take a Break

With so many friends to see, sessions to attend, and vendors to check out, convention can be overwhelming at times, even for the most social and energized among us. Remember to take quiet breaks in your hotel room or outside the hotel if you need them.

Get excited! We hope to see you in Jacksonville!

ACB Next Generation at the 2024 Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk

by Amanda Selm

It's time to get up and get moving for the 2024 ACB Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk. Pull out your favorite pair of shoes and get ready to show your love for ACB Next Generation. This year's theme is "X," and we are challenging you, our members, to "step up to the plate to help support our affiliate. This is how we grow our membership.

ACB's goal is \$63,000. Our goal is \$1,000 with 50% of what we raise going to ACB, and 50% coming back to us.

ACB Next Generation believes in empowering our members to achieve their Allstar potential. We help our members become passionate leaders, achieve their goals, and give them the opportunity to shine.

The funds raised from this event will support initiatives like assisting our members to attend ACB events, such as the DC Leadership Conference and the ACB Conference and Convention.

Register or donate today by visiting our NextGen Allstar team page. Everyone who registers and/or donates will be entered to win door prizes. We will recognize those who join our team and/or donate each week in our Facebook Group, in our members-only ACB Next Generation Messenger Lounge, and on our Next Generation email list. If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach out to us at fundraising@acbnextgeneration.org.

Here is the link to our team's page:

<https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E144393&id=93&cfid=29>

You're Invited: 2024 Committee Showcase

Are you looking for your niche in ACB Next Generation? Are you wanting to step outside your comfort zone, learn new skills, and find unique ways to support this affiliate?

The ACB Next Generation board and committee chairs invite you to the 2024 committee showcase. Committee chairs will provide an overview of their committees and present examples of the exciting work they do to help the affiliate thrive. There will also be opportunities to ask questions and learn more about each committee.

As opposed to previous years, the Committee Showcase will be held on one night this year on Wednesday, August 7, 2024 at 8 p.m. ET. Be on the lookout for more details and the Zoom info for this session.

Cosmic Committee Corner: Membership Committee

The Membership Committee of ACB Next Generation plays a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing the organization's vibrant community. This committee is responsible for developing and recommending strategies to not only retain, but also increase membership. A key task includes maintaining an up-to-date member database, ensuring that all membership details are accurate and current. This is vital for keeping the members informed and engaged with the organization's activities and benefits.

Additionally, the Membership Committee handles the distribution of member renewal notices, ensuring that the membership remains active and that members are reminded of their renewal dates in a timely manner. The committee also facilitates the implementation of various membership perks. These perks include exclusive access

to the Facebook Messenger lounge and a specialized group on Clubhouse, providing platforms for members to connect, share experiences, and discuss topics of interest.

By keeping membership details organized and helping to manage these unique member benefits, the Membership Committee ensures that ACB Next Generation members enjoy a rich and rewarding experience, fostering a sense of belonging and community within the organization. This committee's efforts are essential for the growth and sustainability of the ACB Next Generation, enabling it to continue its advocacy and support for persons who are blind or visually impaired in the 18-to-40 demographic and beyond.

Life Membership Update

We are thrilled to now accept life membership for our esteemed organization. Life membership is an honor bestowed upon individuals who wholeheartedly support the mission and goals of ACB Next Generation. We believe that life membership is a testament to your commitment and dedication to our community. As we continue to grow and advocate for the blind and visually

impaired, we invite you to consider becoming a life member for a one-time donation of \$150.

Life members will enjoy all the rights and privileges granted to our regular "at large" members. However, members aged forty (40) years or older will retain the rights of supporting members.

Once conferred, a life member no longer has any dues obligation to ACB Next Generation. This status, however, does not affect the right of any ACB Next Generation affiliate to assess additional annual dues for life members to support their specific initiatives.

ACB Next Generation will remit annual dues to the American Council of the Blind (ACB) as applicable, ensuring compliance with the ACB constitution and/or bylaws.

You can become a life member by completing the membership application located at [Membership – ACB Next Generation - acbnextgeneration.org/](https://www.acbnextgeneration.org/)

Thank you for being an integral part of ACB Next Generation!

KCBNG Update

by Joey Couch

We hope everyone is doing well. We are at the start of derby season here in Kentucky, which usually starts out with the air show called Thunder Over Louisville. From then through the Kentucky Derby, which is the first Saturday in May, there are numerous activities and different events going on all around the city.

The calls we have done over the past couple of months have included education on the legislative imperatives for the DC Leadership Conference and a great call on audio description. As usual, anytime anyone would like to participate in any of our calls, information will be posted to the ACB Next Generation main email list, and everyone is welcome. Our calls are usually held on the 4th Thursday of the month at 8 p.m. ET unless otherwise stated in the event posting.

Take care, everyone, and I hope you have a wonderful start to spring.

Blog and Podcast Roundup

In addition to publishing the NextGen Insight, the Publications Committee also produces blog posts and the Next Up with NextGen podcast. Below is a roundup of recent blog and podcast content.

Blog Posts

Passion Project Portal: Lindsey LaVere (by Hindley Williams):

<https://acbnextgeneration.org/2024/02/26/passion-project-portal-lindsey-lavere-by-hindley-williams/>

What Are You Reading, and How Are You Reading It? (by Hindley Williams):

<https://acbnextgeneration.org/2024/03/11/what-are-you-reading-and-how-are-you-reading-it-by-hindley-williams/>

Next Up with NextGen Podcast

AI Tools and Their Accessibility for Blind and Low Vision Users:

<https://acbnextgeneration.org/2024/04/04/ai-tools-and-their-accessibility-for-blind-and-low-vision-users/>

Navigating Paratransit with Rideshare Services:

<https://acbnextgeneration.org/2024/02/11/navigating-paratransit-with-rideshare-services/>

Finding My Way at CSUN: Tech Tools for Accessible Travel

by Michael Babcock

This year, I attended the CSUN Assistive Technology Conference in southern California for the first time. Held in mid-March, CSUN is a premier event for those interested in accessibility solutions, and typically has an attendance rate of over 3,000 individuals.

Several apps made my travel experience smoother, especially when navigating unfamiliar locations. While some apps could get me most of the way, the final stretch often proved challenging. AIRA, a visual assistance app that connects users who are blind or visually impaired with live, professional agents, proved invaluable in these situations. Many large airports are now AIRA access locations, meaning you can connect with an agent without using your minutes! Another benefit was that AIRA agents often had a map of the Airport to help me quickly navigate.

having AIRA in my pocket provided on-demand assistance.

The conference itself offered an interesting navigation tool called Good Maps, which is currently limited to select locations. This app allows iPhone users to navigate indoor spaces using captured images. To use Good Maps, simply open the app, select your destination, and slowly pan your phone left and right to capture your surroundings. Once it is able to determine your current location, it provides feedback. For example, “walk 20 feet forward,” and “turn slight right.” While impressive when it worked, the app's responsiveness could be improved. Imagine if the entire CSUN exhibitor hall had been mapped with Good Maps! It would have allowed attendees with visual impairments to independently explore booths and find the resources they were looking for.

For transportation between the airport and hotel, Uber was my go-to app. Not only was the experience itself hassle-free, but it also allowed me to explore other nearby locations independently. If you haven't tried Uber and it's available in your area, I highly recommend downloading it for future trips.

These are just a few of the tech tools that made my first CSUN experience enjoyable and successful. As the

conference celebrates its 60th anniversary next year, I hope many will join us there! The conference itself offered a wealth of information on the latest advancements in assistive technology, and I'm excited to see what the future holds for apps like AIRA and Good Maps.

Autonomous Vehicles – So Much More Than a Cool Date Night Notion

Part 2 – Are AVs Safe and Accessible? And When Do We Get Ours?

by Ron Brooks

Ron Brooks lives in Phoenix, is a long-time member of the ACB, and a 30-year veteran of the public transit industry where he is focused on making bus, rail, paratransit and other services accessible and equitable for people with disabilities. As a believer in the power of emerging technologies to transform lives, Ron regularly writes and presents on the potential of autonomous vehicle technologies. To learn more, find him on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ron-brooks-066b174/>.

In Part 1 of this two-part series on Autonomous Vehicles (AV's for short), we defined the term "autonomous vehicle" and shared some of the potential ways transit agencies

and providers may put them to use. But are they safe? And what about accessibility? And if we can get them going, when are they going to be more widely available? This second and final installment focuses on these three critical questions.

What About Accessibility?

Accessibility is a critical area of concern for everyone involved at every level of the autonomous vehicle industry, and especially for those manufacturers and service providers who wish to serve the public transit industry. In 2020, the U.S. Department of Transportation invited AV manufacturers, service providers, researchers, and other interested parties to compete in an Innovative Design Challenge focused on creating solutions to accessibility challenges posed by AV technology. Participating research teams focused on everything from wayfinding to and from the vehicles, to wheelchair securement solutions, and approaches for assisting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to use Avs safely. Ultimately, the Department of Transportation awarded ten semi-finalist prizes to encourage additional research, and larger grants for each of three finalists. In addition to the AV Innovative Design Challenge, the Department of Transportation hosted a four-part community forum where researchers, advocates, manufacturers, service providers

and other stakeholders identified and discussed accessibility challenges and potential solutions.

These efforts have been encouraging to watch, but the proof is in the pudding, and as of this writing, the level of accessibility of Avs is uneven.

- Vehicles are relatively accessible for people who can use a standard sedan or SUV, but some customer-facing vehicle controls (including in-car entertainment and climate control) are not entirely accessible for blind/low vision (B/LV) passengers. And if a customer requires a wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV), few, if any, of the manufacturers are able to offer a vehicle that fully meet ADA vehicle accessibility requirements.
- Mobile apps used to summon AV-provided rideshare services like Waymo are generally good, but they do not offer all of the functionality that is available through the in-car controls.
- In general, navigating to and from the car using the app-based guidance can be challenging for blind/low vision (B/LV) people. Of these two navigational tasks, finding the vehicle is the easier of the two because AV service providers can give the customer the ability to honk the vehicle's horn, flash the lights, play music to serve as a

directional indicator, or take some other action that identifies the vehicle's location from a distance. AV providers have incorporated some basic navigational guidance for finding destinations into their mobile apps, but these tools need refinement.

Although AV vehicle and service accessibility is evolving, there are other encouraging signs. Many of the major AV manufacturers and service providers either have built, or are working to create, disability community advisory boards who can be enlisted to discuss and advise on accessibility-related questions and concerns. In addition, the AV industry has continued its efforts to include people with disabilities in AV vehicle and service product assessments and pilot projects. These efforts are creating many opportunities for the AV industry to incorporate community perspectives into their products and services. It is also helping to underscore the importance of launching these AV technologies with accessibility built-in, or at least factored into vehicle and service designs where possible.

One challenge to accessibility that cannot be easily resolved is the race to implementation. AV manufacturers and service providers are in a race against time and each other to introduce a viable product, and whoever gets there first will have a clear and short-term advantage in the marketplace. As a result, there is a tendency to

sacrifice more difficult aspects of a new product or service in favor of launching a “Minimum Viable Product” (MVP) as quickly as possible. Given that human-powered vehicles are largely inaccessible, the replacement of this technology with an accessible AV technology, while desirable, is not seen as essential - at least not on day one. This attitude will continue to be a challenge, and it’s one that community leaders will need to address at every turn in this ongoing journey from concept to a commercially viable AV product.

But Are These Things Safe?

It’s a great question, and the answer depends on your frame of reference. AV technology is evolving, and it will get better. There have been accidents and incidents involving AV’s, and there have been injuries and fatalities. On the other hand, the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 94% of all vehicle collisions are caused, at least in part, by human error. Thus, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that by eliminating human drivers, as many as 19 out of 20 car accidents could be eliminated or at least minimized.

Safety statistics are hard to come by, but a 2023 article from Ars Technica, [“Are Self-Driving Cars Already Safer Than Human Drivers,”](https://arstechnica.com/cars/2023/09/are-self-driving-cars-already-safer-than-human-drivers/)

[\(https://arstechnica.com/cars/2023/09/are-self-driving-](https://arstechnica.com/cars/2023/09/are-self-driving-cars-already-safer-than-human-drivers/)

[cars-already-safer-than-human-drivers/](#)) the author uses crash data and accident reports that Waymo and Cruise provided to regulators in the locations where they operate, including Phoenix and San Francisco. Based on this data, the two providers (taken together) operated approximately 60,000 miles between accidents (that's about one accident per five years of human driving), and most of the accidents were determined to be caused by errors made by the drivers of the other vehicles. There were differences between the relative safety performance of the two competing companies, so the article is worth a look. But here's the bottom line on safety. AV's are not yet perfect, but their performance in the area of safety is very promising.

And What If Something Happens?

No technology is perfect, and AV's are no exception. Cars break down. Passengers experience health emergencies. And as discussed above, accidents sometimes happen. So, the logical next question is, "Then What?"

Within a day or two of taking our first trip, my wife Lisa and I decided to meet our kids for dinner at a nearby restaurant. I summoned a Waymo, and when it arrived, my adult son took the front seat, and my wife and I the backseat. Once we were all buckled in, I hit the "Start Ride" button on the Waymo One mobile app, and the

vehicle began to roll. Almost immediately, the pleasant female-sounding Waymo voice announced that we were being contacted by the Waymo Control Center. As soon as they were on the line, an agent advised us that one of our party was not wearing their seatbelt. This was news to me, both because we take seatbelts seriously, and because I was really taken aback by the fact that someone in a Control Center was contacting us in the car to raise the issue in the first place. It turns out that my wife had connected her seatbelt, but she had placed the shoulder strap behind her because she didn't like the way it lay across her collar bone. On another occasion, I was contacted because someone in the Control Center had a question about the placement of my guide dog on the floor in front of the front passenger seat. The placement was fine, but the agent wanted to make sure I was aware that the dog could not block the driver compartment which still exists because Waymo vehicles are still subject to motor vehicle regulations that require passenger cars to have a steering wheel.

At first, I was a little taken aback by what felt like intrusions. What I came to understand is that there is a large Control Center where trained agents monitor every trip taken on the Waymo platform. They're not watching us in the vehicle, but they do monitor people as they enter and exit the vehicle - a time when passengers are most

susceptible to trips, slips and falls. And of course, they also check for adherence to the company's mandatory seatbelt policy. At other times, agents are monitoring vehicle locations and performance and can intervene at any time a vehicle appears to be off course or not performing as expected. And I can also call them any time I have a need.

Waymo is not the only AV provider with a Control Center. Cruise employees monitor their services in a similar manner, and AV services operating shuttle service are also monitored by human beings at all time. Another company, Guidant, uses technology called Tele-Operations to remotely control their AV shuttles if and when the need arises.

Bottom line: these vehicles are autonomous, but passengers are never truly alone, and this strikes me as a very good thing.

Conclusion – What's Next?

Aside from the AV manufacturers and service providers, who are keeping their own counsel, there is no way to know precisely where AV's will launch and when. But there is one thing that is absolutely certain. AV's will become more and more prevalent in the years and decades to come. Currently, most AV manufacturers and

service providers are operating at SAE Level 4 autonomy, but according to an Autonomous Vehicle Fact Sheet from the Center for Sustainable Systems (<https://css.umich.edu/publications/factsheets/mobility/autonomous-vehicles-factsheet>), Level 5 autonomous vehicles should begin to hit the market by about 2030. From there, the rate of market penetration will depend on a combination of factors that are unknown, including vehicle pricing relative to competing vehicles, licensing and insurance requirements, safety and mechanical performance, and customer satisfaction. In the meantime, it is highly likely that the use of AV's for passenger transportation (including by rideshare providers and public transit) will increase as more and more AV projects launch and/or move from pilot to permanent. It is also possible that the overall AV marketplace may look very different from how the traditional human-operated vehicle marketplace looks today. For example, it is possible that converging trends of lower demand for personal automobiles by younger generations and the emergence of AV rideshare services such as Waymo and Cruise may prompt more people to skip on car ownership altogether. Only time will tell.

Want to Win a \$10 Gift Card?

This year, The Publications Committee is giving out a \$10 gift card to one lucky reader of each issue of the NextGen Insight newsletter! All you have to do is read it and answer the following two questions:

1. What was your favorite article in this issue of the Insight and why? Please explain with a thoughtful response (at least two sentences).
2. What type of content/article would you like to see in an upcoming issue of the NextGen Insight?

Please be specific with your answer as we want to ensure we are serving our readers with informative, useful, and interesting content.

Please email your responses to these two questions by Saturday, June 1 to publications@acbnextgeneration.org. One lucky winner will be selected and contacted with their prize. Happy reading and good luck!

Calendar of Events

Everyone is welcome to attend these events by accessing the Zoom mobile app, visiting the Zoom website at <https://zoom.us>, or calling (312) 626-6799, and entering the appropriate meeting ID and passcode.

You may sign up to receive reminders and Zoom details by subscribing to the ACB Next Generation email list. Please send a blank email to main+subscribe@acbnextgeneration.groups.io

In addition, many ACB Next Generation events are listed on the ACB Community Call schedule.

May 2024

- 21 – ACB Business Bootcamp – 8:30 p.m. ET
- 25 - Saturday Night Live Hangout – 7:00 p.m. ET
- 28 – ACB Business Bootcamp – 8:30 p.m. ET

June 2024

- 3 – ACB Next Generation Midyear Meeting – 8 p.m. ET
- 10 - ACB Next Generation Board Meeting – 8 p.m. ET
- 18 - Monthly Education Program – 8 p.m. ET
- 20 - Candidates' Forum – 8 p.m. ET
- 22 - Saturday Night Live Hangout – 7 p.m. ET

27-29 – ACB Conference and Convention Virtual Weekend

July 2024

5-12 – ACB Conference and Convention Hybrid Week

16 - Monthly Education Program – 8 p.m. ET

27 - Saturday Night Live Hangout – 7 p.m. ET

August 2024

7 - ACB Next Generation Committee Showcase – 8 p.m. ET

12 - ACB Next Generation Board Meeting – 8 p.m. ET

14 – NextGen 101 – 8 p.m. ET

15 - May NextGen Insight published

20 - Monthly Education Program - 8 p.m. ET

24 - Saturday Night Live Hangout - 7 p.m. ET

DISCLAIMER: The opinions expressed in the content of this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the opinions of ACB Next Generation as an organization.

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