

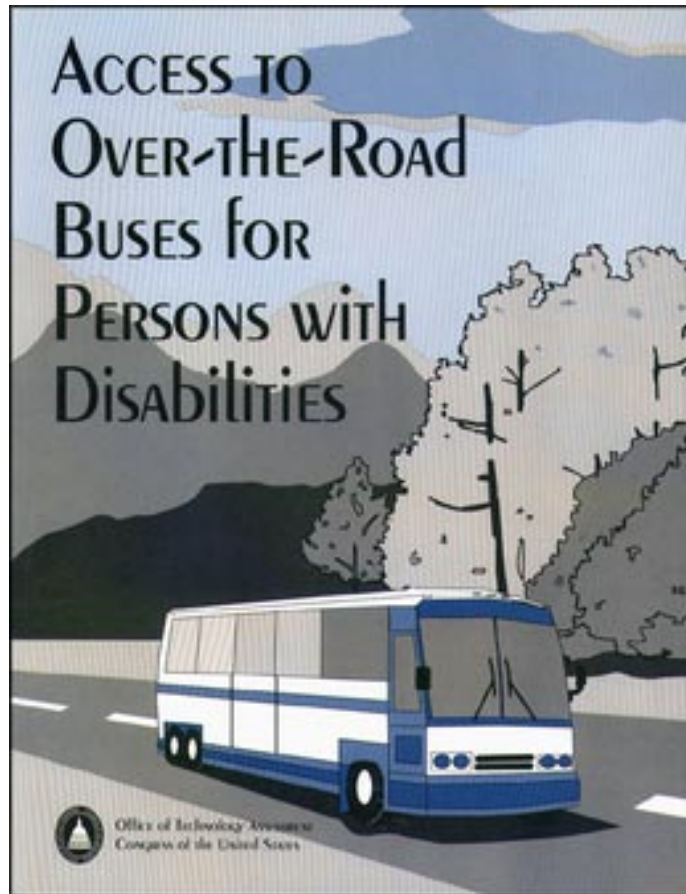
*Access to Over-the-Road Buses for Persons
With Disabilities*

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Foreword

As part of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Congress instructed the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) to analyze the complex issues of access for all persons to over-the-road buses (OTRBs)—buses with a high passenger deck that are commonly used in fixed-route intercity service, as well as for charter and tour trips.

OTRB transportation is an important element of the U.S. transportation system. Companies offering regularly scheduled service with these vehicles serve a portion of the population—rural residents and people with low incomes—with few other travel choices. At present, very little of this service is accessible for persons with disabilities.

The issue of ensuring access to OTRBs by persons with disabilities while maintaining adequate service is complicated, in large part because of the generally difficult financial circumstances facing much of the OTRB industry. OTA finds, however, that there are encouraging reasons to believe that accessibility can be achieved with little degradation of service.

First, technologies to assist passengers with mobility impairments onto OTRBs are available, and OTA anticipates that improved, lower cost technology will enter the market. In addition, allowing a phased implementation over the replacement cycles of vehicles will enable thoughtful, company-specific decisions on technology choices. The phased implementation will also permit members of the disability community to become familiar with the new equipment and practices, and to develop trust that this service will be provided.

This report is part of a process leading to regulations to be issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation. This process has included a review of a draft of this study by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (ATBCB). OTA thanks ATBCB for its prompt response, and thanks the members of the Advisory Panel as well as those who participated in study workshops, reviewed various drafts, or otherwise contributed. These groups provided valuable comments, suggestions, and information. However, their participation does not necessarily represent an endorsement of the contents of the report, for which OTA bears full responsibility.



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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the advisory panel members. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

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