

# Stakeholder Perspective: Travelers with Disabilities

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**4th Annual FAA National Civil Rights  
Training Conference for Airports, 9/16/2013**



# Open Doors Organization

- Chicago-based non-profit founded in 2000
- Mission—to create a society in which persons with disabilities have equal opportunities as consumers
- Primary Focus—Travel and Tourism



ODO Director Eric Lipp

# ODO Aviation Initiatives

- Airline and Airline Service Symposia
- Disability Awareness Training—at ACI Online Learning Center
- Initial and Refresh Training for Airline Complaints Resolution Officials (CROs)
- Aviation Access Certification Program—for airline service company employees—*new in 2013*

# ODO Aviation Initiatives/2

- Ground Handling Wheelchair Stowage Workshops
- Technological Solutions—ODO-designed belt loader device for wheelchairs
- Participation on airline advisory boards and Federal committees including TSA
- Consultative Services—Staff training, Videos, Accessibility Audits, etc.
- Consumer education/media outreach

# Universal Access in Airports Conference

- 2-day event held biennially since 2006
  - Open exchange of ideas and best practice on how to improve accessibility and customer service for air travelers with disabilities and seniors
  - Who attends—airports, airlines, service companies, aviation suppliers, disability organizations
- 5th UAIA will take place October 2014, Chicago O'Hare

# Airports—A Challenging Environment

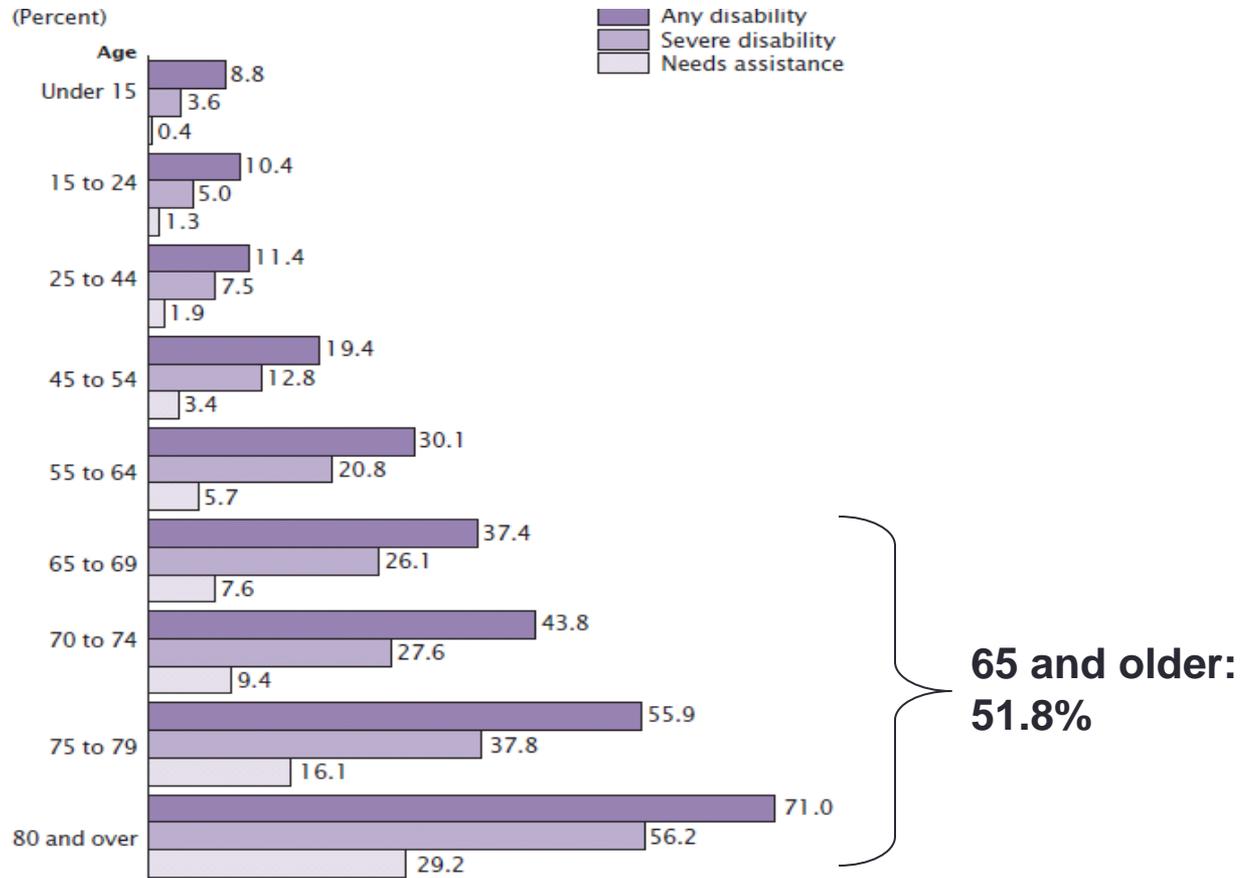
- Airports are complex environments with multiple points of arrival/departure via multiple modes of transportation
- Responsibility for serving passengers with disabilities is divided between the airport and multiple airlines and typically carried out by multiple airline service contractors
- Even responsibility for terminal design and signage may be divided between the airport and individual airlines

# ODO Research (2005)

- Four out of five travelers with disabilities (82%) experience obstacles at the airport
  - Physical (72%):
    - **Long distances to or between gates (63%)\***
    - **Difficulty finding my way (16%)\***
  - Service/Personnel Obstacles (69%):
    - **Long lines at the airport (48%)\***
    - **Difficulty getting assistance with baggage (23%)\***
    - Airport personnel's lack of awareness of services for travelers with disabilities (22%)
    - Difficulties with the Transportation Security Administration (22%)
  - Communication-related obstacles (27%)

**\*Main issues for older travelers (H. Wolfe)**

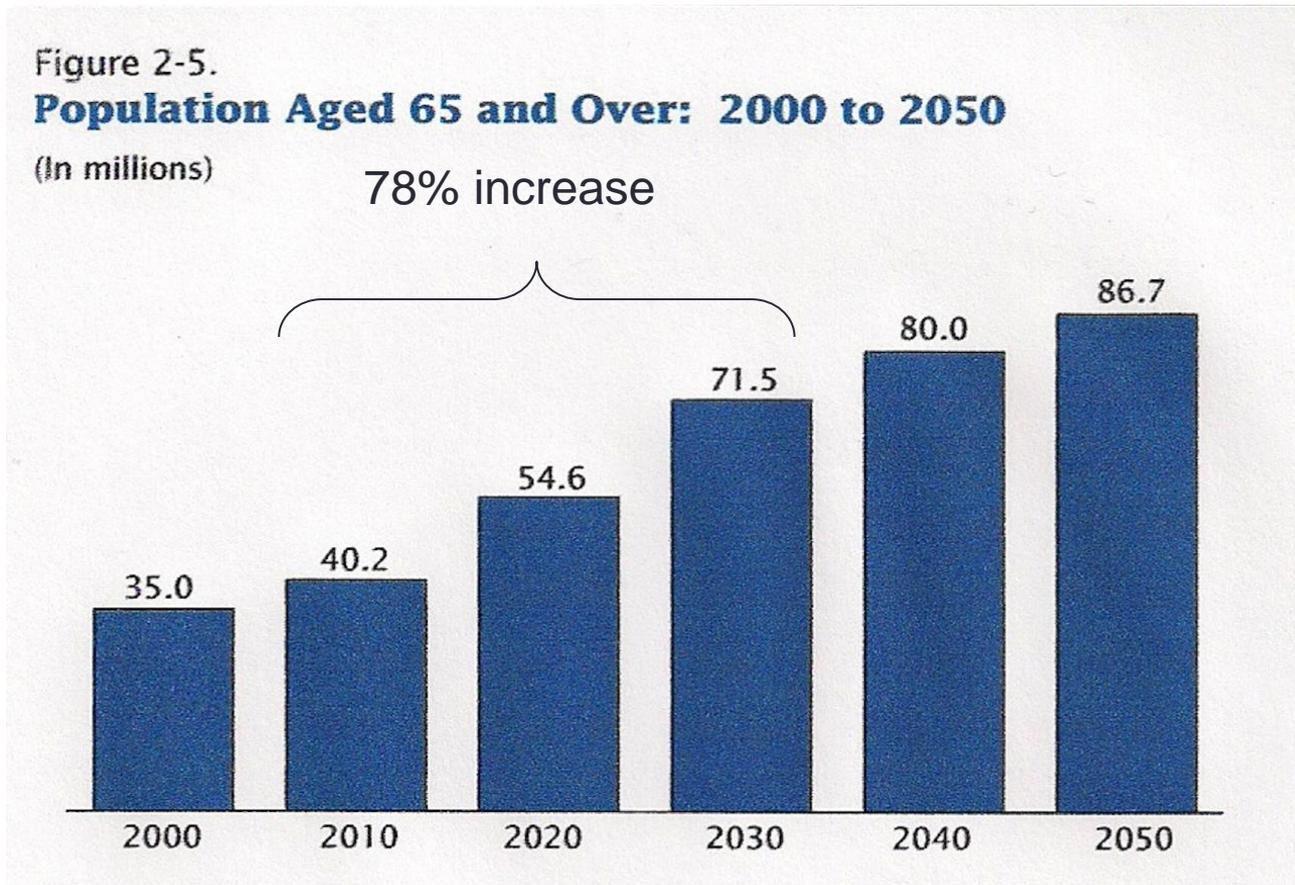
# Disability Prevalence by Age— U.S.



Note: The need for assistance with activities of daily living was not asked of children under 6 years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, June–September 2005.

# 65+ Projected Population Growth— U.S.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 65+ In The US: 2005

# Universal Design—The Way Forward?

- **Universal Design** is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design
- Given the rapid aging of our population, unless we design airports that allow travelers to function independently, service providers risk being overwhelmed by growing demand for one-on-one assistance
- UD is the low-to-no-cost business solution

# The FAA Now Advocates UD

**“As applied to the field of aviation, universal design is fundamental to the safe and efficient transportation of the flying public. In keeping with the concept of universal design, the overall philosophy of this document is to specify both the performance and design requirements that enable seamless and integrated transportation options for all passengers.”**

--FAA Advisory Circular 150/5220-21C  
"Aircraft Boarding Equipment"

# Examples of Universal Design

- Ramps and curb cuts
- Large, pass-through elevators
- Automatic doors
- Low-floor buses
- Multi-level sinks, drinking fountains and counters
- Seats with and without armrests
- Family restrooms with adult changing stations
- Wayfinding strategies using architectural features, destination zones, long sight lines, landmarks, tile patterns and textured flooring, color and lighting, maps, signage, etc.

# Specific Service Issues

1. Access to Information
  - Website content and accessibility
  - At the airport
  - Airline mobile apps for I-Phones
2. Service at terminal entrances
3. Curbside drop off/pick up by buses
4. Availability of seating
5. Service animals
6. Ground handling of wheelchairs
7. Emergency evacuation

# Questions?

For additional information:  
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# Thank You!

