

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Paul Twitchell
Director of Communications and Marketing
email: ptwitchell@mabcommunity.org | phone: 617-732-0264

Contact: Ahlea Isabella
Marketing and Communications Manager, Innovate@BU
email: aisabel@bu.edu | phone: 617-353-8702

**MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND INNOVATE@BU ANNOUNCE
COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGE FINALISTS**

Brookline, MA, (January 25, 2021) – In October 2019, The Massachusetts Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired (MABVI) and Boston University Innovate@BU announced a partnership to develop a \$10,000 challenge open to BU students and alumni to solve community transit problems that will benefit society at large—and particularly for seniors and the blind and low vision community. For the last year, students and alumni have been creating meaningful solutions with impact, learning to think like an entrepreneur, win funding, connect with experts, and mentors.

On Thursday, January 28, from 4:00-5:00 pm, the winning team will be announced in an event via Zoom. The event will be emceed by Bryan Gould, Director of Accessible Learning and Assessment Technologies for WGBH. The guest speaker will be Dr. Mona Minkara, an advocate for accessibility and representation for people with visual impairments in science. Dr. Minkara is a winner of the prestigious Holman Prize for her documentary series [Planes, Trains, and Canes](#), about navigating and access to public transportation systems from around the world. More information on the event can be found at <https://bit.ly/MABVIChallenge>.

The Finalists

Better Bus Stops

Renovating bus stops with unique tactile paving to provide a shoreline on the sidewalk to assist VIP in locating bus stops. The plan also includes installing high-contrast, tactile talking buttons at bus and above-ground T stops that dictate line, stop name, and travel direction.

Meeroo

A smartphone application that requires RFID tags, one mounted on a phone case and another located in each subway/bus station. After entering a destination, they can scan their phone at stations, and further visual/voice guidance is given to them.

Naviband

Naviband is a digital band that can be worn to assist individuals in navigating public transportation. The band incorporates GPS and voice navigation with machine learning, allowing customers to travel safely with confidence.

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION
for the
Blind and Visually Impaired

CONFIDENT LIVING WITH VISION LOSS

“We each have a role in creating a more inclusive space for everyone to live and work and thrive, said Sassy Outwater-Wright, Executive Director of MABVI. “We have the duty to ask tomorrow’s designers, engineers and social scientists to start thinking about that today and to start building smarter solutions. MABVI is proud to partner with BU to solve some of the most common problems facing older adults who are blind or have low vision. Accessibility in design today creates a more inclusive future.”

“Our students and alumni are no strangers to Boston’s public transportation challenges. We are thrilled that this collaboration will give our community the opportunity to view transportation challenges from another perspective and to use their expertise to build better, more accessible solutions for all.” said Gerry Fine, Executive Director of Innovate@BU.

About Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Founded in 1903, [Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) is one of the oldest social service organization in the country supporting adults and seniors who are blind or low vision. A division of MAB Community Services, Inc., MABVI is a leading provider of integrated medical, social, and rehabilitation services for adults and seniors with vision loss. MABVI empowers individuals and offers them the tools they need to accomplish their goals by helping to remove barriers and increasing access to services. MABVI partners with numerous medical, elder services, and community agencies to create high-impact, cost-effective services for over 1500 for blind and low vision people across the Commonwealth.

About the Boston University Innovate@BU

Boston University [Innovate@BU](#) is a University-wide initiative to enable all BU Terriers to become drivers of innovation in their own lives, careers, and communities. Through its physical home on campus, the BUild Lab IDG Capital Student Innovation Center, Innovate@BU provides experiential learning programs that foster an entrepreneurial mindset by teaching innovation, communication, and collaboration skills.

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