



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Ed Roberts Campus Starts Construction**

**Thursday, September 4, 2008 • 1:30 pm**

*Public invited to attend Groundbreaking event with former U.S. Transportation*

*Secretary Norman Mineta and Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates*

Ashby BART Station (Entry at Woolsey and Tremont), Berkeley

Photo opportunity: Groundbreaking to follow speakers (2:45pm)

Berkeley, CA – A unique, cutting edge building, designed to create an environment that is usable by individuals of all ages, with and without disabilities, is under construction in Berkeley.

The Ed Roberts Campus (ERC) will be the nation's first universally designed, transit oriented development serving people with disabilities. Located at a major transit hub, the building will offer state of the art accessibility along with direct connections to regional transit.

“Today is a great day for everyone involved in making the Ed Roberts Campus happen,” said Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who led the federal effort to help fund the ERC. “Now seniors and people with disabilities will enjoy the benefits of a center that is fully accessible by public transportation.”

The Campus' design is guided by the principles of Universal Design - the creation of environments that are equally usable by individuals of all abilities – and the project far exceeds the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Key design elements include the signature helical ramp that winds upward to the second floor, permitting easy access and safe evacuation in an emergency; seven-foot wide corridors that allow wheelchair users to easily pass one another; audio way-finding devices; and oversized elevators with specialized controls that will provide an essential vertical access point from BART to the ERC.

The ERC's location at the Ashby BART Station is central to its mission to make vital services and programs accessible via public transit. Seniors and people with disabilities are among the most transportation-disadvantaged populations in the country. Federal, state and local transportation agencies have generously funded the Campus because they recognize that the ERC is a major transit-oriented development that will result in greater utilization of public transit by the disabled and elderly.

Housed in the building will be many of the organizations that are pioneer organizations in the Independent Living Movement. These agencies offer a wide range of programs and direct services to the disability community from legal advocacy and job training to parenting support and



wheelchair sports. The ERC expects to serve 30,000 people annually throughout the greater Bay Area.

“Berkeley is the birthplace of the disability civil rights movement and I can think of no better place in the world to house such an important facility to serve this important community,” said Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates. Bates, an ardent supporter of the project, secured over \$9 million in local and regional funding last fall that effectively closed the funding gap and allowed the project to proceed towards construction. Mayor Bates has been a long-time champion of the disability rights movement, and as a State Assembly Member authored the legislation that provided permanent funding for California’s independent living centers that allowed for their expansion across the state.

The Ed Roberts Campus will house the offices of the seven disability service organizations that have collaborated to build the building: Bay Area Outreach & Recreation Program; Center for Accessible Technology; Center for Independent Living; Computer Technologies Program’ Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund’ Through the Looking Glass; and World Institute on Disability. The ERC plans to lease space to other mission compatible organizations such as the Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Project and the Berkeley office for the State Department of Rehabilitation.

“From the moment I heard about the Ed Roberts Campus, I knew it was an idea whose time has come,” said Mr. Norman Y. Mineta, former U.S. Secretary of Transportation, and Honorary Chair of the ERC’s Capital Campaign Committee. “To put these important organizations together at a transit hub in an accessible building is a practical solution for their many clients. I am proud to be associated with this national model for transit-oriented development.”

The Campus will provide fully accessible meeting rooms, a fitness center, a cafe, and a child development center. Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects designed the 86,000 square foot Campus. Cahill Contractors will build the facility, which is expected to open Spring 2010.

The Campus is a \$47.5 million public-private partnership with approximately 45% of its funds coming from the private sector and a mortgage paid by the partner organizations and other tenants, and 55% from government sources. The ERC honors the life of Ed V. Roberts, a man recognized as an early founder of the Independent Living Movement, who died in 1995.

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