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The most difficult part of the commute is to walk from our residential building to the bus station. So my parents — sometimes my grandfather — would walk us there as long as they have time.

Yin Tianyou



Scan the QR code to watch the episode.

The twin brothers have to rely on their mother to walk them out of their residential compound.

— would walk us there as long as they have time.”

The brothers live with their parents in a compound built in the late 1950s on Longwu Road. The compound doesn't have tactile paving, and a grocery store and a wet market in the compound make it even more difficult for the brothers.

“The passageways are quite narrow, and there are often cars parking here and there, not to mention trucks unloading in front of the wet market and the grocery store,” said Yin Jingjing, mother of the twins.

After leaving the compound, the brothers have to walk on the bicycle lane to the bus station because the sidewalk is occupied almost completely by shared bikes and trees.

“We generally feel safe but sometimes there are very fast mopeds delivering takeout,” said Tianyou. “The big boxes attached to the mopeds might graze our arms.”

When a family member is not with them, one of the brothers uses a stick while the other follows him with both hands on his shoulders. They said they don't much use the tactile paving on the street because it is often occupied and not well-connected.

However, sometimes obstacles on the roads, such as a tree, a pole or a streetside signboard, could be their guide. They would know where to turn when the stick bumps into an obstacle.

Waiting for the bus is another challenge for them. As 11 different buses stop at the Longwu Road-Fanghe Road Stop, the brothers have to ask the driver which bus it is.

“We could recognize some buses according to the sounds of opening their doors, but not all of them,” said Tianbao. “And if two buses arrive at the same time, we can usually only ask the driver of the first one, and the second one would be gone when we reach it. Once I waited at the stop for 40 minutes as I kept missing the bus. We hope that in the future there will be a station broadcast announcing when the buses arrive.”

Traffic difficulties are also encountered by people with other types of disabilities.

Qian Yudao, a human resources specialist in her 20s with physical disabilities, said she hadn't used a Metro line since she started to use a wheelchair in high school.

“The gap between the platform and the train car, for example, is a big challenge for me,” Qian said. “It's almost impossible for me to push the wheelchair into the car all on my own.”

The road condition is another problem. According to Qian, if she wants to go to a market near her home, she needs to traverse a long slope that is quite bumpy.

“The drop between sidewalks and streets is also a challenge,” she said. “Sometimes I have to detour for a long time to find a slope

so that I can get off the sidewalk and go across the street.”

But the disabled have found that some people are always helpful when they encounter difficulties along the way. Take Tianbao and Tianyou for example.

They can ride buses and Metro trains for free, and bus drivers will scan their offline venue code from a card that is hung on their neck. In the subway station, they go to the service center to get the code scanned again and then the staff open a special gate for them to get access.

“There are barrier-free elevators available in the subway stations, but we're used to going up and down the stairways,” said Tianyou. “The tactile paving in the station is very friendly so we can easily find our usual spot to get on and off the train, ensuring we won't be lost after we get off.”

Staff at Hinichijou Café, where the twins work, give them a helping hand as well. Before the kiosk opened, Hinichijou staff repeatedly guided the men to the bathroom in Times Square, the mall in front of which the kiosk stands, until they had learned the route by heart. Security guards in the mall also keep an eye on them and lend a hand if any emergency happens.

As for Qian, she feels that the city's barrier-free facilities are getting better.

“Now almost every building has a slope at the entrance for wheelchairs, and we have more



The Yin brothers climb the stairs together in a Metro station.

barrier-free buses than before,” she said. “Meanwhile, there are apps for the disabled so that we could know where barrier-free facilities are available. I feel that we're cared about.”

More change is expected to happen in the future. Shanghai Metro, the operating company of all local Metro lines, reported to the Shanghai People's Political Consultative Conference late last month that bridging plates will be used in Metro stations. If needed, staff in the station will place a plate between the platform and the train car for wheelchairs, baby carriages and seniors.

Experiments have been carried out in parts of Metro Line 3 stations and have been well received.

The company said that up to the end of this year, 60 percent of stations in the city will be equipped with bridging plates. Passengers also will be able to contact the station in advance for the service.