

## Accessibility Forum minutes - 25 October 2017

### Attendees

Isabel Liu	Transport Focus Board Member, Accessibility Forum chair
Michael Adlington	Rail Delivery Group
Jean Appleton	Royal National Institute of Blind People
Audrey Daft	Department of Work and Pensions
Olav Ernstzen	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Cttee
Sharon Forbes	Rail Delivery Group
Alison Franks	Department for Transport
Rosie Giles	Transport Focus
Fazilet Hadi	Royal National Institute of Blind People
Scott Hamilton	Office of Rail and Road
David Hanson	Department for Transport
Jeff Harvey	Transport for All
Emma Jolley	Systra
Kwame Kwesie	Department for Transport
Agata Pogodzick	Rail Safety and Standards Board
Jan Welsman	Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
John Welsman	Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
Philip Wilks	Transport Focus
Lewis Wingfield	Network Rail

## **Michael Adlington, Rail Delivery Group**

RDG's vision is for a more accessible, consistent and inclusive customer journey, by moving from policy-led to customer-centric strategies, working collaboratively with train companies and stakeholders, and engaging with disability advocacy groups.

Throughout 2017 RDG has been improving access to assistance and will continue to 2019:

- *January*: one freephone contact number for all operators
- *March*: better turn up and go arrangements
- *March/April*: clear information on National Rail Enquiries website about accessible toilet availability at stations
- *June*: national free text service to book assistance
- *November*: universal ramp to be introduced and automated display of on-train accessible toilet availability
- *September 2018*: a new simplified Passenger Assist service
- *January 2019*: technology unveiling to help passengers navigate around stations using visual and audio assistance
- *June 2019*: redesign of the Stations Made Easy database.

Five train companies (Merseyrail, London Overground, TfL Rail, Chiltern and c2c) are now part of the turn-up-and-go assistance pilot. It applies even from unstaffed stations. A charter will be sent to train companies to sign up to. The service is being advertised for the first time.

Inclusive journey experiences:

- Sharon Forbes has undertaken a number of journeys with wheelchair users and other passengers with cognitive impairments.

- Asking members of Whizz-Kidz (young people's wheelchair-using organisation), to design their ideal rail journey.

Olav Ernstzen (DPTAC) asked whether the destination stations would be contacted other than by telephone.

Further details are shown on the presentation slides.

### **Victoria Garcia, Brighton & Hove Buses**

The company has redesigned its vehicles to be more user-friendly and introduced other innovations to make travel easier and more reassured:

- lighter-coloured floors make the buses easier for dementia sufferers to use;
- standard fixed upright pole at the wheelchair space now replaced by pull-down version, which makes accessibility much easier;
- Helping-hand assistive information cards, black print on yellow background for improved visibility;
- Enhanced staff training in access matters;
- Wheelchair taxi guarantee: any wheelchair user who cannot board the bus will have a taxi provided free – very small cost to company but major reassurance to passengers;
- Scooter card and better driver training to recognise permitted size of scooters;
- Reduced-rate card for carers, even if travelling alone;
- Raising awareness with local charities and organisations;
- Producing accessible marketing material (e.g. large-print timetables);

- *Drama on the bus* – confidence for adults with learning disabilities/dementia; passengers write their own scenarios and then act them out on the bus
- One-to-one familiarisation with bus travel for those who find the prospect daunting.

Further details are shown on the presentation slides.

Fazilet Hadi (RNIB) asked if it was possible to track the number of previous non-users who now travel by bus.

## **Lewis Wingfield, Network Rail**

Lewis Wingfield gave background details on:

- Further route devolution
- System operator
- Diversity Impact Assessments
  - Ensure that project teams consider accessibility and inclusivity
  - Set out expected positive and negative impacts of a project
  - Mitigations explored and actions taken
  - Part of Governance for Railway Investment Projects and updated throughout the project's life cycle
- Future funding: in 2019-2024 (Control Period 6) = £47.9bn; enhancements examined case by case.
- *Railway for Everyone*: aim to include input from those who are not rail users.
- Will be responding to the Department for Transport's Accessibility Action Plan.

Further details are shown on the presentation slides.

## **Dr Scott Hamilton, Office of Rail and Road**

Dr Hamilton represented ORR following the departure of Harriet Gamper, who was thanked for her previous attendance at the forums and her steadfast work on access matters at ORR. Her replacement is David Kimball who will attend in future.

ORR's consumer role: key focus on Disabled People's Protection Policies (DPPPs). ORR's investigation of issues relating to these will be not only reactive but also proactive.

ORR's consumer team for the last year has worked on research projects on:

- the efficiency of current assistance schemes from the passenger perspective
- monitoring how well individual train companies perform

to identify strengths and weaknesses at all levels and to challenge behaviour or change practice as necessary. The depth and level of research has provided a solid evidence base.

A survey was undertaken of 1,000 passengers who consider that they need assistance to travel by rail into their knowledge of Passenger Assist or turn-up-and-go arrangements. A second survey looked at the experiences and preferences of 4,600 Passenger Assist users, which produced performance ratings for train and station operators. For a third survey, 65 people with varied assistance needs making 318 turn-up-and-go journeys.

ORR has defined four areas within its remit for improvements:

- Awareness amongst passengers of availability of schemes
- Reliability
- Staff attitude and training

- Accountability – enhancing ORR’s core data; greater use of primary research; stronger evidence for enforcement action

Fazilet Hadi (RNIB) enquired as to the action which passengers should take at unstaffed stations; use of the help point is recommended. She added that if failures were due to inadequate management, more effort should be put into reporting poorly-performing stations. Furthermore, it would be helpful if details about assistance were provided when Disabled Persons and Senior Railcards are issued.

Olav Ernstzen commented that some potential passengers are deterred from using the railway by concerns over possible assistance failure. He also queried how he can know how ORR is taking enforcement action. Also, it is unclear to which operator to complain in some circumstances.

Jean Appleton (RNIB) pointed out that assistance was unpredictable and thus unreliable.

John Welsman (Guide Dogs) asked if industrial relations may affect access provision.

Jeff Harvey (Transport for All) asked if the research on completed legs of journeys with booked assistance included Turn up and Go travel and whether it shows a difference in the percentage of completed journeys for booked versus Turn up and Go. Does the research distinguish a completed booked journey from a completed Turn up and Go journey?

Dr Hamilton explained that specific stations were being looked at where problems are known to occur. From January 2018 ORR will look at validating information supplied by operators which gives stronger grounds for enforcement action. An

industry seminar will be held in November to discuss this with train companies and also a stakeholder event.

More details are available in the presentation slides.

## **Graham Footer, Disabled Motorists UK**

DMUK is a completely independent charity to promote the welfare and personal mobility of disabled motorists. The organisation campaigns and provides assistance for newly disabled people wishing to drive. Membership is open to all and is represented by all ages, though mostly over 40, most of whom were born with a disability. Membership is roughly 55% male and 45% female. Only disabled members have voting rights.

Its areas of concern include pedestrianisation, parking, refuelling, smart motorways and poor access to public transport.

Its concerns about parking include: blue badge abuse; abuse of accessible parking bays; car-park access; confusion over payment provision; lack of enforcement and verbal abuse and threatening behaviour.

Thought needs to be given to the likely impact of autonomous vehicles on disabled driving. This would be a major boon, though little research has been done into disabled drivers and autonomous vehicles.

Jan Welsman (Guide Dogs) raised the issue of parking arrangements locally which disadvantaged disabled users.

Olav Ernstzen enquired how user-friendly were the roadside services to disabled motorists and was disappointed by the

response. This was echoed by John Welsman who cited examples of rescue vehicles refusing assistance dogs.

More details are available in the presentation slides.

## **Catherine Folca, Transport Focus**

Transport Focus's research project constitutes a wider commitment in this year's Work Plan to focus on the needs of transport users with a disability. Our aim is to understand the experiences of disabled drivers to represent their interest as disabled drivers form some 5% of the driving population (2 million).

We will consider:

- Willingness to use the Strategic Road Network (SRN)
- Confidence when using it
- Wish/need to travel with a companion
- Journey time and management of delays
- Planning
- Roadside services/facilities
- Breakdowns
- Traffic information
- Road-sign clarity and siting
- Usability of service stations

Research is due to begin in November, lasting until February. Publication is scheduled for April, with a launch event in May.

More details are available in the presentation slides.



## **Round-up of participants' activity over the coming months**

### **Department of Work and Pensions – Audrey Daft:**

supporting DfT's Accessibility Action Plan, looking at accessibility in aviation and at HS2 access, especially at the non-dedicated stations.

**Rail Standards and Safety Board – Agata Pogodzick:** launch of the accessibility competition

**Transport for All – Jeff Harvey:** restoration of the deferred elements of the Access for All scheme. Conflicts when using wheelchairs on buses.

**Department for Transport – David Hanson:** looking to launch the next round of funding for Access for All station enhancements in 2019.

**Jon Welsman – Guide Dogs Association:** promoting 'talking buses' and awareness of them as the Bus Bill approaches. Continuing access problems with assistance dogs in taxis. Campaigning on shared spaces, especially for visually-impaired people.

**Department for Transport – Alison Franks:** main focus is the Accessibility Action Plan; events around it are being run across the country. The Minister is meeting Guide Dogs next week. New members have now been appointed to DPTAC including some with expertise in mental-health issues.

**Systra – Emma Jolley:** engagement feedback on design proposals for new private development near Wembley Stadium. It is a mixed-use scheme; concerns about parking and access to public transport.

**DPTAC – Olav Ernstzen:** feedback on new-style street layout in Spain. Central walkway with specially lit crossings at night. Very innovative.

**RNIB – Jean Appleton:** commends Guide Dogs work on buses and shared space; emphasised the need to ensure that assistance schemes function as intended.

**Transport Focus – Isabel Liu:** response to Accessibility Action Plan. Meeting DfT in November when we will present some of the information already shared in these forum meetings derived from in-depth study of bus, train and tram surveys regarding disabled passengers. Our usual work on DPPPs continues.

### **Next meeting of the Accessibility Forum**

The next forum will take place in Room G1 of Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, EC4Y 8JX on Thursday, 3 May 2018 11.00 – 13.00

The room will be available from 10.30.

Lunch is not provided, but please feel free to bring your own. Water, tea, coffee and biscuits will be available.

An agenda and other relevant details will be sent in due course.