

Accessible transport event – audience talking points

27 April 2021

Event audience chat – a summary of key topics and useful links

This document captures the points raised by audience members in the chat function during our *Accessible transport – unlocking a better normal* event. It is not a summary of the panel discussions, keynote speech or Transport Focus contributions.

Accessibility concerns arise across the network

Many coach and train stations and stops are still not accessible. Waiting to board is often difficult and uncomfortable for disabled passengers. Those with standing difficulties need to be admitted as soon as possible. Wheelchair users should be first on and last off, following airport process.

Boarding and travelling on buses, coaches and trains would be improved with level boarding, lifts and access to toilets with room for wheelchairs and assistants. New trains with non-standard heights and huge stepping distances will mean platforms need to be adjusted and gap fillers made mandatory.

Staff assistance is key on the railway and de-staffing at stations and driver-only trains will reduce accessibility. An accessible train is not accessible without a staff-assisted ramp.

Mobility scooter users experience frequent difficulties, with passenger abuse and a lack of empathy from bus drivers who often refuse to take scooters. On trams, larger scooters can take up space causing problems with wheelchair access.

Poor lighting and pathways make transfers between bus and rail stations difficult. Active travel infrastructure such as temporary pop-up cycle lanes have caused problems with parking and conflict at bus stops for many disabled people.

Improving accessibility depends upon collaboration and co-production

Consultation needs to improve by working with disability organisations, involving those with lived experience of a range of disabilities and ensuring senior roles are held by disabled people so insight can be fed directly into management. Time for a user-led rating system similar to that run by the aviation regulator for airports?

Calls for better passenger information

Passenger accessibility information is out of date and unreliable and often poorly designed. People with a disability need to know practical information such as: what to do, where you can sit, if there is an accessible toilet, buffet car opening hours.

A multi-modal approach to information provision which incorporates destination information is critical. We must also include deaf and hard of hearing users to improve accessible transport for all.

Local services are vital

Accessibility and provision of bus transport in rural areas is at risk due to lack of funding.

Passengers need to feel confident that adverse behaviour will be dealt with

Scotland has done a lot of good work on disability hate crime with Disability Equality Scotland, Police Scotland, Transport Scotland and transport providers (bus, rail and ferries). There's also been a lot of work on face covering exemptions with a national help/information line and the Scottish Government launching exemption cards.

Covid safety is key as more people use public transport

Disabled people need to feel reassured that public transport is safe for them to use. What can be done about ventilation given a lack of windows that open? Does air conditioning help or just recirculate contaminated air?

Transport Focus research

On disabled transport users' views and experiences:

<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publication/accessible-transport-unlocking-a-better-normal/>

On ventilation on public transport:

<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publication/ventilation-on-public-transport-transport-user-community/>

Contacts shared

The operators below have provided contact details for anyone with questions or ideas on accessibility:

Northern Trains: craig.alexander@northernrailway.co.uk

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