

## Supercharging the EV transition

### Response from Transport Focus to the Transport Committee

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#### Introduction

Transport Focus is the independent consumer watchdog representing the interests of rail users throughout Great Britain; bus, coach and tram users across England, outside London; and users of the Strategic Road Network in England. Working with transport providers and Governments across England, Scotland and Wales – and in partnership with our colleagues at London TravelWatch – we ensure that the users' voice is heard.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this inquiry on 'Supercharging the EV transition'. Since 2015 Transport Focus has represented the interests of all those who use England's motorways and major 'A' roads, the strategic road network (SRN) managed by National Highways on behalf of the Government. This includes users of EVs and we have carried out a range of work on the subject including on experience of drivers charging and people's views on transitioning to an EV.

Our response is focused on questions F and H.

#### **f. What are the most significant factors affecting consumer confidence in EVs, including purchase and running costs, chargepoint availability, concerns about battery longevity, safety and fire risk, and what are the best steps Government and the sector could take to address them?**

In the past year, Transport Focus has published two reports on EV charging challenges, in relation to drivers on the SRN and the experiences of disabled drivers specifically.

Our May 2025 [report](#), which drew on work including our Motorway Services User Survey and Strategic Road User Survey, found significant challenges among the public seeking to use EV charging on the SRN. Only two thirds of the respondents we spoke to were satisfied with the charging experience on their SRN journey with 26 per cent, or one in four drivers, fairly or very dissatisfied.

There are a number of factors that can influence how satisfied EV drivers feel when charging on the SRN. The reliability and availability of charge points were the main issues for EV drivers. However, speed of charge, ease of use and the environment at the site were also key differentiators, as well as value for money.

EV drivers tend to spend more time at roadside facilities than those motorists with a petrol or diesel vehicle. Usually, the longer a customer spends at a MSA the better their overall experience, but this is not the case for EV drivers. EV drivers are less satisfied with their visits to MSAs than other visitors.

Additional research, which we expect to publish later this year, found that users identified six broad areas for improvement that would make the biggest difference to them across the various aspects of EV charging:

- Physical site experience – Improved lighting, weather awnings and better maintained chargers.
- Queuing and waiting – Queue systems in place, driver alerts when charging is complete and incentivised waiting.
- Signage and information – Better signposting on the SRN, better signposting within the service area and better information on chargers.
- Connectivity – better data consistency and software connectivity (car to charger).
- Pricing and payments – Contactless payment, clarity of speed offered and reduction in high priced preauthorisation.
- Support – call button support and tutorials.

Transport Focus has identified significant issues with EV charging for disabled drivers, our September 2025 [report](#), 'Plugging the gap – the need to improve the EV charging experience for disabled drivers' explored this in detail.

Many disabled people depend on travelling by car to make journeys as independently and seamlessly as possible. But as electric vehicles become more common, issues remain that the charging network isn't able to meet accessibility needs. For individual users, this might be about the weight of the cables, the space to manoeuvre within a parking bay, the complexity of the information or payment systems, the knock-on impact of a chargepoint being unexpectedly out of order or the lack of assistance. The impact may be felt by wheelchair users, those with impaired mobility, strength or dexterity, older users, or those who are neurodivergent.

Estimates suggest that there are currently as many as two million disabled drivers in the UK and travel by car accounts for around 58 per cent of all their trips. It plays an essential role in enabling people to manage their daily lives with a greater flexibility and independence than they might otherwise have.

In the coming years, the number of electric vehicles are forecast to dramatically increase with the phasing out of traditional ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles in line with government targets limiting the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles.

As a consequence, we can also expect the number of disabled EV drivers to rise and the demand for accessible public electric vehicle charging infrastructure to continue

to grow – especially when we consider that a significant proportion of disabled users' homes are not suited to the installation of a home charger.

For the industry this is a huge and complex problem. Accessibility needs weren't factored into early roll out. Standards have since been introduced but they have been difficult to apply in practice and aren't mandatory. The pressure is on to meet government targets and supply fast charging to meet growing current and future needs. Conflicting demands for valuable land, commercial pressures and energy supply issues must be navigated.

There are some positives out there with chargepoint operators trying to bridge accessibility gaps and improve the charging experience for disabled users. But this lacks the consistency required to allow disabled people to travel with confidence knowing they'll be able to charge.

We have identified five key barriers faced by disabled when charging:

- **Charging bay constraints** - users need larger, more accessible bays free from obstacles. It can be difficult to move around the vehicle in a standard charging bay, especially for those motorists or passengers who need more room to manoeuvre, like those with reduced mobility including wheelchair users. Kerbs, bollards and raised plinths can make the experience more difficult or even impossible. Our research has found those with disabilities in their party were less satisfied with size and accessibility of parking bays.
- **Physical challenges** - The weight of cables and the force required to connect them can be a significant obstacle to wheelchair users and drivers with limited upper body strength, including some older users. Faults with the chargepoint - such as the plug becoming jammed - only compound the existing barriers some users already face. Similarly, the position of instructions and controls can often be such that they are out of reach or affected by poor lighting or glare. Our research has also found that showed those with disabilities in their party found chargepoints harder to use than non-disabled users.
- **Reliability issues** – While out of order chargepoints create a poor experience for all electric vehicle users, it can take an even bigger toll on those with mobility impairments. Getting in and out of the vehicle can be more difficult and having to change bays adds stress. For neurodivergent users, some of whom carefully plan in advance to reduce anxiety around their journey, the unpredictability of these experiences can prove particularly challenging.
- **On site environment** - Disabled users report lower feelings of safety when charging their vehicle. A lack of space to wait for an available chargepoint at busy times, poor lighting, unclear signage on site and less well-defined safe walking and wheeling routes were also identified as issues by disabled users, especially when chargepoints are located some distance away from the building in addition to the accessible facilities within. Once their vehicle was in

place to charge, accessing different parts of the site proved difficult for some users, especially at busy times. The poor-quality surface of the paths and car parks, in some locations, could also be potentially hazardous.

- **Lack of on-site assistance** - The proportion of disabled drivers needing on-site support and assistance while charging their vehicle at services is generally higher, as is the impact on these users when it is not available. Far from being able to charge independently and confidently disabled motorists can be left relying on the goodwill and understanding of strangers and other motorists nearby in order to access the help they need in the moment. While helpful, this is far from a reliable or predictable solution for users. While on-site support was offered by some providers, we found that in reality, it was not always executed well. The support was not clearly communicated, readily available or effective with staff unsure how to help.

Given the challenges disabled users encounter with charging, it is understandable that some users are hesitant to transition. The results of a survey published by Motability in June 2025 found that, given the issues with public charging, 65 per cent of their disabled customers would not move to an electric vehicle unless there was no other option.

Our report additionally set out what areas should be addressed to help drive progress and improve outcomes for disabled drivers charging their EV.

- **Urgent focus on delivering a network of accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure** - There is a critical need to act now to deliver accessible chargepoints across the motorway and major 'A' road network with provision that meets both current and future demand.
- **Explore the need for regulation to secure better outcomes for disabled drivers** - There is a significant risk that the market will continue to fail to meet the needs of disabled motorists without a mandatory framework to drive change and track progress.
- **Ensure the accessible electric vehicle charging standards fully meet disabled users' needs and are straightforward for commercial providers to interpret and implement** - A holistic consideration of disabled users' needs will be necessary to sufficiently address the range of issues for charging.
- **Ensure outcomes are appropriately monitored** - Ongoing assessment, continued co-design and transparent reporting is needed to ensure progress can be sustained and tracked.
- **Address immediate gaps in the accessibility of existing electric vehicle chargepoints** - To improve usability for disabled motorists as quickly as possible until a fully accessible network can be delivered.

We have expanded on these points in question H below.

**h. How effectively is the Department for Transport addressing issues in the rollout of charging infrastructure such as affordability, geographic equity, accessibility, administration of funding, and the availability of grid connections?**

We are pleased to see some recent progress made with the recent Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, which gives the Government powers to mandate public charging standards by law if the accessibility of public chargers does not improve.

However, as we have set out there are a number of additional steps we believe that the Department could make in order to further address issues in terms of the rollout, especially for disabled drivers (although the experience would likely be improved for all drivers if carried out.)

There is a significant risk that the market will continue to fail to meet the needs of disabled motorists without a mandatory framework to drive change and track progress. We believe that the standard should be made mandatory as soon as possible, but if the Government chooses not to do this it should set out a clear timeline and targets for the deployment of accessible chargepoints, including trigger points for mandatory action if progress is not made. We need to see a clear and ambitious timescale for industry to work to including requiring every service area on the motorway and major 'A' road network to provide a minimum number of fully accessible chargepoints. The failure to set out a clear plan now risks leaving disabled drivers behind today and a major, expensive retrofit job in the future.

Monitoring should follow any introduction of regulation with a focus on compliance, specifically the number, reliability and location of compliant accessible chargepoints available on motorways and major 'A' roads.

We ask the Government to start systematic reporting of the provision of available accessible chargepoints for compliance purposes – mandatory reporting would be one possible way of achieving this to ensure progress can be sustained and tracked. Furthermore, make this reporting easily accessible to ensure that disabled users can make use of it in journey planning.