

Railways for All



March 2005

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Introduction

The Railways for All consultation document will be addressed to a wide audience. It will seek views on how best to make the railway more accessible for everyone.

Accessibility is not a marginal issue. There is no single measure or estimate of disability, but the most recent Government estimate of the number of adults in Britain covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) definition is around 10 million – more than one in seven of the population. There is a strong correlation between age and disability. The number of such people will therefore grow due to ageing of the population. Two thirds of today’s disabled people are elderly.

It is important to appreciate the diversity of people with disabilities. Some people have more than one disability; many have disabilities that cannot be seen. Only about 8 per cent of disabled people are wheelchair users.

Disability	Millions affected
Hearing impairments	8
Mobility difficulties	7
Learning difficulties	4
Visual impairments	1

Source: OPPM and OPCS websites.

Note: These sources do not identify the numbers of people who are affected by more than one type of disability.

■ **Figure 1: Number of people experiencing impairment or other difficulties**

- Many measures designed to improve accessibility for disabled passengers also offer benefits to non-disabled passengers. Disabled and older people represent 'a growth market'. The annual spending power of disabled people in the UK is £80 billion.¹

An accessible railway, within the framework of an integrated transport system, is important to delivering the Government's commitment to comprehensive civil rights for disabled people. The draft Strategy will also help the railway industry to respond positively to disability legislation.

Who will deliver the Strategy?

The SRA will consult on the Strategy under section 206 of the Transport Act 2000. Until the Railways Bill is approved by Parliament and the SRA is wound up, we will continue to exercise our statutory functions. Responsibility for the elements of the final Strategy will then transfer to the Department for Transport, the Scottish Executive, the Office of Rail Regulation and the railway industry.

Purpose of the consultation

The draft Strategy will describe how accessible Britain's railway will be in 10 years time, depending on the choices that are made. Priorities have to be established because not everything can be done at once. The consultation will inform those choices.

The objectives of the Strategy will be:

- To establish a coherent, agreed, funded plan for making the railway more accessible through both physical and customer service improvements;
- Given finite resources, to establish a framework within which choices can be made; and
- To set out a clear implementation route so that different players within the restructured railway can all work towards common goals.

¹ Department of Work and Pensions, 2004

Progress to date

The rail industry has been working hard to improve its services and to make travel more accessible for all its customers, especially disabled people. Recent years have seen many improvements in the accessibility of journeys including:

- More than 4,000 new DDA compliant vehicles introduced to the network since 1997. £4.2 billion has been invested in new trains including the replacement of 1,738 Mark 1 slam door vehicles;
- Investment of over £2 billion in refurbishing older trains. For example, the refurbishment of GNER's Mark IV stock and SWT's Class 455s has resulted in increased designated wheelchair spaces, accessible toilets, and priority seating;
- Training of more than 3,000 staff last year in disability awareness;
- Enhancements to pre-booked assistance services. Last year 142,000 assistance requests were received from Network Rail's 20 major stations;
- Publication of a 'Rail Map for People with Reduced Mobility' and establishment of an online station database providing pre-journey information to improve journey planning for disabled passengers; and
- New and enhanced information displays and announcements (both on stations and trains).

New proposals for improved accessibility

A truly accessible railway needs to be accessible to people with different disabilities. The SRA will propose that the key elements of an Accessibility Strategy should be:

- Readily available and accurate information;
- Physically accessible rolling stock and stations wherever reasonable;
- Availability and training of staff (including the ability to book and receive reliable assistance through the Assisted Passengers' Reservation Service (APRS)); and
- Alternative accessible provision (where access to the rail network cannot reasonably be provided at a given location).

For completeness, the draft Strategy will cover the entire journey (decision to travel, approaching the station, in the station, boarding the train, on the train and disembarking). Some of these elements, for example, the physical accessibility of rolling stock, are already the subject of regulation and changes to the law. In some areas the draft Strategy proposes change, in others it simply reports on changes that have already been set in motion and will continue to be delivered. The main changes proposed in the Strategy are to:

- Establish an **Access for All fund** for accessibility improvements at stations. Over £370 million ² will be spent over the period 2004 to 2015. This is in addition to accessibility improvements already being delivered by mechanisms such as franchising, major projects, investment in rolling stock and maintenance and renewal of the rail network; and
- Update the **Code of Practice** which sets out the standards that Train Operating Companies and Network Rail have to meet in providing for disabled passengers.

Access for All fund

The proposal is the fund will be used to increase the proportion of passenger journeys that occur from stations where:

- Real-time audio and visual information is provided;
- There is step-free access to platforms; and
- Trained staff are available to assist disabled passengers.

In proposing these measures, factors taken into account included the numbers of disabled people likely to be affected, the cost of the measures and whether they

² 20 per cent of the fund is available to be spent on revenue measures such as increased staffing. The remaining 80 per cent is for capital measures (such as step-free access, Customer Information Systems and Passenger Announcement systems) and will be added to Network Rail's Regulatory Asset Base (RAB).

were better prioritised locally through the franchise or nationally through the Access for All fund. The draft Strategy sets out a proposed list of 286 stations to be targeted for investment through the fund. In reaching this list the main considerations were:

- The numbers of people using the station.³ 70 per cent of all rail journeys are made from the busiest 10 per cent of all stations. The majority of these heavily used stations are in London and the South East;
- Is there provision of reasonable geographical coverage across the network; and
- Existence of stations along routes with other accessible stations and interchanges.

The draft Strategy proposes targeting 75 per cent of the fund at the busiest stations (on a national basis) and the remaining 25 per cent at busy stations in each region. If the Access for All fund is spent as recommended in the Strategy, the proportion of journeys taking place from stations with Passenger Announcement systems, Customer Information Systems, step-free access and staff assistance would improve as set out in the figure below.

Proposed measure:	% of journeys covered		% of stations covered		Total investment (£ millions)
	Now	2015	Now	2015	
Passenger Announcement Systems	95%	97%	65%	68%	1
Customer Information Systems	88%	93%	39%	43%	15
Fully step-free	57%	81%	50%	55%	280
Fully staffed	70%	76%	20%	23%	74
Total Investment					370

■ **Figure 2: Effect of Access for All fund**

³ The SRA does not have data on the distribution of disabled passengers and has therefore assumed that the travel patterns of disabled passengers follow current passenger trends.

The Code of Practice

The draft Strategy proposes that the Code is amended to bring it up to date and to clarify areas that have caused confusion in the past. In addition, Train Operating Companies will be required to provide:

- Core modules for staff training on disability issues; and
- Appropriate systems, facilities and assistance for passengers using the dedicated reservation service (APRS).

The consultation process

The SRA is seeking the views of disabled people, the railway industry, the public sector (including the devolved administrations), and the wider community. The deadline for responses is 14 June 2005. Responses to the consultation exercise will inform the final Accessibility Strategy, to be published in summer 2005. A set of questions is set out in the full draft Strategy along with the arrangements for sending responses.

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