

London Visual Impairment Forum's Response to London Assembly's Transport Committee's Accessibility of London's Transport Network November 2010

Introduction:

London Visual Impairment Forum (LVIF) comprises voluntary (not for profit) organisations working with, and on behalf of, blind and partially sighted people in Greater London. There are approximately thirty-eight local, London wide and national organisations actively involved.

There are 39,315 people registered as blind or partially sighted in London. However, it is likely that there are between 78,600 and 117,900 people that have low vision who have not registered. The majority of blind and partially sighted people lose their vision when over the age of sixty, at a time when they may also be facing additional disabilities, such as hearing impairment, or conditions which add to their mobility difficulties.

London VI Forum welcomes the report which makes a number of useful suggestions but there are a few issues which we don't feel are fully covered which we would like to highlight.

Our response is organised under the headings of the recommendations made by the Committee in its report.

General Comments:

Whilst there were many good points made by the Committee in its report, we were disappointed that visual impairment issues were much lower down their list compared to issues affecting other impairment groups especially when it came to the actual recommendations.

This report also talks about a whole journey approach but does not cover walking or door-to-door transport. We accept that the Committee have done separate reports on this but it would be helpful if reference to these reports and their recommendations could have been made by this report.

Recommendation 1

By June 2011, TfL should:

Lantern House, 102 Bermondsey Street, London, SE1 3UB. Tel: 020 7378 0985

a) in conjunction with relevant organisations including Network Rail, the train operating companies and London Boroughs, use the Committee's information on the numbers of people with reduced mobility and their location to develop its physical accessibility strategy post 2018;

We question the reports assumptions on the number of disabled people. According to the Analysis of the Annual Population Survey (2009) 18% of the surveyed population in London are disabled which, using the population figure from London from the 2001 census of 7, 172, 091 would translate to 1.3 million people have reduced mobility in London today, more than the one million people which the Executive Summary of the Committee's report suggests will exist in 2031. following increases in population.

b) Publish its physical accessibility strategy for consultation with people with reduced mobility and relevant organisations. The strategy should set out the plans for improving accessibility until 2018 and the options for providing further step-free stations and fully accessible bus stops thereafter; and

No comments

c) Publish details of the organisations and individuals it will consult and how in relation to its physical accessibility strategy. This should include clarification on the future of its Independent Disability Advisory Committee.

LVIF have welcomed the setting up of a programme of regular meetings between LVIF and TfL Stakeholder Engagement Manager Elin Campbell and hope that will allow LVIF to address visual impairment issues at an early stage in developments.

Recommendation 2

By June 2011, TfL should enhance pre-journey information and support for people with reduced mobility by:

a) Including details on its online Journey Planner of the heights of steps and platforms at Tube and Overground rails stations, the accessibility of bus stops and possible national rail service options;

We are pleased that information about the gap between the train and the platform is available in the TfL step free guide, but more publicity about how to obtain copies either electronically, or in large print or Braille need to be well publicised.

b) Streamlining, in consultation with relevant groups, the range of publications and maps about accessibility

This consultation also needs to include the contents of the publications and maps about accessibility.

c) Publishing all its data relating to the accessibility of transport services on the London Datastore;

The average visually impaired passenger will not have easy access to the data store but will want to use the London Transport Travel information line to get information as necessary. Unfortunately this has been changed from an 0207 number which is usually included in free minutes packages to an 0844 which is not and for example, T Mobile charge 40p a minute to dial 0844 numbers.

d) Extending, in collaboration with relevant organisations including London Boroughs as appropriate, its travel assistance scheme so it supports more than 10,000 journeys p.a. by people with reduced mobility in 2011/12 and each year thereafter.

No comments

Recommendation 3

By June 2011, TfL should enhance the accessibility of Tube and Overground rail for people with reduced mobility by:

a) Providing alternatives to step-free access including allowing people to use manual ramps wherever possible on the Tube and Overground rail networks. For example, at terminating stations;

No comments

b) Introducing a minimum set of criteria for the accessibility features at a Tube station and an Overground rail station;

This is a welcome recommendation but hope that a wide range of disability organisations including the London VI Forum will be consulted on its contents.

We hope that Transport for London can also push for National rail to adopt similar standards so all stations have essential safety features like tactile platform edge markings as we are aware of people of have fallen off the edge of platforms and in one case this was fatal.

c) Working in partnership with disability groups to put in place a programme of accessibility audits for all stations. These should assess how far stations meet the minimum set of criteria and where they do not identify any low cost solutions. TfL should publish the findings from these audits;

No comments

d) Publishing its assessment of the impact on people with reduced mobility of proposals to reduce staff at Tube stations and the measures it intends to put in place to mitigate the impact; and

We are pleased that an equality impact assessment was done on these proposals. However, we believe that it is essential that now that these proposals have been implemented that their affect on disabled people is monitored and the Transport Committee should ask for these monitoring reports to be submitted to the Transport Committee on a six-monthly basis.

e) Appointing an existing member of staff to act as an “accessibility champion” at each interchange station to ensure a co-ordinated approach to accessibility across different transport modes and operators. These “accessibility champions” should organise training for all staff at each station which ensures they are familiar with the accessibility of all modes and can assist people with reduced mobility in relation to any service.

LVIUF welcome the Committee's proposals for access champions

Recommendation 4

By June 2011, TfL should enhance the accessibility of buses for people with reduced mobility by:

a) Redeveloping the disability awareness training provided to bus drivers, and to trainers providing this training, so it is more practical than theory-based.

The disability awareness training should involve people with reduced mobility sharing their experiences directly or through videos;

The involvement of disabled people who experience the difficulties of using public transport on a daily basis would be invaluable in making sure that it is effective as possible in making bus travel accessible for blind and partially sighted and other disabled people.

Guide Dogs 'Tips for bus drivers' containing concise practical tips on how bus drivers can assist blind and partially sighted passengers may be a useful resource

b) Improving guidance for bus drivers including the information in the Big Red Book about the service standards for people with reduced mobility including which specific scooters are permitted;

We welcome the fact that the Committee's report mentions the need for bus drivers to wait for passengers to sit down before pulling away and for the iBus system to be turned on. However, as TfL seem to accept that these are reasonable suggestions, these proposals should be added to the Committee's recommendations.

The fact that the countdown system at bus stops is now going to be extended to provide audible information at bus stops is welcome. However, its reliance on people using mobile phones may be a problem. The percentage of older people possessing mobile phones is much lower than amongst younger age groups but the percentage of the population which is visually impaired increases with age. According to the Continuous Household survey issued by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in 2010 the percentage of those owning a mobile phone amongst the over 60s in the UK was 70 % compared to 93-97% for all other age groups. According to the RNIB approximately one person in thirty are living with sight loss but this rises to 1 in 5 amongst those over 75s and 1 in 2 for those over 90.

c) Introducing specific performance targets for bus drivers on the service to be provided to people with reduced mobility;

No comments

d) Displaying individual bus drivers' ID so it is easier for people with reduced mobility to report any issues;

Individual bus drivers ID is likely to be easier for a partially sighted passenger to identify than looking for the number of the bus but consideration needs to be given to the design of the badges to make sure that they are as easy as possible for blind and partially sighted people to read.

e) Introducing more publicity on buses about who is entitled to use the accessibility bay and the bus service standards. This should include the services relating to the iBus system and bus drivers allowing people to settle in their seats; and

No comments

f) Exploring the scope to include in the new bus for London and future buses more flip-up seats or other provision for more people with reduced mobility.

No comments

Please could the committee also raise the issue of ensuring that there is adequate effective space at priority seats for guide and assistance dogs and for these seats to be easy to locate particularly for blind and partially sighted passengers?

TrailBlazers' response to Transport Committee's report on accessibility, November 2011

About Trailblazers

Trailblazers is a nationwide organisation of more than 300 young disabled campaigners. We are part of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, the leading UK charity working to fight muscle disease.

We aim to fight the social injustices experienced by young disabled people living with muscle disease, and to work together to ensure we can gain access to essential services.

About the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign is the leading UK charity working to fight muscle disease on all fronts by;

- funding vital research into treatments and cures
- offering free practical and emotional support
- campaigning for better services and provisions
- providing grants towards specialist equipment.

Trailblazers were pleased to have been involved in the investigation and London Assembly report. We are pleased that the London Assembly has taken into consideration some of our suggestions when making recommendations to TfL.

Trailblazers response to the London Assembly Transport Report

Recommendation 1

By June 2011, TfL should:

- a) in conjunction with relevant organisations including Network Rail, the train operating companies and London Boroughs, use the Committee's information on the numbers of people with reduced mobility and their location to develop its physical accessibility strategy post 2018;
- b) Publish its physical accessibility strategy for consultation with people with reduced mobility and relevant organisations. The strategy should set out the plans for improving accessibility until 2018 and the options for providing further step-free stations and fully accessible bus stops thereafter; and
- c) Publish details of the organisations and individuals it will consult and how in relation to its physical accessibility strategy. This should include clarification on the future of its Independent Disability Advisory Committee.

Trailblazers response 1

Trailblazers welcomes the development of a more transparent strategy addressing physical accessibility for people with reduced mobility. Clarifying plans prior to and post 2018 will give opportunity to discuss options. Publishing details of the organisations and individuals TfL will consult with will give *Trailblazers* an opportunity to get involved within such a vital process.

Trailblazers would like to see a representative, democratic process. TfL should consult with people from a diverse background of pan-disability organisations with people from a range of ages, including young disabled people.

Trailblazers would urge TfL to consider *Trailblazers* within the consultation process as the organisation can offer a valuable source of information, advice and potential solutions to alleviate current challenges in the transport network.

London Assembly Recommendation 2

By June 2011, TfL should enhance pre-journey information and support for people with reduced mobility by:

- a) Including details on its online Journey Planner of the heights of steps and platforms at Tube and Overground rails stations, the accessibility of bus stops and possible national rail service options;
- b) Streamlining, in consultation with relevant groups, the range of publications and maps about accessibility;
- c) Publishing all its data relating to the accessibility of transport services on the London Datastore; and
- d) Extending, in collaboration with relevant organisations including London Boroughs as appropriate, its travel assistance scheme so it supports more than 10,000 journeys p.a. by people with reduced mobility in 2011/12 and each year thereafter.

***Trailblazers* response 2**

Trailblazers welcomes the development and streamlining of pre-journey information and support for people with reduced mobility. Informing people of the current state of access is crucial to allow people to plan in advance, making modifications to their journey where required. Publishing information would need to be updated regularly to ensure this is a useful exercise.

Extension of the travel assistance scheme is much welcome, and is vital for people to gain, and continue to gain access in and around the capital. Staff assistance is integral to people, especially those with reduced mobility. In the underground this is especially crucial- some stations are 'step free' but are only step free to the platform- to gain access to the carriage it is often necessary to rely on assistance from members of staff to make this an even remotely accessible station.

London Assembly Recommendation 3

By June 2011, TfL should enhance the accessibility of Tube and Overground rail for people with reduced mobility by:

- a) Providing alternatives to step-free access including allowing people to use manual ramps wherever possible on the Tube and Overground rail networks. For example, at terminating stations;
- b) Introducing a minimum set of criteria for the accessibility features at a Tube station and an Overground rail station;
- c) Working in partnership with disability groups to put in place a programme of accessibility audits for all stations. These should assess how far stations meet the minimum set of criteria and where they do not identify any low cost solutions. TfL should publish the findings from these audits;
- d) Publishing its assessment of the impact on people with reduced mobility of proposals to reduce staff at Tube stations and the measures it intends to put in place to mitigate the impact; and
- e) Appointing an existing member of staff to act as an "accessibility champion" at each interchange station to ensure a co-ordinated approach to accessibility across different transport modes and operators. These "accessibility champions" should organise training for all staff at each station which ensures they are familiar with the accessibility of all modes and can assist people with reduced mobility in relation to any service.

***Trailblazers* response 3**

Trailblazers welcomes the recommendations of providing portable ramps at stations, especially those advertised as 'Step free' With TfL's investment into lifts in stations, the access onto the carriage is an

absolute necessity. Access to the platform is rendered useless without wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility being able to gain access to the transport.

To demonstrate, an exemplary station is Kings Cross, on the Northern Line route, where billions has been invested, and yet, a wheelchair user cannot gain access onto the carriage.

Trailblazers would urge TfL to consider access throughout the planning stages of any refurbishment/building as an integral part of the engineering. This investment would save costs in the long term.

Humps like that at London Bridge or raised rails like that at Wembley Park would combat challenges at existing step free stations.

Level access like the Jubilee Line from Westminster and beyond would be recognised as a brilliantly accessible station.

Trailblazers believe that introducing a minimum set of criteria for an accessible station would be well received as it would inform passengers, allowing them to plan accordingly. There would be an element of clarity, consistency and reassurance when a customer visits a step free station.

Working with disability organisations and auditing stations would complement the minimum standard and allow passengers to make informed decisions. Decisions should not be made without consulting disability organisations with different mobility requirements.

Photographic information, together with details of the steps, gradients and distance to lifts would be some examples of what could be included.

Producing an assessment of the affect staffing reductions will impact on disabled passengers is vital, before making cuts there must be a review and assessment. The investment already made to improve access will be wasted if passengers are prohibited from using transport due to staff cuts.

Accessibility champions are welcome, however it is essential that this person is not deemed to have all the responsibility. All members of staff must be trained to a high standard for all disabilities. The cost is not high, but the long term benefits are invaluable.

It is suggested by *Trailblazers* that disability organisations review and observe and perhaps work together to deliver the training delivered to ensure it is useful, accurate and up to date. This will increase the value and relevance of the training.

London Assembly Recommendation 4

By June 2011, TfL should enhance the accessibility of buses for people with reduced mobility by:

- a) Redeveloping the disability awareness training provided to bus drivers, and to trainers providing this training, so it is more practical than theory based. It should involve people with reduced mobility sharing their experiences directly or through videos;
- b) Improving guidance for bus drivers including the information in the Big Red Book about the service standards for people with reduced mobility including which specific scooters are permitted;
- c) Introducing specific performance targets for bus drivers on the service to be provided to people with reduced mobility;
- d) Displaying individual bus drivers' ID so it is easier for people with reduced mobility to report any issues;

- e) Introducing more publicity on buses about who is entitled to use the accessibility bay and the bus service standards. This should include the services relating to the lbus system and bus drivers allowing people to settle in their seats; and
- f) Exploring the scope to include in the new bus for London and future buses more flip-up seats or other provision for more people with reduced mobility.

Trailblazers response 4

Trailblazers implores TfL to enhance and develop disability awareness training provided to bus drivers, involving people with reduced mobility to allow for a more practical and human element of the training process. There is a real benefit in allowing real people to demonstrate real problems.

Trailblazers and other disability organisations can assist with reviewing and improving the guidance within the 'Big Red Book' to ensure accuracy and relevance to the people the theory is provided to assist.

Introducing specific targets for the service provided will be beneficial but another way of engaging drivers is to ensure the ramp is working prior to the bus leaving the garage. If a ramp breaks halfway through a journey, the driver must report this immediately, thus introducing accountability to the bus company and driver for any wrongdoing.

Introducing publicity on buses is also much welcome and was suggested by *Trailblazers* within the investigatory process. However, it is important to clarify the entitlement. If prams are able to use the space when wheelchairs do not require it, that should be clear within the publicity and information provided.

Trailblazers believe that it is important to distinguish between the two groups with reduced mobility—mothers with prams and passengers with aids to assist with reduced mobility because of disability. It is crucial that the disabled and elderly can board a bus, especially in cold winter conditions. Prams on the whole can be folded, and if they cannot, there is a real need for Government to liaise with manufacturers to address this accordingly.

In future bus designs, *Trailblazers* recommends the allocated space should be flexible, allowing 2 wheelchairs, a wheelchair and a pram or many people to stand with luggage simultaneously.

More flip up seats in these areas could address or alleviate such issues.

The future of transport

Trailblazers understands that a completely accessible transport network will not happen overnight. However, when there is an opportunity *Trailblazers* believes that accessibility should be at the heart of any development processes.

The recent announcements concerning Crossrail and Thameslink are such brilliant opportunities and *Trailblazers* would encourage TfL to liaise and consult with us on such positive developments.

Considering access at the initial stages results in more people accessing services; more investment upfront results in diminished costs later.

Level access to the carriageways is wholly encouraged by planning the ramps, platforms and looking at the carriages.

Investing in technology such as train or platform lifts can also be a way of improving access.

Staff attitudes always make a real difference with how pleasurable an individual's experience was. Customer service and disability awareness should develop simultaneously.

Inclusion London's response to the report on accessibility, February 2011

Demand for Accessible Transport

Analysis of the Annual Population Survey (December 2009) indicates that 18 per cent of the surveyed sample in London is disabled, which would give a figure of 1.4 million disabled people in London. Inclusion London therefore questions the figure the Transport Committee uses, of 890,000 people who have reduced mobility, and would be interested to know how the GLA arrived at this figure. Inclusion London recommends that Transport for London (TfL) uses the figure of 1.4 million.

Inclusion London strongly recommends that the Committee advises the Mayor and TfL to identify and secure further funding to provide qualitatively more access at other stations and bus stops.

[NB. The Committee's report sets out in detail, at appendix 1, how it determined the numbers of people with reduced mobility]

Before the journey – improving pre-trip information and support

See Recommendation 2. part b) re. the range of maps and publications about accessibility: Inclusion London recommends that disabled people are involved in improving the content of publications regarding access issues as well as 'streamlining'.

Inclusion London believes that telephone calls to the TfL Helpline, charged at Premium Rates are very expensive for disabled people who are disproportionately likely to be low income earners, whether in employment or not, and if not employed are even more likely to be living on exceeding low incomes. We recommend that they are free to disabled people.

During the journey- improving the accessibility the Tube and Overground Rail

TfL needs to adequately monitor the impact on disabled people of the reduction in London Underground station staff. It should make available 6 monthly reports to the Transport Committee. The accessibility impact assessment on disabled people published by TfL regarding staff reductions cuts was woefully inadequate. Inclusion London opposes the reduction in staff as we believe it is likely to further limit accessibility.

During the journey - improving the accessibility of the buses

See Recommendation 4: Disability Awareness training: Inclusion London recommends that disabled people are involved in the design and content of the disability awareness training rather than just turning up to share experiences.

Bus Stops Accessibility: Visually Impaired needs for accessible information at bus stops is mentioned in the report but not in formal Recommendations. Inclusion London (IL) recommends that TfL's standard for a fully accessible bus stop includes audible information for visually impaired people.

'Next bus' information provided via mobile phones will not be accessible to many older people who do not use mobile phones as a method of communication.

Inclusion London recommends that Bus Drivers should lower the ramp to allow relater users off and on buses

Inclusion London agrees that there are low cost solutions, such as highlighting the edges of steps and contrasting colours for floors, wall and doors, which can increase accessibility.

The report professes a whole journey approach yet the importance of the pedestrian environment, cycling and door-to-door transport is not mentioned in the body of the report. Inclusion London would like to make the following points:

- No cyclists should ride on pavements where they are a dangerous hazard to pedestrians. Cyclists should be encouraged to attend training.
- Funding for Dial-a-ride and other door-to-door transport needs to be protected as does the Mayoral influence re. funding.
- Funding should be protected for the Freedom Pass: we are concerned at the impact of the Mayor's relinquishing of powers. The boroughs, TfL and the Mayor need to ensure the Freedom Pass is protected.
- Re. the possible removal of 145 traffic lights - controlled pedestrian crossings need to be retained.

Responses from individuals, November 2011

I'm dismayed to see that there apparently isn't a word in the report about the 1 in 100 Londoners (and those who are working in London), who are on the autism spectrum. What happened to including our access needs? Having written in to the London authorities several times on these issues, it is rather dispiriting to find that we're still not mentioned from one end of the document to the other. Or is the assumption that one has to be Blind or a wheelchair user to have access difficulties on transport? This isn't joined-up thinking: The government is trying to get 100,000 people with autism off benefits and into work, and we're nowhere near having a transport system that can even deliver us to our place of employ.

Have a look at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6G-OpGgo3c> for an example from the National Autistic Society of how train journey can go wrong. Have a look at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPb5WPypsU8> for another of their examples of how bus journeys can be a sensory overload that forces us to not attempt to use them. Just a few minutes of your time, but these are perfect illustrations of serious issues for us. It's not as if we can even use disability spaces so that we can take a car to work, because people don't understand our limitations in processing fast-moving traffic whilst on foot and the dangers we may face simply crossing the road.

Bearing in mind that I have never received a response to anything I've sent to the Mayor's office on these issues in the last year, I am feeling a little despondent.

I'm copying in my local MP, John Redwood, as I know he takes an interest in these matters.

Kind regards
Mrs Ann Memmott

[NB. A response was provided to Mrs Memmott to highlight that, although the Committee did not refer explicitly to people who are on the autism spectrum in its report, it adopted a broad definition of people with reduced mobility. Also, the information it used to identify the numbers of people with reduced

mobility was based on a TfL survey of people with travel-related disabilities that covered people with hearing, learning, mental health, mobility, visual, physical and other impairments that might affect their use of public transport.]

I note the overwhelming emphasis on physical (wheelchair) access at the expense of relatively inexpensive improvements such as suitable way finding information.

I must confess some disappointment, particularly as a director of London Overground said that too much was being spent on physical access whilst potentially greater benefits could be gained through alternative means.

It's clear that just fixing the Tube, or whatever, will probably not fix people's entire journeys, so much money could be spent on facilities which remain out of reach for those with reduced mobility.

Terry Robinson B.Sc

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Transportforall

Accessible transport is our right

**A response to the London Assembly
Transport Committee's investigation into
the accessibility of London's transport
network. February 2011**



Introduction

Transport for All is a pan-London organisation of disabled and older people that provides specialised advice, information, advocacy and training to both users and providers of accessible transport.

We have over two decades of experience in the accessible transport sector in London, and we welcome this investigation by the GLA Transport committee.

Access to transport services remains a vitally important issue in the lives of disabled and older Londoners. It is the crucial factor enabling people to maintain independent lives and remain active citizens.

Restricted and lack of access to transport services leads to social isolation and has a negative impact on physical and mental well being.

Furthermore, at a time when the Government is increasingly encouraging disabled people to work, with many disabled people fearing the withdrawal of benefits, the inaccessibility of the transport network is one of the biggest barriers to disabled people taking up employment. An accessible transport system is vital to ensuring that all those who want to work are able to find employment.

We therefore believe that making London's transport network accessible, by removing the obstacles and barriers that prevent disabled and older people from travelling, must be seen as a political and funding priority by both the Mayor, Transport for London and the Government.

With one year until London hosts the Olympics and Paralympics, with an estimated 500,000 visitors to London, there has never been more urgency to ensure London's transport systems are accessible to all.

Faryal Velmi
Director
TfA

Transport for All deals with the transport enquiries and issues of hundreds of disabled and older people every year. Through our pan London outreach work we visit numerous organisations, groups and forums across London, listening to many different perspectives from a cross section of London's disabled and older communities. It is these issues and everyday experiences that we have incorporated into this response.

Recommendation 1

TfA welcomes the Transport Committee's emphasis on consultation with transport users with reduced mobility and relevant organisations. The slogan of the disability rights movement, 'nothing about us without us' encapsulates the importance of involving people directly. Those with reduced mobility are the experts on accessible transport.

The Transport Committee is right to draw attention to the large number of people with reduced mobility in London, and the projected growth in demand for accessible transport.

TfL's commitment to work with 'comments from people with reduced mobility' should ensure that people from all sections of these groups are represented, including older people, those with sensory impairments, those with learning disabilities, and parents who travel with pushchairs.

TfA is disappointed that TfL has no plans to engage with disabled and older people's groups on the physical accessibility strategy.

We would like to urge the Mayor and TfL to engage in regular and genuine consultation with disabled and older Londoners to ensure the service will work for us.

Recommendation 2

TfA welcomes the Committee's recommendations to improve the quality of information available for pre-journey planning. However, a significant number of Londoners do not have internet access, and this proportion rises among older people. It's therefore vital as well as the Online Journey Planner, paper information on accessible journey planning and accessibility maps are easily available at stations.

We welcome TfL's publication of data regarding accessibility on the London Datastore. We would like TfL to go further in this admirable commitment to transparency and, as recommended by London Travelwatch, make its complaints public too. This would help flag up areas in need of improvement and recurring problems.

And in order to boost confidence in the Tube network, TfA would like to request that the Mayor and TfL publishes the response times to repair broken lifts and escalators.

TfA urges TfL to expand its travel assistance programme and work with the many local organisations offering travel training and assistance. Evidence from elsewhere in the country suggests that there are considerable long term savings to be made by travel training, as people who are confident and able to use buses and trains are less reliant on door-to-door services which are more expensive and have higher associated emissions overall.

This scheme is not well known, and information at stations publicising this would be helpful.

Recommendation 3

TfA fully support the suggestion of offering manual ramps at Tube stations where possible. While we look forward to seeing manual boarding ramps and temporary platform humps at the Olympics and Paralympics, trialling use of these at stations prior to summer 2012 would provide an excellent opportunity to review their safety and any operational constraints, with the possibility of using them in other circumstances, and if possible before the Olympics and Paralympics begin.

TfA have come across cases in which disabled people have been left stranded on trains for some time before a member of staff was able to come with a ramp. It's therefore vital that for manual ramp provision to work, that there are adequate numbers of staff present.

The Committee makes an excellent point that the vast majority of stations which it calls 'step-free' are not step free from train to platform. We welcome the introduction of raised platform humps in some parts of the Underground, and suggest that TfL sets out a programme for extending their usage to all stations which are step free from street level to platform only.

We would welcome the introduction of an 'accessibility champion' at each interchange station, to create a joined-up approach between different transport modes. This must be alongside regular disability, deaf and age-awareness training for all members of station staff. It's important that some of this training includes face-to-face contact with disabled and older volunteers. Many of London's disability groups would be happy to assist in this sort of training, which could be supplemented with video training as well.

The Transport Committee is right to draw attention to the damaging effect which fewer station staff is having on disabled and older people. We have heard a number of reports of disabled people who required assistance at Tube stations and were unable to find anyone.

To quote just two:

*Since the meeting...I have developed epileptic seizures. The most frightening was in Westminster Tube Station just before Christmas. **I looked frantically for station personnel as I was transferring from the Jubilee to District Lines and couldn't see anyone in a uniform to help me.** My friends got me out of the station and into a taxi. I could not have done that if I were on my own. I knew I was in Westminster Tube Station where I've been a million times, but I could not possibly have found my way out of the station by myself.*

*I won't risk being in a tube station if I feel at all vulnerable or shaky, but taxis are eating me alive financially. **The thought of having a seizure on a tube platform or in an unmanned station is beyond terrifying.** Not only the obvious risk on a platform, but*

we both know there are people who take advantage of physically vulnerable people and I am helpless during a seizure.

And, from a wheelchair user:

"I arrived at Westminster at approx., 17:00. Because of engineering works, on Jubilee Line, the tube was only going as far as West Hampstead, which does not have wheelchair access.

*I asked a member of staff, CSA, Phillips, to arrange for assistance, for me at Finchley Road, to get on to the Metropolitan Line, to get Wembley Park. **He was told there was no staff at Finchley Road.**"*

TfA were extremely concerned to see that London Underground's Equality Impact Assessment concluded that the cut to staff numbers on the tube would have a positive impact on people with disabilities.

We question how TfL had reached this conclusion given that the response from older and disabled groups and those with reduced mobility was that changes to station staffing would have a negative effect.

TfA would however like to add that in order for disabled passengers to use the accessible parts of the tube network freely, the lifts and escalators linking the street, ticket hall, platform and train must work.

If they break down at any level then access is severely diminished. Lengthy delays in repairing lifts and escalators have caused major disruptions and furthermore reduces people's confidence in using the Tube.

Whilst repairs are being carried out, information on completion dates also need to be readily available to all staff so that it can be communicated to passengers.

TfL should introduce as part of their minimum criteria for station accessibility a commitment to a maximum time to fix broken lifts and escalators.

Recommendation 4

Bus driver training The introduction of the accessible bus fleet has been a huge victory for disabled campaigners. And the rules for bus drivers is largely good. They are told to give priority to wheelchairs over buggies; to wait for passengers are seated before setting off; to kneel buses when necessary, to come right into the kerb to avoid a big step from pavement to bus, and to allow all but the heaviest scooters onto buses,

However, Transport for All receives complaints extremely frequently that bus drivers do not follow these rules. In one particularly worrying complaint, it was alleged that the bus controller told the bus driver not to give the wheelchair user priority.

Research from Age UK suggests that 800 older people fall on buses every day. In London, many older and disabled people are hurt in accidents of this kind.

Driver attitudes and behaviour are a very significant barrier to bus use and the Transport Committee's recommendations in terms of bus driver training, if taken up, we believe could improve the accessibility of buses substantially.

TfA visited a bus driver training session at Metro line buses last year. And while the introduction to the social model of disability in the training syllabus is welcome – there is a great need to supplement this with the real life everyday experiences of disabled and older bus passengers.

We therefore wrote to London Buses in new year offering suggestions on how the current training syllabus can be improved - however we are yet to hear back.

Indeed, TfA would like to see training in disability, age and deaf awareness for all new bus drivers, with face to face practical training once a year for all bus drivers. Many disabled and older people's groups would, we believe, be very happy to assist.

Furthermore, bus drivers who have been found to have failed in their duties towards disabled and older customers should be asked to meet with the bus user to apologise (restorative justice), and take further disability equality training if necessary. We were

pleased to see this happen recently in the case of Mrs A Dobson of Islington.

TfA feel that the Transport Committee's recommendations regarding specific performance targets on the service to people with reduced mobility should include targets on faulty ramps.

Improvements have been made to the reliability of ramps but still many bus companies are allowing buses to go out with faulty ramps.

This results in huge inconvenience for disabled passengers who then have to wait at bus stops for prolonged periods of time. TfA has heard many stories of disabled travellers being let down by a succession of buses with faulty ramps. We would like the Mayor to address this important issue by more robust action against private bus companies who knowingly allow buses with faulty ramps to leave their depots. This could include increasing the penalty placed on these companies.

Timetables

Bus operators must also ensure that timetables for bus routes can practically accommodate the needs of disabled and older passengers.

Complaints

TfA welcomes the Committee's suggestion to make complaining easier. Our own advocacy work shows that often disabled and older travellers once having complained about a bus travel experience, are disheartened to receive standard generic responses.

Providing a feedback form (for feedback both positive and negative) in the bus, as is found in Tube stations, would make it easier for passengers to record details of an incident while it was fresh in their minds.

Big Red Book

Increasingly, disabled and older people are choosing to purchase and use electric mobility scooters. No doubt with an aging population, we will be seeing more of them on our streets. Scooters provide users with a reliable and efficient way to get out and about locally; however longer distances are not possible as

they run on re-chargeable electric batteries which run out. Therefore increasingly scooter users have expressed a wish to be able to board buses and so increase the distance they can travel.

However, there is much confusion as to when and where this can happen. Some scooter users tell us they can board local buses, while others say they are flatly refused.

A lack of guidance to bus drivers in this matter is, TfA believes, responsible.

The Transport Committee is right to draw attention to misleading information in the Big Red Book on whether to allow scooters and wheelchairs onto buses. In the next edition, this must be made much clearer to avoid suggesting that scooters are not allowed (as is implied in the picture).

Furthermore, more explicit information should be given on what it means to give wheelchair users priority. Current guidance is that if a passenger refuses to move, the bus driver should 'Politely explain the situation to the wheelchair user and advise them to wait for the next bus'.

TfA believes that in cases like this, the passenger should be told that the bus will not move until they give way, and that wheelchair users have priority by law.

Flip-up seats

We welcome the Committee's recommendation to provide flip-up seats on buses, and question TfL's misgivings about flip up seats. They are used on the new Victoria Line trains, and provide an excellent balance between providing wheelchair space as well as passenger space if no wheelchair users are present.

Furthermore, bus networks elsewhere in the country use them. Here is a picture of the interior of a Brighton bus which has a wheelchair space seven seats long.



Mike Best, the Operations Director of Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company Ltd., said:

We find that the tip-up seat arrangement works really well for us, as it provides a useful space that enables us to carry buggies even when there is a wheelchair user on board. There has been a very small number of accidents over the years involving these seats but it accounts for less than 1% of all accidents and they have all been of a very minor nature, so it is fair to say that the effect has been negligible.

New Bus for London

For many disabled and older Londoners, a chance to design a bus from scratch was to be an exciting prospect. From the start Transport for All has been keen to stress that if the bus was to be accessible then it must involve disabled and older bus users from the very beginning.

Whilst consultation has occurred with groups of disabled and older people (as well groups representing other interest groups like parents) being invited to discuss the design and view 'mock ups' of the new bus - it appears that the views and experiences of

disabled travelers, in particular wheelchair users, have been left on the design table.

The wheelchair space whilst meeting official regulations that refer to the dimensions of a 'reference wheelchair' does not seem to be able to accommodate larger wheelchairs including electric ones. Maneuvering skills of a paralympian basket ball player seem to be required to get yourself into the space. As shown by footage taken by Transport for All during a tour around the mock up shown on BBC London News.

This means that only those wheelchair users with the confidence and patience to get into the space will be able to use it. It also means that there is no prospect whatsoever of scooter users using the new bus..

A bus for everyone.

It is true that to design a bus to accommodate all sections of London's diverse communities – is not an easy call. However it follows that when faced with such a task it is important to look at what currently exists, and then attempt to better it.

The New Bus for London should be taking the best of what's out there already in terms of bus design: and there are some really accessible buses out there on the roads. If TfL instead just settle for the legal minimum for their wheelchair space, it would be a wasted opportunity.

We urge the Mayor and Transport for London to listen to feedback it has received and ensure that the new Routemaster lives up to its expectations.

In Conclusion

Transport for All congratulates the London Assembly's Transport Committee and its staff on an impressive report with many valuable recommendations on how to further improve the accessibility of the transport network for London's disabled and older citizens.

We urge the Mayor and TfL to seriously consider and take up the report's recommendations. The last few years have seen a number of key accessibility programmes de-prioritised, for example the LU step free programme.

It is imperative that to restore faith in the Mayor's and TfL commitment to accessibility, that more political will and resources are directed into ensuring that improving accessibility is not a soft target for cuts in the current economic climate.

An accessible transport network benefits all Londoners and is a not an expendable luxury, but a much needed necessity.