

London Assembly Transport Committee investigation into Using London's transport system with a sensory impairment

Organisation submissions

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Consultation Response

Travelling with a sensory impairment London Assembly Transport Committee February 2016

About us

Action on Hearing Loss is the charity formerly known as RNID. Our vision is of a world where deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus do not limit or label people and where people value and look after their hearing. We help people confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss to live the life they choose. We enable them to take control of their lives and remove the barriers in their way. We give people support and care, develop technology and treatments and campaign for equality.

Our response will focus on key issues that relate to people with hearing loss. Throughout this response we use the term 'people with hearing loss' to refer to people with all levels of hearing loss, including people who are profoundly deaf. We are happy for the details of this response to be made public.

Introduction

Action on Hearing Loss welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the London Transport Committee on the experiences of people with hearing loss of using London transport. There are 11 million people with hearing loss in the UK today and we estimate there are over a million (1,081,000) people with hearing loss in London.

Below you will find answers to the three questions posed by the Committee.

What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

There are three main challenges for people with hearing loss in using the London transport network. These are:

- Access to accurate real-time information;
- Staff awareness of hearing loss and their ability to communicate with people with hearing loss;
- Access to information in emergency situations.

Further evidence on these three challenges is detailed below.

People with hearing loss face challenges in accessing accurate, real-time information. While people with hearing loss can check the details of their journey in advance, issues are more likely to arise during travel that cannot be anticipated, for example a station closure, or a bus terminating early. In our 2008 annual survey we found that over half of respondents had travelled by train during the previous year and nearly two-fifths of these people said it was difficult to find information during their train journey. In 2013, a contributor to our online forum stated:

The tube - I absolutely hate! I jumped on at Morden as the tube doors were open, no visible displays anywhere. I must have sat there at Morden on this tube for over 20 minutes, only to realise that the tube was not going anywhere soon and everyone was getting on at another platform. How much of an idiot did I feel?

While the increase in up-to-date information available on the internet such as travel information apps and Twitter feeds is beneficial for people with hearing loss, this information needs to be kept up to date as incidents occur. This is currently not always the case as this quote from Action on Hearing Loss' online forum in 2013 shows:

Twice, this last week I got on the wrong bus, after using what I thought was a reliable TfL guide online through my smart phone. The first time, I hadn't realised until everyone got off the bus, and I was the last one sitting there, miles from home. I was not pleased that I had to walk three miles back home in the freezing dark.

A lack of staff awareness of hearing loss and communication methods is another challenge. When needing to interact with station staff, people with hearing loss say that poor lighting in stations, combined with a lack of understanding of hearing loss and knowledge of communication methods among staff make lip-reading and communicating difficult. We have heard stories from people with hearing loss having to remind transport staff to remain face-to-face and not hide their mouth with their hands, which can become frustrating. Bus drivers, conductors and ticket inspectors are also not always deaf aware.

The need for up to date information and staff awareness becomes even more acute in emergency situations. In the most extreme cases, such as the evacuation of a station or being asked to vacate a train carriage, inadequate access to information may put people in danger. Our supporters have told us that they have found themselves in potentially dangerous situations when stations have been evacuated where they have not been sure what is happening. Ideas suggested to us included simple visual aids in these situations, for example if staff wore sashes or tabards which said 'emergency situation – please evacuate' which could avoid confusion in a potentially dangerous situation.

How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

Action on Hearing Loss welcomes efforts made by Transport for London to make the transport network more accessible to people with hearing loss, although we feel that changes can still be made to improve the experiences of passengers with hearing loss.

In London, every bus now has next stop visual displays on board, as well as a countdown display at many bus stops. It is extremely important for people with hearing loss to have access to up-to-date visual information and London has demonstrated that this technology can be successfully implemented.

On the Victoria line, tube drivers are able to choose from a wider range of messages to show on the visual display system. This allows for drivers to make ad hoc announcements visually, as well over the speaker systems. Action on Hearing Loss would like to see this approach adopted across the whole tube network as it would be beneficial to people with hearing loss.

Where issues, such as poor communication, have occurred, however, the passenger's experience is affected. Having a negative experience when travelling, particularly when having prepared and checked information in advance, can have a detrimental impact on a person's confidence.

How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

Action on Hearing Loss believes that all frontline staff should be aware of how to communicate with people with hearing loss. All initial training should cover deaf awareness, including communication methods, emergency evacuation procedures and the use of technology, such as induction loops. We recommend that Transport for London considers this in its training and development programmes for all staff, but particularly those working on the frontline. This would ensure that there are always staff on duty with the skills to communicate, even basically, with people with hearing loss.

Action on Hearing Loss would like to see that real-time visual displays provide the same information as audible announcements during travel; for example, bus diversions, changes of destination, changes of platform, delays, cancellations and emergency information. We recommend that the technology used on the Victoria line is extended to all tube lines and bus services in London, as this would improve accessibility of the London transport network to people with hearing loss.

Transport for London must also consider developing and implementing procedures to communicate emergency information to passengers with hearing loss in a visual format. This could be through the use of the real-time visual displays, but also through staff trained in communicating with people with hearing loss, or staff wearing tabards with clear, short messages. Action on Hearing Loss recommends that Transport for London communicates messages in emergency situations to people with hearing loss in a visual format.

Summary of recommendations

- Transport for London should introduce deaf awareness and communication methods in its training and development programmes for all frontline staff.

- Transport for London should introduce the real-time visual and audio technology used on the Victoria line to all tube lines and bus services in London.
- Transport for London should develop and implement procedures to communicate emergency information in a visual format to passengers with hearing loss.

Contact details

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David Heathfield

Assistant Business Development Manager

10/02/2016

The Chiltern Railway Company Limited – Response to the Greater London Assembly’s Investigation into Using London’s Transport System with a Sensory Impairment.

1. The Respondent

The Chiltern Railway Company Limited ("Chiltern Railways") operates franchised passenger train services from London Marylebone towards Aylesbury Vale Parkway and Birmingham Moor Street, plus associated branch lines, including between London Paddington to South Ruislip. Chiltern Railways operates six stations in the London Travel zones area as well as serving stations operated by Transport for London. The Chiltern Railways franchise is due to expire in 2021.

The Chiltern Railways contact for Greater London Assembly Transport Committee matters is either myself (details in the header of this response) or Thomas Painter, Business Development Manager (Chiltern Railways contact details are as follows: 0207 3333 117; thomas.painter@chilternrailways.co.uk, or Great Central House, Marylebone Station, Melcombe Place, London, NW1 6JJ).

2. Comments for the Investigation

Chiltern Railways is committed to ensuring that all passengers are able to use our services safely and comfortably. We have invested in our trains and improving our stations to provide a better journey experience for passengers with sensory impairments.

At Our Stations and On Board Our Trains

Chiltern Railway operates six stations within the London travel zones, by far the largest of these is London Marylebone station. At Marylebone we have recently installed an information point which acts as a first point of contact for passengers with disabilities who require assistance. The station is equipped with an audio induction loop for passengers who use hearing aids.

During service disruption, we make regular announcements and ensure that our information screens are updated regularly to keep passengers informed. If there is a change of platform at short notice,

we ensure that customers with disabilities who have identified themselves to our staff on arrival at the station are provided with assistance to change platforms.

All of our trains are equipped with public address systems for broadcasting information. To ensure that customers have sufficient time to prepare to leave the train, we make an announcement and display information about the next stop after departure from the previous station where possible. We aim to ensure that passengers are kept regularly informed of how the train is running, especially if there is disruption.

Nearly all of our trains are fitted with Passenger Information System screens which display next stop and terminal station information amongst other messages. By 2020 this will be rolled out to the small proportion of the fleet lacking the facility in line with PRM TSI regulations. Chiltern Railways trains are fitted with priority seats for disabled customers or those less able to stand.

Training and Policy

At a company level we ensure that staff receive appropriate training to help passengers with sensory impairments undertake their journey. All new staff undergo disability training as part of their company induction, whilst existing staff receive an update at least every two years. Our training provides our staff with information on our legal obligations to customers and staff and covers areas including disability and discrimination, the effects of different types of disability and communication with disabled customers and colleagues.

We include in our training a number of simulated and practical activities which teach our staff how to assist and lead people with visual impairments. Members of staff in customer facing roles and those who use the telephone to speak with customers are provided with specific training to assist them understand the importance of clarity of speech including intonation, emphasis and language. This training is designed to raise awareness of potential communication issues and emphasise how ineffective communication can impact upon disabled customers.

Aside from physical adjustments to stations and rolling stock, we regularly review our arrangements with a variety of stakeholder groups such as our Passengers Board which contains experts on disability issues, statutory consultation bodies such as Transport Focus and London Travelwatch, our industry representative body ATOC and individual interest groups.

Company Engagement

As a company Chiltern Railways has committed to engaging with organisations representing people with sensory impairments. In 2014 our Managing Director took part in Hearing Dogs for Deaf People's 'Deaf for the Day' challenge. The opportunity to experience our service from the perspective of a deaf passenger allowed him to share several learning points with the wider company.

The Hearing Dogs for Deaf People charity is based on our route in Saunderton and works to help deaf people overcome the feeling of isolation which results from deafness. They were one of our

charities of the year in 2014 and over £4,000 was raised by Chiltern Railways employees for this worthy cause. Chiltern managers have held meetings with Hearing Dogs for Deaf People in order to take these learning points and incorporate them into our training.

Chiltern Railways also has close ties to Guide Dogs for the Blind who are located on our route in Leamington Spa. Fundraising by Chiltern Railways employees has enabled the company to name two guide dog puppies in recent years.

3. Conclusion

Chiltern Railways is committed to working in the best interests of all our passengers. We maintain a fund for minor improvements and are committed to working with Network Rail to support the delivery and development of Access for All and Inclusive Design schemes.

We would welcome any further questions or clarifications you might need on this issue and look forward to engaging further.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'D Heathfield', written in a cursive style.

David Heathfield

Community Response to TFL Accessible Transport

What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

Navigating the streets is increasingly difficult with the increased desire to make use of outdoor space for entertainment continually encroaches on the available pathways need for those that are partially sight or disabled, the use of shared surfaces increases the difficulty for both guide dog users and non-users in having the ability to navigate a clear direct route through pedestrian areas.

One of the big challenges with the transport network is signage. Signage needs to be at eye level using large and bold fonts, making it easier with help points in strong contrasting colours

Constant changes to stations layouts and timetables causes' great concern for members when arranging travel routes, these changes cause distress for the users of the transport system bringing confidence issues in using the system and for those arranging support along the route leaves them open to a service that is not readily available to access when required so limiting independence.

With regard to safety for lone travellers and with disability hate crime on the increase, we are more than aware due to media coverage and the perceptions that appear in publications has seen a dramatic increase in recent years many of the users of the transport system feel vulnerable and concerned that a lack of staffing leaves a great possibility of experiencing unwelcome behaviours that go un reported. Mindfulness in selecting colours of uniform would also be helpful.

A recent example which was reported to me via our membership as follows;

A lone traveller needing to purchase a ticket at a station which had no ticket office available the only way to purchase a ticket was via a machine which for a partially sighted person was impossible, no staff were available to help and he was directed to the opposite end of the station to use a machine no help was offered and during a busy peak period he was unable to locate the machine initially, once he did after much searching he was unable to read the machine it was not audible and no staff were on duty to help, the individual had to ask for help from a fellow passenger, this removes both independence and confidence in using the transport system.

Guide dog access limits the use of some stations. Audio description works well when on the bus but not when waiting for a bus. Bus stop signage needs to be lower/bolder and/or in Braille.

We therefore would seek to ensure that staffing is adequately resourced to reflect the real need of highly trained visible staff. Staff need to be clearly identifiable at all times in highly reflective clothing

As challenges change and technology moves on then staff training and awareness needs to follow suit.

Particular attention should be given to those disabilities that are not visible such as autism, learning disabilities and mental health. Staff need support to ensure a level of awareness in helping and supporting such members of the public that require assistance training provision should be ongoing to ensure that levels of awareness and understanding amongst staff is of a sufficient level to maintain the safety of users.

We continue to have concerns raised regarding the use of disabled seats on buses and trains we would like to see a high profile campaign informing the general public of the consequences of using spaces designated for disabled travellers. This creates issues at peak and off peak traveling times and needs addressing.

The use of audio signals is welcomed however, we would like to see this more widely used, along with tack tiles to ensure guide dogs are not put into situations that leave both the disabled member and the dog at risk of injury.

Whilst welcoming the commitment to ensure staff are trained to both be aware and understand the complexity of users, we consider that further training should be made available and that all staff should have access to the training with this is the pressing need for the training to be delivered by disabled users to again emphasis and real understanding By ensuring that a considerable increase in staffing levels takes place to proactively engage with users of the transport system.

I would like to draw your attention to the following which is a perfect example of how travel is key to ensuring both the independence and wellbeing of all.

Alex Scott was a lifelong trade unionist and campaigner for the rights of disabled people, particularly in Scotland.

Alex, who was blind, was an activist a campaigner and a much respected member with the National League for the Blind and Disabled (NLBD), which became part of Community in 2000.

Alex campaigned tirelessly to make sure we never lost the ability to look not just at the large high level things that affect lives..... but also the smallsometimes seen as trivial matters to those that might not contemplate the impact of decisions made at higher level...*small but meaningful.*

Alex above all wanted

To make Meaningful differences to the lives of the blind and sensory impaired community. The 'All Aboard' campaign is a perfect example of Alex's practical approach to campaigning.

Tragically this was to be Alex's last campaign, as he passed away earlier this year.

Rail travel is not easily accessible to all disabled people.....

And Why is that?

Well.. Its Multiple factor that makes navigating different train lines and routes difficult for people with both physical disabilities and particularly partially sighted people.

Take the differing train manufacturers when designing trains Each manufacturer will have buttons and handles in different positions/ locations, both on train line main doors and in toilets. Imagine not having your sight for a moment and being in a simple position where you simple can't find that button.

Alex once told me a tail..

Of a man wanting to be independent working and traveling regularly. A proud man who on this day had travelled on the train alone, he needed to use the on board facilities and entered the toilet after searching for the button albeit, With a little help from a fellow traveller, but all did not go well, this man felt humiliated..... He could not find the button to exit the toilet and was stuck in the toilet for a considerable time..... Alex always said it's about enabling... it's the small and meaningful.....

Buttons on the train A thought..... To agree with manufacturers to place them in the same place.... Small but meaningful

Platform staff

Need to be visible at all times

A simple change could help make all the difference to a partially sighted person... small and meaningful!

Please leave your contact email address in case we would like to ask for any further information (optional)

bbambrough@community-tu.org

07801253271

SUBMIT

Submission from Guide Dogs London:
Robert Harris, Engagement Manager

What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

Assistance at, and between Tube/Train stations.

- We congratulate TfL for the training they give Tube staff when it comes to guiding skills. In the main we receive positive feedback from our clients when it comes to confidence of guiding and friendliness. There are however times when finding a member of staff at the less well staffed ticket barriers is a challenge. We have also heard of clients being put on a Tube carriage at one end, but no member of staff to collect them at the other. This may be a result of recent staff changes.
- Assistance between TfL and Network Rail stations is sporadic and something that our clients can never be confident will occur.

Buses:

- The most controversial issue with buses is to do with drivers who do not pull the bus up to the flag at the stop on every occasion. If there is a queue of buses at a stop, the buses at the back of the line will very often leave before getting directly to the stop. A vision impaired person will not be aware that they have missed the bus. Bus drivers must also use their sight and sometimes common sense to spot someone with a cane or dog waiting at the stop and call out the number and destination of the bus.
- There is always a misunderstanding surrounding whether a guide dog owner has priority over a buggy user on a bus. It would be preferable if TfL could be stronger and clearer with their messaging on this as our clients regularly find themselves without a seat, or room for their dog with buggy users refusing to move or fold the buggy away.
- Bus drivers regularly drive off before our clients have the chance to find a seat, resulting in some falling over or being wrong-footed.
- Bus stop bypasses are completely unusable by our clients, therefore unacceptable, resulting in our clients unable to board and alight buses. Guide Dogs is currently working with TfL on a suitable re-design and monitoring scheme, but our position remains that these areas step backwards for mobility.

Our clients will never have the confidence to cross a cycle lane in order to get to and from a bus. Our informal research has shown that the majority of cyclists will not stop to give way to pedestrians, including our clients, who can't hear when it's safe to cross.

Pedestrian environment:

- The ever changing 'shared space' guidance that differs from borough to borough adds to confusion and huge drop in confidence for our clients living in these affected areas. These shared areas rely on the use of sight to use effectively. Informal crossings (where a pedestrian can cross the road at any point) only work when a pedestrian can make eye contact with a driver so that one can give way over the other. Vision impaired people cannot hear cyclists, so there is never a safe way to cross. We advise controlled crossings at every opportunity. We have examples of areas where clients have been cut off from their community – unable to get to shops or doctors. In some cases, they will not leave their home. Randomly placed street furniture may look pleasing, but can create confusion and in some cases bumps and scrapes for our clients. We ask for a sensible approach to this issue, an appropriate balance and a firm positive case study that works for everyone and can be followed by other designers.
- Cyclists must be kept segregated from pedestrians via an obvious kerb drop, or 'uplift' to make it clear to everyone where they belong on the street. Cycle space must never be created at a cost to pedestrian/pavement space. Space shared by pedestrians and cyclists is unacceptable. Our clients regularly have 'near misses' with cyclists who whizz past them at high speeds, startling them and their dogs. Ongoing education surrounding the behaviour expected from cyclists at zebra crossings/junctions and bus stop bypasses must be a priority at a time when cycle superhighways are nearly complete.
- Tactile paving must be used wherever appropriate and applicable. Guidance paving can be a great tool to help vision impaired people get from one area to another.
- A-Boards. Legislation surrounding the use of advertising boards on pavements is sporadic. These boards act as a barrier for our clients and as they travel from one Borough to another, they can never be sure whether these boards, or indeed café furniture will be a barrier to them or not. One rule for all must be a priority, giving enough clear space on the pavement for our client to move around safely in.

- Private Hire Vehicles. This remains the biggest challenge to the mobility of our clients in London. Clients are regularly denied access to vehicles by drivers who have a lack of understanding of the law regarding the admittance of assistance dogs. This can be due to religious/cultural beliefs, or a basic lack of knowledge/education by the licensing authority or business owner. Whilst TfL is making great strides in improving this issue, more must be done by the owners of PHV businesses to educate drivers about the law. Being denied access to PHV's affects the confidence of our clients, is very upsetting and at times can leave them abandoned by the roadside.

How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

- In general, good guiding skills.
- In general, good 'talking' transport – buses, Tube and Overground.
- Network Rail trains regularly fail when it comes to correct audio information.
- Regular, and effective engagement from TfL



How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

- Always think of planning new projects/improving access with sensory impaired people in mind. In general this process works better for every passenger, impaired or not. E.g. more staff, audio announcements, safe and cycle free pedestrian environments and buses that always pull up to the stop.

Your answer



Please leave your contact email address in case we would like to ask for any further information (optional).

Robert.harris@guidedogs.org.uk

From: [Challinor, Amanda](#)
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Feedback for transport for people with sensory needs.
Date: 13 February 2016 11:44:51

Please see the following feedback from our Deaf Community in Bexley

Weekend staff limited mean difficult for deaf people to ask for assist.

Weekend engineer work - no announcement on platforms also sometimes it say do not use this train but people do catch as they heard the latest voice announcement which is not same message as visual announcement... the visual announcement need update same time as voice.

The helppoint for emergency / information not good for hearing impaired.. we need better accessible.

Any staff need deaf awareness and maybe basic sign language skill

As explained above about visual announcement that not always update quickly enough... staff need to be aware of important to update same time as voice.

Visual message inside the carriage not always working and when change of plan i.e. different route the visual announcement never updated.

Bus driver will not know if people are deaf... sit upstairs and everyone got out for some reason and the driver unaware that deaf passenger still upstairs... need for the driver to be aware that there is deaf passenger in the bus... maybe bus pass need add message say hearing impaired so the driver is aware.

London underground similar issue as train (announcement) also lack of disability access i.e. lift.

Train - 2 carriages only.. front and end carriages go different routes but for deaf people who usually not aware which carriage to go with.. sometimes the announcement will only tell you which one but no visual announcement!

There is 'ipad based' early warning system at hospital.. could be useful if we have the same at transports?!? or handset phone alerts 'live'.

Amanda Challinor
 Development & Operations Manager
 Sensory Support Services
 Inspire Community Trust
 020 3045 5330

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 to report this email as spam.

Rebekah Canning
Secretariat,
6th Floor, City Hall
The Queen's Walk
SE1 2AA

10 February 2016

Dear Rebecca,

Using London's transport system with a sensory impairment

London TravelWatch is the statutory body representing transport users in London. We welcome this investigation and are grateful for the opportunity to comment.

Everyone should be able to get around on London's transport system. It is easy (and we do this ourselves) to consider the needs of the mobility impaired without thinking of users with a sensory impairment. A lot has been done, but there are still gaps in the provision of information, and assistance with navigation on around the public transport system and our streets for those with a sensory impairment. Those that represent people with a sensory impairment promote the notion of 'universal design'. This is a concept that should be adopted and it is helpful when considering these issues. Below are some examples of issues that are raised with us.

The majority of London's bus stops are now accessible to those with a mobility impairment, which benefits many users, but they are not accessible for those with a visual impairment because it is not possible to know which number bus has arrived without assistance from fellow passengers. Bus Countdown is valuable for most passengers, where it is installed, but it is again not accessible for those with a visual impairment. Bus Countdown should be installed at many more bus stops than it presently is and TfL should investigate using announcements at bus stops as well as its Bus Countdown screens,

Stations are difficult to navigate by those with a visual impairment. There are mapping systems that can help with navigation. However, the only feasible way in which some users will be able to get around stations is with the assistance of staff. Our research into the travelling environment demonstrated a general support for staffed stations. Stations should be staffed from the first to the last train. Public address systems are used to alert passengers to changes to their services and disruption. However, those with a hearing impairment will not receive this information. Information should be broadcast over public address systems and customer information screens.

It is well established that tactile paving should be installed at the top and bottom of staircases; however, this is far from universal. There should be a programme to introduce tactile paving on staircases.

On-bus and train information is now widely available on both bus, Underground and rail services. This will become universal as new trains replace the existing ones without this facility.

On London's streets there are further difficulties for visually impaired people. London's streets should have footways that are level, continuous and clear of obstructions. It is the duty of TfL and the local highway to keep their footways clear and they have the powers to do so. Only a very small number of local highway authorities do this, as they should. Some defend the right of traders to clutter the streets with free-standing advertising boards. TfL acknowledges this issue and is starting to enforce against those that obstruct the pavement. We would welcome the support of the Assembly in our campaign to clear London's streets of obstructions. Our report looking at this issue is available at:
[http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/news/view?id=20&x\[0\]=news/list](http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/news/view?id=20&x[0]=news/list)



Upper Street, Islington

Tactile paving at crossing points is useful for visually impaired users and it is generally installed, however it can be installed incorrectly or inconsistently. There is work being undertaken to address this and develop new standards that we welcome.

Modern technology can provide many new ways of communicating with passengers. The industry should embrace these opportunities for all its passengers, but also recognise not all passengers can utilise them.

If anything needs clarification, or you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Stops
Policy Officer

London Assembly Transport Committee Enquiry

1. What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

A) Using the transport network

There are some contrasts and contradictions across the transport network which make travel more difficult for blind and partially sighted people. Travel on the London Underground is consistently viewed as a positive experience owing to the excellent assistance staff are able to offer. This assistance is greatly valued and it allows increased flexibility of travel as there is no need to book in advance. This contrasts with services offered by the rail companies who still require at least 24 hours notice hence a visually impaired person is guided through the Underground without prior notice to then face a wait at the station i.e. London Bridge as staff there are not able to continue this 'turn up and go' service. Another contrast between the Underground and rail travel is the use of announcements onboard trains. All Underground trains have excellent information including on some lines details of delays on other routes, station closures all of which aid a person's independence and confidence while travelling. However, some rail companies still operate trains through London with no announcements hence raising anxiety and causing a need to rely upon fellow passengers to disembark at the correct station.

Travelling by bus is similarly made much more straightforward owing to the 'lbus' information system. However, this system still relies upon driver awareness when a bus is diverted and the system is not able to accommodate the changes to the route. While travel on board a bus is a positive experience problems continue with actually boarding the correct bus. There are an increasing number of bus stops across London served by a number of routes, not something which on the face of it should be a problem. However, very often a blind or partially sighted person is faced by a queue of buses and has no idea of the second or third bus is the one they require. Very often by the time a fellow passenger has told them the bus has arrived it is pulling out into traffic and away from the stop. We believe that all buses should pull up to the stop and that this should be something which bus operators and Transport for London should regularly remind their drivers of. It is vital to note here that drivers

can't assume that because a person at a stop isn't holding a cane as doesn't have a guide dog that they are not visually impaired.

A further barrier to confident use of London's buses is caused by continued changes to the pedestrian environment designed to aid one group but directly impacting upon another.

B) The pedestrian environment

i) Bus stop bypasses: Firstly and to continue with the experience of bus travel we should focus upon 'bus stop bypasses'. This idea to promote safer cycle use will and is already causing concern for blind and partially sighted people. The idea of a route which passes behind the bus stop to facilitate cyclists causes real concern for our members and supporters. Firstly how would a passenger with a visual impairment know to expect such a route as they get off the bus? How can these routes be made safe? We welcome Transport for London's acknowledgement of the difficulties caused and their ideas for reducing these but would strongly recommend that such projects are halted pending further research. One vital area of research is the idea of a crossing being put into a bypass something which should increase pedestrian safety rather than the current assumption that cyclists and pedestrians will interact and know who should have the right of way – the flawed thinking underpinning the idea of so-called shared space.

ii) Tactile or bubble paving

This type of paving is to be found at controlled crossing points where it is traditionally red. It is also found at crossings where the road and pavement are at the same level and is traditionally yellow at these points. It is a cause of real concern that both TFL and some boroughs seek to deviate ever further from Department for Transport guidance. They are doing so both in how the paving is positioned and also in the colours used. The whole point of this paving is to enable blind and partially sighted people to locate a crossing point. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that any reductions in the amount will make this more difficult. This is especially so if the so-called 'tail' which extends across the pavement is reduced both in width and length. Furthermore identification difficulties are caused by the changing in colours used for the identification of crossings for people who have some sight. It is frustrating to note that these changes are often related to aesthetic considerations rather than taking into account the needs of visually impaired people.

iii) Shared space

We are very concerned about the increased desire of planners and designers to wish to develop this type of urban design. The idea of removing all delineation between the pedestrian and the road user to improve behaviour is essentially what lies beneath this concept. This type of scheme can be seen on Exhibition Rd where confusion still is very clearly manifested by both drivers and pedestrians. We believe the idea of drivers and pedestrians making eye contact with each other and hence modifying their behaviour is greatly flawed when it comes to people who are blind or partially sighted. As with bus stop bypasses we would wish to see no further schemes developed until further research into pedestrian safety is undertaken.

iv) Advertising boards (A boards)

Advertising boards have been highlighted by our members as the number one obstacle they face while walking. The key reason for this being their unpredictability there is no common position for them to be placed, no common height or width and of course from day-to-day they will not be in precisely the same place. Over time this erodes a person's sense of well being and confidence as can be clearly seen in our report 'who put that there'. We therefore warmly welcome Transport for London's decision to adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to A boards on some of their routes. We would like to see Transport for London and the Assembly exert pressure on the Boroughs to follow suit. It is welcome that the London Boroughs of Kingston Upon Thames, Hackney and most recently the City of London have instigated such a policy. However, it is vital to note here that any policy is only as good as the ability to enforce it. We therefore strongly recommend that both TFL and the Boroughs ensure that enough time and staffing are devoted to the policy's enforcement.

2. How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

Transport for London offers and has developed a number of areas which greatly aid the ability of blind and partially sighted people to travel independently. The 'turn up and go' support on the Tube is hugely valued and appreciated as it allows for independent and spontaneous travel. However, as has been mentioned above there are gaps between travelling through the Underground and successfully travelling through mainline stations onto a train. We would hope that when Transport for

London takes over train routes in London that this key gap will be closed. Furthermore we would expect that no trains will travel into and through London without station announcements.

It would be hugely welcomed if the Boroughs consulted with local blind and partially sighted people at the start of a transport project rather than either during or post implementation. Current examples would be the increased implementation of cycle lanes which reduce road crossings, see bus stop bypasses introduced and causes problems for private hire and dial-a-ride services. The latter point is of particular concern as a person using either private hire or dial-a-ride is most likely doing so due to having little mobility and hence wishes to be taken directly from A to B. However, cycle way developments have meant that some areas are now non-stopping i.e. Cycle Enfield so a person will no longer be able to taken directly to their destination.

3. How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

i) Transport for London – As has been mentioned above Transport for London already implements a number of schemes and systems which help hugely in people's independent travel. However, there is a very clear need to improve the user experience at the bus stop. Too many times we are told of the problems caused by 'stacking' and would wish drivers and operators to be regularly reminded of the need to pull up to the stop rather than some distance along the road as is currently the case. Furthermore there is a role for some joint working with the Boroughs to ensure this problem is not compounded by the removal of stops and hence further pressure on those which remain. The re-design of the public realm in Wimbledon saw one stop removed and so the only remaining stop is now served by 6 buses with a further route which terminates there.



Registered Charity No. 294922

National Association of Deafened People

To

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM,
 Chair of the Transport Committee
 London Assembly
 City Hall
 The Queen's Walk
 London
 SE1 2AA
transportcommittee@london.gov.uk

From:

Lidia Best
 Chair
 NADP, Dalton House
 60 Windsor Avenue
 London SW19 2RR
chairman@nadp.org.uk

Dear Valerie,

Date 11 March 2016

Re; Transport Committee visit.

Thank you for the letter dated 1th March.

It was a pleasure to meet you and the team, I am glad you have found the discussions and experience helpful, I felt the same in terms of sharing the experiences with you.

Thank you for asking us to provide the committee with the written questions, this provides us with an opportunity in case I am not able to attend the meeting.

- 1) We have noted, buses always display the visual information on their boards correctly, however, this is not always the case with London Underground Trains.
Can we please make sure drivers update the information correctly?
- 2) What is the plan to update existing London Underground Lines with better accessibility features?
Is there a plan to follow similar improvements, we see with Circle and District lines?
- 3) Emergency information and sudden changes to route is only provided via loudspeakers. This means that deafened people are receiving the information needed to make decision related to next steps in their travel plans. More importantly, they are not able to follow instructions in case of emergency.
How does TfL propose to remedy this situation?
Are there any trials related to implement real live information on boards?

Patrons: Miss Ruth Griffiths, Baroness Howe of Idlicote CBE, Mr David Jackson, Mr Tom Levitt, Sir George Martin CBE,
 Professor Richard Ramsden FRCS, Sir Roger Sims JP
 Chairman: Mrs Lidia Best, Hon. Vice- Chairman: Mrs Ruth Myers,
 Treasurer: Mr David Wise, Hon Secretary: Mrs Clare Hedley, Membership Secretary: Susan Bramley

- 4) Can Transport for London and the Transport Committee provide us with action plans dedicated to the protection of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies? Especially in case of deaf people in general and their needs for information access?

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lidia Best', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lidia Best

Patrons: Miss Ruth Griffiths, Baroness Howe of Idlicote CBE, Mr David Jackson, Mr Tom Levitt, Sir George Martin CBE,
Professor Richard Ramsden FRCS, Sir Roger Sims JP
Chairman: Mrs Lidia Best , Hon. Vice- Chairman: Mrs Ruth Myers,
Treasurer: Mr David Wise, Hon Secretary: Mrs Clare Hedley, Membership Secretary: Susan Bramley



(NADP) Dalton House
60 Windsor Avenue
London SW19 2RR

Email: vice-chairman@nadp.org.uk

11 February, 2016

London Assembly Transport Committee
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Dear Transport Committee

Consultation on the Accessibility of London Transport for sensory impaired people

The National Association of Deafened People represents the needs of people who have lost most or all of their useful hearing and rely mainly on visual aids and assistive devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants to enable them to communicate.

We welcome the opportunity to take part in the consultation and would like to acknowledge constant improvements which Transport for London is undertaking in respect to access to public transport. One of the best practice signage of carriages is currently displayed with new Circle Line trains, we hope other Underground lines which are undergoing improvements will follow the design.

We make the following comments on the consultation:

What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London?

Some pelican crossings are not very visible, for example, those without a zebra crossing.

We also find that often the lights, showing green or red are not facing pedestrian but drivers only. This creates additional anxiety. Additionally some lights change too quickly and do not allow sufficient time to cross safely.

On London Underground far more needs to be done to ensure deafened people are informed about changes to their journey when they are already in the station. Clear visual information should be available at entry and platform level. At the moment, the information is only voiced, which is not accessible. This is especially important in case of emergency

On board LUL trains, drivers should ensure all visual information is correct - it is not unusual to board a train which displays incorrect journey information or has not been switched on.

How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network?

We find staff in general deaf aware and supportive when approached.

We welcome continuous improvements with new carriages following best practice guidance.

We find licensed taxis more accessible for booking online and with text messaging.

London black taxis with loop systems installed have proven very useful.

How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel?

Buses should display “next stop” information where it can be seen clearly from all parts of the vehicle. The location/indicator board should be placed at roof level on single decker vehicles.

On double decker vehicles the indicator board should be placed near the door and driver at single decker height.

there should be an area on platforms and trains clearly marked where people can use the loop to hear announcements

Train indicator boards should be used at all stations to provide “next train” and service information;

People who live on some outer-London sections of LUL have minimal means of obtaining service and “next train” information.

There is a complete lack of any visual information on Thameslink trains and this needs to be addressed urgently.

Kind regards

Ruth Myers
Vice Chairman NADP

From: [Katy Wright](#)
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Feedback: Using London's transport system with a sensory impairment
Date: 11 February 2016 11:42:57

Good morning,

My name is Katy Wright, I am the Project Coordinator at South East London Vision (SELVis). We are a registered charity supporting blind and partially sighted people in Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark.

I forwarded the email I received from a colleague requesting comments from people with a sensory impairment using the London Transport Network.

Below are some points raised by our members.

Challenges:

- Often issues with buses not pulling up to the curb, stopping far away from the bus stop etc.
- Signage in the underground is not very good.
- Careless/thoughtless cyclists - Cyclist need more training and there needs to be more enforcement of the rules for cyclists.
- Development of Cycle superhighway. There are now floating bus stops which are not accessible through a safe pedestrian crossing. Also see the below comment from a Southwark resident.
- 'Finding out the layout of a bus stop which can only be reached over the cycle lane. I approached the bus-stop nearest to Southwark tube on the Blackfriars Road from Southwark Tube itself. On the way, I encountered a misleading dropped kerb without bobbles amongst other pavement furniture. Having reached the correct crossing point, (a dropped kerb with bobbles) I was able to hear the full complement of traffic in both directions on the Blackfriars Road in front of me echoing under the railway bridge, punctuated by trains going over the bridge and bleeping from the pedestrian crossing further up the street'.
- Removal/relocation of bus stops.
- Street furniture
- Bus drivers not always having audio announcements turned on.

How well do TFL, boroughs and providers support those with a sensory impairment:

- Things have improved with station staff (especially since 2012). More assistance to get to platforms etc is provided.
- Some bus drivers are very helpful, they wait until you are seated, check you are on the correct bus and so on. Others are not - there needs to be more consistency as bad experiences can deter many blind and partially sighted people from wanting to access public transport independently.

How could TFL and other providers improve (Suggestions included):

- Bus drivers need more awareness training.
- A marshal system for buses during rush hour, to prevent over crowding and pushing on buses (For example how school buses are controlled). The presence of a person in a high-vis jacket can improve safe access to transport for all.
- People with a sensory impairment need to be consulted more often.

Please can you inform me of any future developments and progress with the information provided.

Kind regards,

Katy

Katy Wright

Thomas Pocklington Trust

Katy.Wright@pocklington-trust.org.uk
 07973692487 / 0203 815 3661

www.pocklington-trust.org.uk

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Valerie Shawcross OBE AM
Chair, London Assembly Transport Committee
City Hall
Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

03 March 2016

Dear Valerie

Experience of people with sensory impairment using London's transport network

I am pleased that the London Assembly Transport Committee has chosen to investigate this important topic and look forward to discussing our work with you in more detail.

London has one of the most accessible transport networks in the world. All London's buses and taxis are accessible and we are making around 40 more London Underground and London Overground stations step-free in the next decade.

Fourteen per cent of Londoners consider themselves to have a disability, with around 200,000 of them blind or visually impaired. We need to provide all the customers who use our services with the advice, information and support they need to be confident in using public transport.

This letter provides an overview of our work to make London's transport network the best and most accessible it can be. I hope you find this helpful ahead of the Committee session on 9 March.

Technology

We are leading the way among transport authorities in our use of data to meet the needs of customers. Over the past 10 years we have made significant strides in making the network more accessible for people with sensory impairments. Technological innovation means we can provide more information, better suited to customers' specific requirements.

The proliferation of audio-visual information on our trains and buses has given blind, vision-impaired and hearing-impaired people much greater independence. Twenty years ago blind and vision impaired people would often have to rely on counting the number of times the doors opened to gauge which

station or stop they were at, or rely on staff and other customers. Our trains and buses now give this information audibly.

We introduced iBus more than 10 years ago. This system feeds real-time arrival information to all bus stops by text message and internet and to the 2,500 bus stops that have display screens. It also provides the data for the on-board 'next stop' visual displays and audio announcements, making travelling by bus much easier for everyone, especially customers with visual or hearing impairments, people not used to using buses, and customers who don't have English as a first language. Guide Dogs cited us an exemplar in their 'Talking Buses' campaign, asking all bus operators outside London to provide audio-visual information on their vehicles.

Open data

In addition to data provided directly on our own website, our open data powers popular apps such as CityMapper, Nearest Bus and Tube Tracker to further assist customers. Smartphone technology means this information can be received in real-time, and in audible and visual formats.

Wayfindr – Digital Audio Navigation

We are working with the Royal London Society of Blind People and Wayfindr.org on the Wayfindr Digital Audio Navigation project. This system uses Bluetooth technology and iBeacons installed in stations to transmit information to blind and vision impaired people via an app. Users are guided through the station and are told when they are approaching specific infrastructure, such as steps and lifts. We had a small proof of concept trial at Pimlico station in January 2015, followed by an extensive trial at Euston, which finished a few weeks ago.

We will undertake a final trial at several more stations and, crucially, include journeys in between stations and interchanges. This will help us to confirm whether it can work across the whole Tube network.

Our collaboration with Wayfindr.org will set the first standard for audio navigation for vision impaired people. This standard will be developed through rigorous user research and will empower vision impaired people to independently navigate urban settings, using their phone. We will make all the data open, which means it can be used by vision impaired people all over the world.

A human presence

Having our people readily available on the ground, and travel mentoring are vital in helping people with sensory impairments use our services. We now have 'turn-up-and-go' on all our public transport services, so disabled people can travel with the same freedom as everyone else. With disability equality training

for our staff, we can assist our disabled customers through stations and on to trains where needed.

Manual boarding ramps were introduced to the Tube as a trial during the 2012 Games and have now been permanently installed at more than 50 stations, with staff trained in how to deploy them. These ramps have a mix of designs to suit the different needs of stations and trains across the network.

For many disabled people, independent travel can be a daunting prospect. Our travel mentoring service provides more than 9,000 accompanied journeys a year to help people start using public transport. We offer advice on planning a journey using an accessible route and a mentor to travel with customers for up to five journeys to help them gain confidence and become an independent traveller.

We run a session with Action for Blind People on their Living with Sight Loss course every six weeks. This is where we speak to people who have recently started to lose their sight about the services we provide to help them travel.

Streets

We are committed to ensuring customers with sensory impairments can navigate London's transport network, particularly streets and pavements.

We produce Streetscape Guidance and London's Pedestrian Design Guidance, to give street engineers guidance on how to install tactile paving and bus stop bypasses, among others. This guidance is used by London's boroughs, as well as by us.

Ninety-nine per cent of London's traffic signals have either audible signals or tactile cones to help blind and vision impaired people cross the roads. The remaining sites will be upgraded by March 2017.

We also know that street clutter is a barrier for our vulnerable customers. In 2014 we introduced zero-tolerance areas for A-boards on certain busy high streets. Building on this, we have recently changed our policy to increase compliance and enforcement against A-boards and other types of street clutter. We respond to specific problems as they arise, by using data from our on-street enforcement officers and information from customers and stakeholders.

How we organise to deliver

Our whole organisation is committed to better ensuring we assist our disabled customers and achieve a truly accessible transport network.

Our Equality & Inclusion Leadership team, led by Managing Director of Crossrail 2, Michele Dix, is responsible for ensuring that we fulfil our policy objectives and comply with the Equality Act 2010. The team comprises senior representatives

from across the organisation, to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to achieving our objectives.

The team are also supported by our Independent Disability Advisory Group. Its seven members are appointed for their extensive expertise and knowledge as well as their direct experience of disability. They help to further shape our equality policies and advise where we can make a difference.

We work with organisations like Guide Dogs, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and Transport for All, to understand the issues facing disabled people and this guides our policy making. This work is led by our Campaigns, Communications and Engagement team, working closely with our Transport Equalities team.

Two examples of events we held to inform policy are Access All Areas in 2014 and our Come on Board campaign.

Access All Areas was an exhibition at London's Excel Centre to meet more than 1,500 customers and other stakeholders. The event was also attended by the Managing Directors of Planning, Surface Transport, London Underground and Rail, and Customer Experience, Marketing and Communications.

Come on Board is the work we do to meet local grass roots disability groups across London.

Both pieces of work have provided valuable insight into the improvements disabled people want to see and have influenced our policy making.

Our commitments are captured in '*Your Accessible Transport Network*', and we will soon publish an updated set of commitments entitled '*Action on Equality: TfL's commitments to 2020*'. Last month, these commitments were discussed and approved by the Commissioner at a TfL Executive Committee meeting.

Case study: Assistance dogs campaign

In February, we launched our assistance dogs campaign, targeted at private hire drivers and operators.

We have listened to our customers' and stakeholders' concerns about being refused travel or charged more by drivers. As a result, we developed a new campaign with input from Assistance Dogs UK and Guide Dogs. This educates private hire drivers and operators on their obligations and tells passengers with assistance dogs what rights they have, including that their dogs are allowed in the passenger compartment and they do not have to pay extra.

We have sent a poster (copied below) to all private hire operators across London to raise awareness of the seven types of assistance dogs they can expect to use their vehicles. This was accompanied by a guide to accepting assistance dogs and other communications to drivers via emails and our 'On Route' newsletters.

Finally, we produced a customer leaflet, setting out their rights, advice for booking private hire vehicles and how to contact us if there's a problem. By contacting us, rather than the operator they have booked with, we can take action, potentially meaning drivers and operators lose their licences.

This campaign gives drivers and operators clarity about their obligations and gives customers greater confidence in their ability to travel with assistance dogs.

A guide to assistance dogs for private hire drivers

Passengers with assistance dogs use private hire services to make their way around the Capital. In the UK there are more than 7,000 active working dogs. Assistance dogs are your passengers too.

Guide Dogs

'We wear **white** harnesses with **yellow** fluorescent stripes.'

Guide dogs are for young people and adults who are blind or partially sighted.



Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

'We wear **burgundy** jackets.'

Hearing dogs are for adults and children with hearing impairments.



Dog AID (Assistance in Disability)

'We wear **red** jackets.'

Dog AID dogs are for physically disabled adults.



Canine Partners

'We wear **purple** jackets.'

Canine Partners' assistance dogs are for physically disabled adults.



Dogs for Good

'We wear **green** jackets.'

Dogs for Good assistance dogs are for people with physical disabilities, or children with autism.



Support Dogs

'We wear **blue** jackets.'

Assistance dogs for physically disabled adults, seizure alert dogs for people with epilepsy, and autism assistance dogs for children with autism.



Medical Detection Dogs

'We wear **red** jackets.'

Medical detection dogs are for adults and children with complex health conditions.



Did you know it is against the law to refuse or charge a passenger more because they have an accredited assistance dog? Private hire drivers and operators doing so could risk being prosecuted or losing their licence.

MAYOR OF LONDON

TAXI-PRIVATE HIRE
TRANSPORT FOR LONDON
EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS

Yours sincerely

David McNeill

Director, Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement

Travelling in London with a sensory impairment: A submission from Transport for All February 2016

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this investigation. Perhaps due to the fact that the international symbol of disability is a wheelchair, all too often transport access is conflated with stepfree access. We would like to see greater emphasis on enabling people with a sensory impairment to travel with freedom and independence.

1. Audio visual information on trains and Tube

The regulations requiring trains to have audio-visual information do not come into force until 2020, and so there are still many train companies where trains routinely do not have any audio-visual announcements, disadvantaging both deaf / hard-of-hearing and visually impaired and blind passengers.

On TfL services, automated audio announcements are fairly reliable, although not always properly timed so one hears the destination station *before* one boards while it's not too late to disembark if they are on the wrong line. Our members in Croydon tell us this is a particular problem on trams.

"So many times I have stood on a platform beside the open doors of a tube listening to hear its destination being announced only for the doors to close before the announcement has finished – so frustrating! In my experience this happens too often on the westbound Piccadilly at both Hammersmith and Acton Town where the line divides and it is crucial to know the destination. Better driver awareness training needed please".

- Amanda

We believe it is a reasonable adjustment under the Equalities Act for drivers to announce the name of the stop in plenty of time as they approach the station. Unfortunately, on trains, this is often not happening. We have taken complaints about Thameslink and SouthEastern in this respect, although SouthEastern last week informed us that they have been having a communication campaign to remind drivers to make announcements. Tesafai,

avisually impaired (VI) member who spoke to us said that he had got off at an unfamiliar station and got lost on occasion as a result of this.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing people would benefit from being able to see announcements including ad-hoc announcements (e.g. a delay) on the on-train dot matrix screens. This would considerably reduce the stress of seeing all the other passengers gurn in response to an announcement; or even disembark; but without knowing what is going on.

Audio announcements on trains and at stations are notoriously difficult to hear, and often unclear even for people without a hearing impairment. Where possible, train companies and TfL should upgrade their loudspeaker technology for a clearer sound.

"I have trouble hearing announcements sometimes and have to ask another passenger or someone on the platform. London being the most international city in the world, or close enough to the most - I often find the person I've asked for help with the announcement doesn't speak English and didn't understand it either".

- Susan

"I am...hearing impaired disabled so my issues are around the lack of VDU displays to supplement audio announcements which are usually impossible to hear in normal station or train situations".

- Andrew

Thameslink will shortly be introducing new trains which will have audio visual information installed, including, we understand, the facility for the driver to make 'ad hoc' announcements visually, on their dot matrix screen, as well as audibly. We would like TfL and other TOCs to follow suit, and install this facility both at stations and on trains.

Finally, VI people very much value audio announcements that include which side the door will open, so they can line up in time. This is also highly valued by passengers who use a mobility aid as well as buggy users, and take time to get into position. We would like to see these rolled out to all trains in London. We have been told that the new Crossrail trains will *not* feature this, and we urge Crossrail to rethink on this issue.

2. Audio visual information on buses

The i-bus system is very much appreciated by passengers with a sensory impairment.

"Another very good development on London Buses is the use of Audible and Visual Indicators. Such an implementation has enabled more disabled people to use this service with much more independence and with confidence".

- Gary

However, we do get complaints from VI people from time to time about the volume being set too low, especially if there is lots of external noise, e.g. it is raining outside. Members also suggested an external speaker on the bus, to announce its number and destination *before* one boards. This would solve a common issue that many VI people experience where they are unsure which bus has arrived at the stop and have to either ask other waiting passengers or board every bus and ask the driver.

In addition, there is no visual system available for ad-hoc announcements to be relayed to deaf and hard-of-hearing passengers. When a bus terminates early, or there is another disruption, it can be very distressing to see other passengers leave and not to know what is going on. We would like to see TfL introduce the facility for drivers to make ad-hoc announcements visually.

With the exception of the New Bus for London, the position of the dot matrix screen on buses means that wheelchair users in the wheelchair bay cannot see it.

"I am indeed deaf aided [and]an electric wheelchair user. Sometimes I have trouble on buses and trains when the bus diverts or stops while on route and I don't have a clue what's happening until I notice lots of people getting off the bus. Yes I see the visual indicator on the front of the bus, but in the wheelchair space I generally have my back to the front of the bus therefore don't see the visual indicator And cannot understand the announcer either".

- Paul

3. Hearing loop on buses

Only newer buses have a hearing loop. However, they do not always work well, due to volume issues or (particularly on the New Bus for London) electrical interference produces an unpleasant buzz.

"Don't get me started on London Buses, the electronic interference is terrible if a loop is even fitted on a bus. It's a constant synchronised electronic whine that matches the speed of the bus engine almost perfectly".

- Andrew

We are glad that TfL has been engaging with deaf and hard of hearing people to remedy this.

However, we note that signage for bus hearing loops can be poor. On some buses it is clear and visible as you board (see below).



On some buses (e.g. the New Bus for London) there is no signage as you board, there is only a small sign set back in the bus (see above). Hearing aid users appreciate knowing *before* they board that there is a loop, so they have time to switch their hearing aid to 'T'.

4. Bus design

Most buses in London have bright yellow or orange poles. The New Bus for London has dull dark beige poles. (Thomas Heatherwick is [on record](#) whingeing about how access regulations require good lighting and “nuclear-warning-yellow” poles. Without irony, and clearly exhibiting a complete lack of regard for disabled passengers he stated “No one had thought about the dignity of the passenger.”)

This lack of contrast places VI passengers (who are disproportionately likely to be older and hence more unsteady on their feet) in danger of falling.

It is shocking that Heatherwick should have been able to override TfL guidelines and good practice on bus access. As TfL plan to roll out the NBfL on more routes, we recommend that the next wave of NBfLs should have high contrast poles.

In addition, assistance dog users tell us that current bus design leaves insufficient room for their dog, especially if the wheelchair bay is occupied by a wheelchair or buggy. When there is no room for an assistance dog, they are often accidentally kicked or trodden on by other passengers. A Pavlovian

response may then develop where the dog is reluctant to board a bus, associating it with pain.

Transport for All have long maintained that the next generation of buses needs to be more spacious, to allow buggy users and wheelchair / scooter users to share; and reduce the conflict between disabled and non-disabled passengers. A more spacious bus (as available in many other cities including Brighton, Oxford and Edinburgh) would also make it much easier for assistance dog users to use the bus.

5. Bus driver behaviour

The single biggest complaint we hear about from VI bus users is that bus drivers frequently fail to pull right up to the bus stop. Especially at busy bus stops, where several buses may 'queue', this makes it easy for a VI person to miss the right bus, as they are not aware that it has arrived or are not sure where the entrance is. Bus drivers failing to pull up to the stop seems to be endemic.

Bus driver training does ask that drivers pull up to the stop, but the message is failing to get through. We would like TfL and bus companies to put greater emphasis on the need to pull up to the stop; including potentially greater penalties for drivers and bus companies who continually fail to do this.

In addition, boroughs and TfL should, where possible, separate out stops so there is a limit on the number of routes using each stop; as it is the most heavily used bus stops where this 'queuing' is most common.

Mobility impaired passengers will of course benefit greatly from this as well, as scurrying down in time to catch a bus which is 20metres behind the stop is painful or impossible for many.

6. Bus stops

We appreciate the work that TfL and a number of London boroughs have done to make more bus stops accessible. However, some boroughs are still languishing behind on this, with bins and posts blocking the bus stop. VI passengers tell us sometimes they step out of the bus straight into an obstacle. We would like an update on where each borough is in making bus stops accessible, and the Mayor to apply pressure to those at the bottom of the

league table. Mobility impaired passengers will of course benefit from this as well.

We remain extremely concerned about the roll-out of floating or island bus stops, by both TfL and boroughs. Such bus stops require pedestrians to cross a lane of moving bikes to reach the stop. We are horrified that the roll-out of these stops continues while research is still ongoing as to the safety of these stops. VI people tell us that the prospect of stepping out into a bike lane, when bikes are inaudible, is frightening and deters using these bus stops. There is no way for a blind pedestrian to know if a bike is approaching. TfL convenes a working group on bus stop bypasses, which is looking at trialling mini-zebras. However, island bus stops are being installed regularly at locations across London, despite the fact that research on the danger of these stops and how to mitigate this has been completed. Such research risks being seen as a post-facto fig leaf rather than a genuine investigation into a solution.

We support street infrastructure which makes cyclists safer, but not at the cost of VI people being unsafe to use buses.

We call TfL to halt the installation of bus stop bypasses until research has shown that VI people can use them safely.

7. Assistance on the London Underground

VI people highly value the assistance offered by Tube staff, it's perceived as non-patronising, helpful, and largely reliable. With the reductions in staff numbers, we will be monitoring the changes in the reliability of this service.

"Over the past years, I have been very impressed and appreciate the level of guidance and support of TFL staff on the Underground Network. The system of guiding me down to the relevant platform and phoning through to my destination is very impressive and most occasions works very well".

- Gary

As ticket offices close, it becomes more important for VI people to be able to find staff, even if they move about within the station. London Underground have told us that they will be introducing red gilets at 'busier stations' to ensure staff are visible. We would like the definition of 'busier' stations to be a generous one, as even at smaller stations, especially at rush hour, staff in dark clothes among dark-coated commuters are hard to spot.

The number of occasions I have difficulty finding staff at tube stations has got slightly worse in the past year. Not on my daily commute to work but at some central stations in the evenings.

- Roger

Tube staff informally help VI and blind people walk round a station at quiet times of day to understand its layout. We would like this service to be formally offered and noted in TfL communications.

8. Tube station design

We are glad that tactile coverage, by stairs and at platform edges, is nearly at 100% on the Tube and urge TfL to complete this project as soon as possible. However, on the new TfL rail lines and on some of the London Overground stations, work still needs to be done to install tactile and ensure that the stations are safe and negotiable by VI people.

Coverage of tactile at stairs and at platform edges is very inconsistent at rail stations however. In particular, the Great Northern platform at Old Street, despite this being a station heavily used by VI and blind patients at Moorfields Eye Hospital, has no tactile marking.

We urge TfL to work towards 100% hearing loop coverage at all TfL stations, and set a target date for completion. As ticket offices close, all of which had hearing loops, this is vitally important.

We would like TfL and train companies to closely involve disabled and older people in the design of new stations, include lighting and signage. The Jubilee Line stations, with lots of glass and grey, are not very accessible environments for people with sight loss.

In addition, it is important to recognise that step-free access, while often perceived as a benefit to people with a mobility impairment, also benefits many VI people. These include assistance dog users whose dogs are not trained to use escalators; and VI people who find it difficult negotiating stairs.

“There have been times I have asked station personnel to please walk me down the stairs to the platform because I don't think I can get there on my own. Walking across a bunch of people to get to the stairs or escalator when they are going the opposite direction or at an angle to me (Holborn...) and they don't know I can't see them.... It's really frightening.

It's really scary using stairs in rush hour - and if I knew there were lifts and where they are, I would feel a lot more confident using the tube”.

We support the development of technologies such as Wayfindr. However, as always we must stress that the majority of people with a sensory impairment do not use smartphones and that, as exciting as they are, apps can never be a replacement for human assistance and inclusive design.

9. Rail assistance

Rail assistance is very inconsistent, and there are still many stations where, for large parts of the day, there are no staff and therefore no assistance available for VI and blind people. This can lead to people choosing not to use those stations or to make journeys; or to people having to rely on random members of the public, untrained in guiding disabled people. We have even come across stories of members of the public groping or robbing VI people; and whilst no doubt rare, this fear, amplified at unstaffed stations, deters many from making journeys.

In addition, there are a number of stations where staff challenge disabled people who request assistance without having booked 24hours ahead. This is despite the fact that Office of Rail and Road (ORR) guidance clearly obliges staff to assist disabled people who have not booked assistance (see page 19, http://orr.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/5604/how-to-write-your-dppp.pdf). We applaud Virgin East Coast for changing their message in response to listening to our members:

Whether you booked in advance or not we want to help you in any we can, but planning ahead helps too. So if you know you're going to be travelling please call our Assisted Travel team and we'll make sure somebody is on hand with any help you may need.

Call our Assisted Travel team on **03457 225 225 (lines are open Monday to Saturday from 8am - 8pm and Sunday 10am- 8pm), or use the Text Relay Service on 18001 03457 225 225.**

Don't worry if you are not able to book assistance in advance. We have staff available at all of our stations, although priority will be given to those who have booked assistance in advance.

- <https://www.virgintrainseastcoast.com/support/accessibility/>

However, most rail companies deter passengers who require assistance, stating that they advise booking 24hours ahead. On London 'metro' style services, this booking period is a serious impediment to disabled people's

equality. Very few Londoners, particularly commuters, are able to know what train they will be on 24hours ahead, and this places a real block on freedom, independence, socialising and spontaneity.

Scandalously, several rail companies (Southern, Cross Country and Grand Central) advise booking 48hours ahead – in contravention of ORR guidance and, arguably, in breach of the Equalities Act, as 48hours is not a *reasonable* adjustment. We would like ORR to enforce train companies' accessibility duties more stringently, and with real penalties.

Proposals for TfL and DfT to takeover suburban rail routes and introduce Turn Up And Go assistance are warmly welcomed. However, on some routes, this is several years away, and we urge train companies to lift the 24hour booking recommendation as soon as practicable.

In addition, assistance, even when booked, remains highly unreliable. A Transport Focus report looking at passenger assistance found that one in five passengers who had requested assistance did not receive any help alighting from the train. All passengers in the report booked assistance, but on only 66% of occasions were staff prepared for them when they arrived at the station. This reflects what we hear from members about rail assistance.

Lastly, as a previous London Assembly Transport Committee report has noted, there is a real problem with assistance between modes especially at major transport hubs; with some rail staff unwilling to assist beyond their gateline, and leaving VI and blind people to find their own way without help to a taxi rank, Tube gateline or bus stop (although this problem applies to Tube assistance as well).

We would like an update on the trial of Access Champions, whom, we understand, were put in place at several stations to assist with intermodal assistance.

10. Information provision

We warmly welcome TfL's recent advertising campaign about its range of accessibility guides and maps. The range of audio, Braille and large print information is an example to other transport companies.

11. Taxis and PHVs

We welcome TfL's new campaign about the obligations on PHV drivers to pick up assistance dogs and not charge extra. This is a continuing problem, and we urge TfL and police to go further, and follow the example of Kirklees Council who carried out a [sting operation](#) to uncover and discipline firms who refuse assistance dogs.

We would like the next generation of taxis to include a talking meter, so that VI and blind people can keep track of their fare.

Black taxis are well-designed in terms of accessibility for people with a sensory impairment, with a hearing loop and contrast poles. The rise of app-based minicabs may further restrict the availability of taxis which are accessible to blind, VI, deaf and hard-of-hearing passengers. We would like TfL to pressure minicab firms, through the licensing process, to increase the proportion of accessible minicabs in their fleets; for example by giving discounts on licence fees or by setting a minimum percentage of accessible minicabs for larger companies.

Whilst beyond the scope of this investigation, and a problem for *all* disabled and older members including those without a sensory impairment, we note that Taxicard is increasingly seen as, unaffordable, and therefore restrictive by members of the scheme. We urge TfL, which contributes the lion's share of funding, to take a much bigger role in managing the scheme and ensuring it meets the needs of members.

12. Streets

We warmly welcome TfL's recent guidance on streetscapes that clarifies that it is an offence to block the footway (London Travelwatch is to be congratulated for their continual championing of this). We hope this will spur more boroughs to remove ill-placed A-boards and other clutter, and charge Fixed Penalty Notices where businesses obstruct the footway. Areas designated 'Zero Tolerance Areas' for A-boards have not always been kept clear in practice, and so enforcement is of the essence. We would like to see more areas designated as 'Zero Tolerance' for A-boards.

However, street obstructions (by pavement parked cars, vegetation, poorly maintained footways) continue to be a problem, especially on smaller roads.

Many pedestrian crossings do not have audio signals. Tactile signals are more difficult for VI people to use, as it is hard to touch the signal box if the crossing is crowded, or if your hands are full. We feel that unless there is a very strong reason not to use audio, it should always be used at crossings in preference to tactile.

Another issue at crossings is that the tactile is often worn down. We believe that councils and TfL should audit crossings regularly and relay where necessary, and that doing so is a reasonable adjustment. There are several very high-profile and highly-used crossings locations including by Parliament, Buckingham Palace and Oxford Street where the tactile has worn down to such an extent that it is useless.

Transport for All would like to put forward the following recommendations:

1. TfL to set a target date for all trains to have audio-visual information *including* the facility for ad-hoc announcements to be broadcast on dot-matrix screens
2. TfL to look into setting up the facility for ad-hoc announcements to be broadcast on dot-matrix screens on platforms
3. Train companies and TfL to install door opening announcements on all trains
4. Train companies and TfL to improve some of their loudspeaker equipment where sound quality is very poor
5. Boroughs and TfL to audit and replace worn-down tactile paving
6. Boroughs and TfL to designate and enforce zero-tolerance for A-Boards
7. An immediate moratorium on the use of floating bus stops until research shows they do not deter VI and blind people and are safe
8. TfL guidance to stress that audio signals should be placed at crossings unless there is a very good reason not to do so, and audio to be rolled out to more crossings
9. A 'sting' operation to crack down on accessibility dog refusals and overcharging (ideally combined with a 'sting' operation on wheelchair refusals and overcharging)
10. Incentives to promote hearing loops and contrast poles within PHVs
11. Rail companies to introduce Turn Up And Go assistance at all stations when staff are present
12. Rail companies to radically improve the reliability of their assistance, where necessary training and hiring staff
13. ORR to monitor rail assistance and fine companies who consistently fail in their legal obligations to assist disabled passengers

14. LU staff to wear red gilets at rush hour at all stations, and at all times at larger or busier stations
15. Access Champions to assist across modes at all major stations
16. More stepfree access to Tube and Rail
17. TfL to involve disabled people in the design of new stations
18. Working hearing loops on all buses, with clear signage by the front door
19. Train companies to ensure that tactile is in place at stairs and platforms on all stations
20. A timetable for bus stops across all boroughs to be made accessible, and an update about current levels across boroughs

From: [Isabel Reid](#)
To: [Transport Committee](#)
Subject: Using London's transport system with a sensory impairment
Date: 24 January 2016 14:13:13

The London Assembly Transport Committee is investigating the experiences of people with a sensory impairment using the London transport network. Transport for London and other providers in the capital have a programme of initiatives, including improving accessibility of stations, bus stops and the pedestrian environment, providing audio and visual information, assisting travellers, travel mentoring and working with partners to exploit new technologies.

The Committee wants to hear from people with a sensory impairment and their representative organisations about the impact of accessibility initiatives and any ongoing challenges. The Committee would particularly like to know:

- What are the current challenges for people with a sensory impairment in using the transport network and pedestrian environment in London? ***lack of access to spoken and auditory announcements, especially at times of urgency, delays and changes.**
- How well do Transport for London, boroughs and providers of rail or bus services support people with a sensory impairment to access the transport network? *** lack of deaf aware staff, those who can sign, or are aware of the importance for clear communication and using other methods such as pen & paper, access to written / subtitled information for announcements, visual information screen displays on trains and buses etc**
- How could Transport for London and other providers improve the accessibility of the transport network for people with a sensory impairment, including supporting independent, as well as assisted, travel? **100% subtitled and visual information screen displays at all times in all stations, trains and buses for any announcements, delays, emergencies and changes.**

Isabel Reid

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