



## ORR Accessible Travel Stakeholder Forum

24<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Microsoft Teams Meeting

### Attendees

Name	Organisation
1 Matt Westlake	Office of Rail and Road (ORR, Chair)
2 Claire Clark	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
3 Grace Garner	Office of Rail and Road (ORR) – item 2 only
4 Jacqui Russell	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
5 Will Sanderson	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
6 Les Waters	Office of Rail and Road (ORR) – item 3 only
7 Stephen Brookes	Disability Rights UK
8 Roger Mackett	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
9 David Mapp	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
10 Simon Watkins	Mobility Access Committee for Scotland (MACS)
11 Erik Matthies	Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
12 Charlotte Morley	Scope
13 Madeleine Stewart	Transport for All
14 Emma Vogelmann	Transport for All

Apologies were noted from Clare Gray (Shaw Trust), Kirstie Kalonji and Lynne Nicholl (both Alzheimer's Society).

## Agenda

Item no.	Time	Topic
1	11:00-11:05	Welcome, introductions and actions
2	11:05-11:30	PR23 and accessibility
3	11:30-11:50	Consultation on changes to the timetabling process
4	11:50-11:55	Refreshment break
5	11:55-12:15	Proposed changes to luggage assistance bookings
6	12:15-12:30	Roundtable update

## Meeting summary

The Chair began by welcoming the Forum members and provided an overview of the agenda.

### PR23 and accessibility

Grace Garner, ORR's Head of Regulatory Analysis, introduced the first item, opening up a discussion on accessibility within PR23, in terms of Network Rail's (NR) Strategic Business Plan (SBP). ORR began by providing an overview of the periodic review process and an update on where we are currently in relation to the programme – ORR are due to publish the Draft Determination for consultation on 15<sup>th</sup> June, before publishing the Final Determination during the autumn.

The Chair added to this by summarising how accessibility features as part of the PR23 process. The process provides the opportunity to ensure NR are committed to their existing obligations, have engaged with management at the relevant level with regard to accessibility, and to understand funding, timescales and deliverables for accessibility workstreams at a high level. In development of NR's SBP, DfT gave NR and ORR discretion as to what should be included (by only mentioning accessibility in broad terms), and ORR wants to ensure accessibility gets sufficient inclusion.

For the England & Wales (E&W) SBP, there was some detail on accessibility, including various commitments that we confirmed to be consistent with regions' SBPs and with the DfT HLOS. Scotland's SBP had nothing specific on accessibility, so ORR raised this

with the NR Scotland team with the expectations that it will provide further detail in response to our draft determination.

The Forum expressed disappointment in Scotland's SBP for this reason, highlighting that you would expect many of the accessibility commitments made in the E&W SBP to be replicated in Scotland's [NB: A subsequent version of the Scottish SBP has since been received, with more relevant material included]. Members of the Forum shared concerns around reliability of lifts and escalators, and the challenges presented by facilities of a similar age all having problems at a similar time. The Chair noted that ORR have work in this area planned for Q3 of this year. In the E&W SBP, NR have committed to supporting accessibility by design with a new Diversity Impact Assessment standard, which the Forum emphasised must be developed through engagement with disabled people. More generally, the importance of consultation with disabled people during decision making and any prioritisation was also emphasised. Lastly, the Forum raised the issue of the high costs of accessibility improvements, suggesting ORR could take more of a role during CP7 in assessing improvements' value for money, with the intention of getting more accessibility schemes delivered for the same cost.

**ACTION:** ORR to circulate the June Draft Determination consultation to Forum members.

### **Consultation on changes to the timetabling process**

ORR's head of licensing joined the meeting to provide an overview to the Forum of the proposal to reduce NR's requirement to publish a timetable from 12 weeks in advance of services to 8 weeks, through its network licence. They noted the consultation which had recently closed, and thanked DPTAC for the response received.

This consultation, which closed on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, had been shared with passenger groups including DPTAC. It asked for further evidence on how passengers and end users might be affected by a potential reduction in the notification period for timetable changes, noting that disabled passengers could potentially be among those impacted most. The Forum confirmed this, saying that disabled people need as much time as possible to plan their journeys, while noting that there could be potential benefits of a shorter notification period if that resulted in a more robust timetable that was less susceptible to change.

DPTAC noted that the consultation was somewhat unclear but that they had responded. They briefly summarised this response, which they agreed to share with Forum members.

**ACTION:** DPTAC to circulate consultation response.

### **Luggage assistance bookings**

The ORR accessibility senior executive presented the final item, covering proposed changes suggested by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) for luggage assistance bookings. They began by summarising RDG's problem statement, outlining that there had been an increase in the number of luggage-only assistances requested through Passenger Assist, raising the concern that it might be being interpreted as a luggage porter service. This risked taking resource away from providing for legitimate assistance requests. ORR understands these concerns, but had emphasised to RDG that any change must not deny assistance for legitimate requests, and that benefit of the doubt should be given.

RDG's initial proposal was presented, which involved removing the 'help with luggage' assistance option from booking systems, including the app, replacing it with a more generic option like 'help getting to my train or seat' – retention of a luggage entry section to the booking form as part of the proposal was highlighted.

The Forum shared no objections with the reasoning behind the proposed move and supported it being dealt with to ensure that all legitimate requests could be met. It was suggested that part of the issue may be that some members of the general public are unclear on who Passenger Assist is intended for, and that making this clearer on the app could be beneficial. Forum members indicated that they would not be comfortable with the idea of passengers making luggage-only requests being challenged or questioned on the necessity of the request, particularly for passengers with non-visible disabilities.

**ACTION:** ORR to share discussion points with RDG.

### **Roundtable update**

Closing the session, the Chair provided a brief forward look to two upcoming areas of work to be undertaken by ORR:

- Five TOCs are being audited on their delivery of passenger assistance, to look at their use of Passenger Assist, the implementation of the Handover Protocol, and their relevant management systems.
- A review of the systems that NR has in place to manage the reliable provision of lifts, and how the industry provides up-to-date information on lift availability for passengers.

ORR's Head of Consumer Policy reminded Forum members that the team are open to suggestions on what parts of the industry may benefit from additional scrutiny if there is evidence of any problems.

UPDATE: Following the meeting, Scope provided a written update of their work. Its current main priority is around the launch of a guide on passenger rights and travel information for disabled people with DfT. Scope have also recently conducted research via their research panel on disabled people's experiences of accessing public transport, including on experiences with the complaints process.

**ACTION:** ORR to share Scope's findings with relevant colleagues, including for the upcoming work planned on the accessibility of the complaints process.

## **AOB**

No further business needed addressing and the meeting closed at 12:30. The next meeting will be held in November 2023.

**END**