



ORR Accessible Travel Stakeholder Forum

23 April 2024

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 David Kimball	Office of Rail and Road (ORR) – item 1 only
4 Jacqui Russell	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
5 Will Sanderson	Office of Rail and Road (ORR) – item 1 only
6 Stephen Brookes	Disability Rights UK
7 Niki Glazer	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
8 Simon Watkins	Mobility Access Committee for Scotland (MACS)
9 Erik Matthies	Royal National Institute of Blind People
10 Megan Barnett	Transport for All
11 Emma Vogelmann	Transport for All

Agenda

Item no.	Time	Topic
1	10:30-10:35	Welcome, introductions and actions
2	10:35-10:55	Recent and ongoing work
3	10:55-11:15	ORR's research on disabled passengers' experiences of complaints handling by train operators
4	11:15-11:20	Refreshment break
5	11:20-11:45	Accessibility performance benchmarking
6	11:50-12:00	Roundtable update and AOB

Meeting summary

The Chair began by welcoming the Forum members and provided an overview of the agenda. It was confirmed that actions from the previous meeting were completed.

Recent and ongoing work

The Chair introduced the first item, by providing an overview of the first of two substantial pieces of recent ORR work, the [passenger assistance audit](#) of five operators. This audit focused on three areas: use of Passenger Assist, use of the handover protocol, and process for management oversight and continuous improvement, and resulted in a series of recommendations for industry. These included recommendations around use of the Passenger Assist staff app, handover protocol compliance, assistance by onboard staff, industry systems and operators' internal accessibility risk-management processes. Key findings and recommendations for individual operators were also [published](#).

ORR's accessibility senior executive then provided an overview of ORR's [report on passenger lifts at stations](#), which reported on recent data about Network Rail-managed passenger lifts across Britain. Key findings were shared, which demonstrated a decline across numerous passenger impact metrics – this data will now be reported twice-yearly and published by ORR. It was outlined that Network Rail will now be expected to take appropriate action to make improvements, and ORR will be undertaking a Targeted

Assurance Review of Network Rail's monitoring and management processes. Progress in making real-time lift availability information accessible to passengers and staff was noted, with ORR intending to continue monitoring the delivery of this through the Smarter Information Smarter Journeys programme.

The ORR senior manager then reported on work to consider a specific and limited change to ORR's Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) Guidance. Where a staffing change puts the delivery of assistance at risk or would result in the need for mitigating actions, operators would be required to ensure the views of disabled passengers are sought and considered. At present, operators are required by the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement to consult where ticket office closures are proposed (note that ORR has no formal role here) – however staffing changes are currently not covered. The Forum discussed the topic, resulting in helpful feedback for the ORR team.

The Chair updated the Forum on ORR's engagement with Eurostar, following media reports of a passenger's experience of assistance at St Pancras. The Chair reminded the Forum that operators must deliver a service to disabled passengers that is consistent with their approved ATP. Eurostar's approved ATP does not include reference to the specific process that was actioned on this occasion. The Chair reported that we have asked Eurostar to review its policy and to either revert to a process consistent with Eurostar's approved ATP, or to formally submit any proposed change to its ATP to ORR for consideration, together with its justification and evidence of how they have sought and considered feedback. We will consider any proposals in line with our standard approvals process.

ORR's research on disabled passengers' experiences of complaints handling by train operators

The ORR senior manager introduced this item following the report's recent [publication](#), and started by providing an overview of how we hold operators to account for complaints. This includes the Complaints Code of Practice, the ATP Guidance (for redress where assistance has failed) and a range of passenger surveys to understand disabled passengers' experiences of complaints and redress processes.

They outlined that the research itself involved a survey and in-depth interviews, and work with Transport Focus and industry representatives, and resulted in three key findings. Firstly, awareness of complaints processes is good, but redress provision less so. Secondly, processes are broadly accessible but some people experience barriers. Thirdly, people will make complaints if they consider it a worthwhile use of time and energy, and if it will lead to change.

The presentation included a summary of next steps. These included writing to ten operators on non-compliant areas, requiring operators with the lowest satisfaction scores to provide interim reports and also requiring them to include disabled people in their continual improvement annual reporting from next year. ORR will continue surveying passengers and share this data, and hold a workshop with operators (aimed at sharing key findings, best practice and considering how this can be best integrated into their processes). The Forum discussed the findings and raised some useful points for the team.

ACTION: Forum members to share any thoughts on the operator workshop by email.

Accessibility performance benchmarking

The Chair introduced this project which is currently in its early stages. The objective is to develop a new approach to reporting accessibility performance. This will provide greater transparency on relative performance, recognise good practice, and focus attention on the areas where improvement is needed. The Chair set out that the aim of this session was to consider some basic questions and gather ideas.

The Forum participated in an exercise to collate initial thoughts on what benchmarking should set out to achieve, and these will be taken into account by the project team.

The Chair then discussed the range of areas that may be considered, questioning how the benchmarking criteria should be selected. The Forum discussed whether these should be areas that: the benchmarked entities have control over, have regulatory or customer expectations that are broadly consistent, and have a clear relation to accessibility. The Forum then undertook a second exercise to prioritise factors that could be considered as part of a benchmarking process.

The ORR project team will now start working up potential options and will return to the Forum to share progress in due course.

Roundtable update

Closing the session, the Chair provided members with the opportunity to update the rest of the Forum, however there were no organisational updates.

AOB

DPTAC raised the possibility of reviewing the Forum's attendee list to ensure that it remained as representative as possible. ORR will take this away to consider.

No further business needed addressing and the meeting closed at 12:05. The next meeting will be held in October/November 2024.

END