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OFFICE OF RAIL REGULATION

14 September 2012

Disability Advice (re DPTAC)
Department for Transport
Sustainable Travel and Equalities
Zone 2/15
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Dear Sirs

Consultation on: The abolition of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC); and,

The best option for successor arrangements should DPTAC be abolished

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your consultation on the abolition of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC); and the best option for successor arrangements should DPTAC be abolished ('the consultation').

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) is the independent economic and safety regulator for railways across Great Britain. We are committed to improving the credibility and effectiveness of protections for all passengers in the mainline railway, and a sharper focus on customers forms a key element of our business plan for 2012-2013.

The needs of disabled passengers are of particular interest to us. We are responsible for the enforcement of the Rail Vehicle Accessibility (Non-Interoperable Rail System) Regulations (RVAR) 2010, and, Persons of Reduced Mobility Technical Specification for Interoperability (PRM TSI), which establish that relevant rolling stock has to provide a number of features that make it easier to use, such as handholds, passenger information displays, priority seats and provision for wheelchairs. The PRM TSI also imposes accessibility requirements for new and significantly upgraded stations.

Together with DfT we have sought views on ORR becoming responsible for approving, monitoring, and enforcing compliance of train operators' Disabled Persons Protection Policies (DPPPs).

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We believe it to be of key importance that a mechanism exists to allow DfT and others (including ORR) to receive good quality advice on the needs of disabled passengers. DPTAC has historically been effective in providing this type of independent advice.

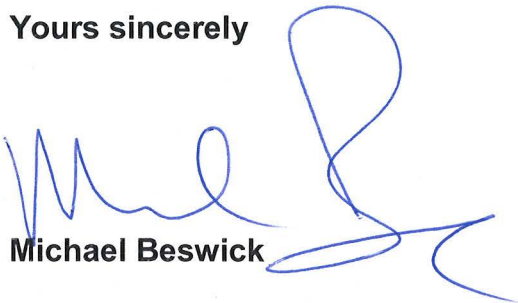
ORR believes that the decision on the future of advice in this area should be guided by key principles. These principles are that advice should be: pan-disability; expert; credible; and, readily available. Options 1 and 4 from the consultation do not appear to be suited to meeting these principles.

ORR recognises the value of receiving expert advice for our own work. We see independence as an important factor in establishing the credibility of that advice.

In addition, we agree that either DPTAC or its successor should represent value for money for the tax payer. We note from the consultation that the operating costs of DPTAC are currently in the region of £500k - a figure that needs to be compared with the benefits that can be provided to rail projects from good quality advice on disability issues.

We do not consider any part of this response to be confidential.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Beswick', is written over the typed name.

Michael Beswick

Director, Rail Policy