

# Accessible Travel Policy Guidance:

Accessibility of rail  
replacement services



easy  
read

# Contents

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**3** Introduction



**5** Listening to people



**6** What people said



**21** Changes to the guidance



**22** Next steps



**23** For more information

# Introduction



This report comes from the Office of Rail and Road.

We are a Government organisation that makes sure the railways are run properly.



We check that train companies are making their services accessible to everyone.



We have been looking at what happens to disabled people on **rail replacement** services.



**Rail replacement** is when the rail company provides a bus, coach or taxi because the train can't run.



We had 5 **proposals** for train companies.



A **proposal** is an idea to make a change about something.



We asked people what they thought about these proposals.



We asked people to complete a questionnaire.



This report explains:

- what people said



- what we think after listening to people



- what happens next.

# Listening to people



We received answers to the questionnaire from 49 people, companies and organisations.



We also met with the Accessible Travel Stakeholder Forum.



This is a group of disabled people from all around Britain who speak up about using the railways.



We also visited Blackpool Transport to talk about how they provide rail replacement buses and coaches.

# What people said



**We asked:** Please tell us your issues about accessible buses and coaches?



**People said:** Train companies use buses for short journeys. Most buses are now accessible.



Coaches are better for longer journeys. But there are not many accessible coaches.



Coach companies don't buy accessible coaches because the law says you don't have to have an accessible coach for most journeys.



But they should have accessible coaches for rail replacement journeys.



**We think:** We have taken this into account in the new guidance.



**We asked:** How can train companies make sure that passengers get an accessible rail replacement bus or coach?



**People said:** There are plenty of accessible buses, which are fine for short journeys.



But we need more accessible coaches for longer journeys.



We need to find ways to encourage coach companies to buy accessible coaches.



Maybe the train companies could pay coach companies more.



It's hard for coach companies to provide an accessible coach in a short amount of time.



Rail companies should tell coach companies before they are needed.



Often rail companies use coach companies because the railway is closed to make repairs to the track.



They know about this weeks beforehand. They could plan to ask for accessible coaches.



**We think:** We will write to rail companies and ask them to plan to use accessible coaches.



**We asked:** What do you think about the buses and coaches that you have used when the train couldn't run?



**People said:** There are good and bad things about the buses and coaches they had used.



They told us about:

- the toilets on the coaches



- how much space there was on coaches



- space for luggage



- waiting for taxis.



**We think:** We will ask rail companies to provide a range of different coaches for different people's needs.



**We asked:** If you have a disability - was the bus or coach accessible to you?



**People said:** Mostly people didn't like having to go on a coach because:

- it's not so comfortable



- there aren't proper signs



- it's harder to get on.



They prefer going by train.



**We think:** We will ask rail companies to provide a range of different coaches for different people's needs.



**We asked:** What sort of transport would you prefer when the trains can't run?



**People said:** They liked a coach best. It is the most comfortable.



The next favourite is the low-floor bus. It is good for short distances.



The least favourite was taxis.



**We think:** We will ask rail companies to provide a range of different coaches for different people's needs.



**We asked:** Have you any information about the number of disabled passengers who need a bus or coach when the trains can't run?



**People said:** One company recently provided buses and coaches for 12,000 passengers - none used a wheelchair.



A rail company has to find on average 11 accessible taxis every 4 weeks.



Disabled people don't go on trains when there is going to be a rail replacement bus or coach.



More disabled people would use the rail replacement service if it was more accessible.



**We think:** This is useful information. We have taken it into account in our new guidance.



**We asked:** Do you have any information about how Network Rail and train companies agree on the timing of engineering works?



**People said:** It is difficult to organise engineering works. There are a lot of things to arrange. It's hard to get everything right all the time.



Rail companies don't want to tell disabled people not to travel because there are not enough accessible coaches.



**We think:** The new guidelines say rail companies should provide accessible rail replacement coaches when they have engineering works.



**We asked:** Should the Government's Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) check that only accessible coaches are used for public service work?



**People said:** We should work with the DVSA to work towards getting enough accessible coaches.



Different organisations need to work together better.



**We think:** Rail replacement coaches should follow the DVSA guidelines for accessible coaches.



**We asked:** How can train companies encourage coach companies to buy more accessible coaches?



**People said:** We should pay coach companies more so they could afford to buy accessible coaches.



Other people said that rail companies could work together to buy enough accessible coaches.



**We think:** We have new rules that say train companies must hire as many accessible coaches as possible.



**We asked:** What other ways could train companies help to get more accessible coaches for rail replacement services.



**People said:** If train companies know at least 12 weeks before that their train won't run, they should be able to arrange accessible coaches.



If the train is cancelled less than 12 weeks before it should have run, then it will be hard to get an accessible coach.



**We think:** Wherever they can, train companies must arrange accessible buses and coaches if they know about the train cancellation 12 weeks beforehand.



**We asked:** What are the good and bad things about each proposal?

Which is your favourite proposal?

Which proposals should we use?



**People said:** There are a lot of different ideas.



**We think:** We are using people's ideas in the changes that we are making to the guidance.



**We asked:** Are there any other ways we could help train companies to use accessible coaches when the trains can't run?



**People said:** You could:



- make a new rule that all coaches should be accessible
- give money to coach companies so they can buy more accessible coaches



- check that coaches are accessible.



Some people suggested that you should get compensation if you can't travel because there isn't an accessible coach.



**We think:** Giving money to coach companies is a matter for the Government.



People can already get compensation if they can't travel because of something that a rail company has not done.



**We asked:** Are there any other things we need to think about to achieve the best result for everyone?



**People said:** If there were more accessible coaches, it would help everyone.



It would help schools include disabled children on trips. It would help older people.



It would help people with a lot of luggage.



**We think:** We have taken these comments into account.



**We asked:** Do you have any other comments?



**People said:**

- staff that run coaches and buses should learn more about working with disabled people



- the website should say which stations are able to use accessible coaches.



**We think:** We have taken these comments into account in the new guidance.

# Changes to the guidance



We give guidance to rail companies around arranging accessible coaches and buses when the trains can't run.



Our new guidance for when the trains can't run:

1. Rail companies must arrange accessible coaches and buses unless they ask for permission not to do this.



2. Rail companies must deal with coach companies that have accessible coaches.



3. Disabled people should not have to wait longer than other passengers for their transport.



4. Passengers must be told if there is going to be an accessible bus or coach.

# Next steps



Rail companies should write new plans which explain how they are going to arrange accessible rail replacement buses and coaches.



We are working with DVSA to make sure people understand who is in charge of which rules for accessible transport and to share information where we can.



We will check that rail companies are using accessible rail replacement coaches.



The Government wants more coach companies to have accessible coaches ready to use as rail replacement coaches.

# For more information



If you need more information please contact us by:



Email: **ATP@orr.gov.uk**



Post:  
**Consumer Policy Team  
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