

Passenger Information and RRV contacts

4 July 2025

Dear colleagues,

Rail replacement vehicles – update to industry

Over the last two years we have been working to drive improvements in the information provided to passengers when rail replacement vehicles are in use for planned works. In December 2024 we published our [second report](#). It made a [number of recommendations](#) and we wrote to train operators. This letter summarises their responses and our next steps.

We hold train operators to account under their passenger information licence condition, which requires them to ensure that passengers have the information they need to plan and make journeys with confidence, including during disruption. All operators have adopted the industry [Customer Information Pledges](#) as their regulated passenger information Code of Practice. In addition, our [Accessible Travel Policy guidance](#) requires train operators to provide passengers with information about the accessibility of rail replacement services.

The majority of bus and coach services, including rail replacement vehicles, must also meet accessible information provisions set out in the [Public Service Vehicles \(Accessible Information\) Regulations 2023](#) (PSV(AI)R). These regulations are enforced by the Driver and Vehicles Standards Agency (DVSA) with whom we have an MOU and regular engagement. DfT issued a [technical exemption](#) from these regulations for rail replacement coaches, which expires in July 2026.

Advance information about the accessibility of rail replacement vehicles

We expect passengers who have specific access requirements when travelling to be easily able to find information in advance of travel about the accessibility of rail replacement vehicles. Passengers must also be informed of alternative travel arrangements if the vehicles are not accessible to them. We said that operators should provide information about the accessibility of rail replacement vehicles on their assisted travel webpages, rail replacement FAQs and on webpages for specific engineering works.

We asked nine operators to improve accessibility information about their rail replacement services on their websites and all have now done so.

Information on board a rail replacement service

Passengers should be able to easily identify which replacement vehicle to board and know when to alight. We asked all operators to review their processes for displaying destination information and providing calling points information on board.

In most cases the operators place contractual obligations on their rail replacement service providers to deliver appropriate information to passengers. They also require their suppliers to monitor and record data about the vehicles that are in use.

Compliance is then reported regularly and normally discussed at periodic contract review meetings with the train operator. This is important because *accountability under their licence* remains with the train operator.

We have seen that train operators, and their suppliers, have worked hard to improve the information provided on vehicles. This includes providing route diagrams on board vehicles and guidance to drivers on what they need to do, such as announcing station stops and the destination. We have observed examples of good practice on site visits, although this is not yet universal.

Monitoring and reporting have also increased. We have observed bus coordinators recording the details of the vehicles that are in use and understand that some apps have been updated to capture passenger information data. This data can then be reported to the contracting train operator and collated by RDG for DfT.

We asked train operators to include details of their next steps to drive improvements in this area. We are encouraged to see that these include activities such as making random checks on vehicles, developing operator performance scoring, co-locating bus suppliers in railway control centres and introducing more fixed bus stop signs.

We also welcome the progress being made to provide passengers with realtime bus information, which is being managed by the industry's [Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys](#) programme. Successful trials took place on Southeastern and South Western Railways and are currently underway on Transport for Wales rail replacement services.

Being able to complete a journey

In our report we reminded train operators of the need to ensure that passengers know they can still get to destinations normally served by trains, even if part of the journey will be by bus. Our recent site visits have suggested that this is still an area that requires focus.

Online information is usually correct, but information at stations and on trains remains less consistent. For example, we have observed insufficient signage directing passengers to bus stops, and an absence of on train messages where the

train is not completing its normal route. While a lot of the focus at present is on the bus experience, it is important that trains and stations are not forgotten.

What happens next?

We expect train operators to continue to work to deliver better information for passengers whose journeys involve rail replacement vehicles, building on the findings of our report.

We will continue to observe rail replacement services as they travel on the network. Where we carry out more formal checks, we will share the feedback bilaterally with train operators and hope to work more closely with the bus suppliers too. We will also be monitoring the data reported to us by operators to identify where we may need to engage.

Yours sincerely

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