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Operator Accessibility Leads
By email

14 October 2025

Dear industry colleagues,

Provision of wheelchair spaces – regulatory position

For wheelchair users to access and travel safely on our rail network, stations and trains need to be accessible to them. Provision of wheelchair spaces on all passenger trains, to which wheelchair users always have priority, is one key enabler.

Several complementary regulatory standards require operators to provide wheelchair spaces and ensure they are available to wheelchair users when required. These are:

- [Accessible Travel Policy Guidance](#)
- [Rail Vehicle Accessibility \(Non-Interoperable Rail System\) Regulations 2010 \(RVAR\)](#)
- [Accessibility National Technical Specification Notice \(ACC-NTSN\)](#)

We have recently engaged with a number of operators on aspects of compliance with these standards. To support all operators' understanding of the standards, we have summarised the regulatory position below.

Regulatory position

The standards define the minimum number of wheelchair spaces that must be provided on a train and define how these mandatory spaces must be designed for wheelchair users. Dual or multi-use design is not permitted, except as provided for in the standards. For example, an overhead luggage rack, an openable window, a handrail and fold-down seats are permitted.

The standards do therefore allow for another passenger to use the space when it is not required by a wheelchair user. That is, the standards allow fold-down seats to be installed in the wheelchair space. ORR considers that this also allows passengers to keep their belongings with them whilst they are present, including larger items, but does not allow them to store any items in the space and leave them unattended. Belongings may for example include luggage, a bike or a pram/pushchair. A passenger must give up this wheelchair space to a wheelchair user, including removing any belongings from the space.

The Accessible Travel Policy Guidance requires operators to make every reasonable effort to ensure wheelchair users are able to use wheelchair spaces. In practice, if an operator chooses to allow other passengers to keep belongings with them in a wheelchair space, they need to assure themselves that it would be possible for the passenger and their belongings to move promptly for a wheelchair user. Good practice is to ensure that adequate storage space is provided elsewhere in the vehicle.

The standards for RVAR and ACC-NTSN (formerly PRM-NTSN and PRM-TSI) vehicles are comparable with regards to the above position. Wheelchair spaces are provided for the use of wheelchair users who will always have priority to use the spaces.

Next steps

Operators should assure themselves that they are taking appropriate steps to secure compliance with the standards set out above. We will continue to engage with operators bilaterally on a targeted basis where there is evidence of potential non-compliance with the standards.

Please email ATP@orr.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

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