

Project no.: **44289**  
Project acronym: **PTaccess**  
Project title: **Public Transport Systems' Accessibility for People with Disabilities in Europe**

**Specific Support Action**

**CALL IDENTIFIER: FP6-2005.SSP-5A**

**Priority Area 2.4: Quality of life issues relating to handicapped/disabled people**

**Task 1: Accessibility of public transport systems for people with disabilities**

Title of Report:

# **State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in United Kingdom (GB)**

**Status: final**

Start date of project:	<b>1. February 2007</b>	Date of preparation:	<b>3. November 2008</b>
Duration:	<b>24 months</b>	Prepared by:	<b>FGM-AMOR</b>
		Quality control by:	<b>JMP</b>
		Dissemination level:	<b>PU (public)</b>

## PTaccess – Public Transport Systems' Accessibility for people with disabilities in Europe

One specific area, for which there is still a lack of EU level data, is the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities and its impact on their employment and social integration prospects.

The European project 'PTaccess' offers the chance to fill this gap in knowledge and obtain information on the current state of accessibility of urban and rural public transport systems in 25 EU member states. For each member state PTaccess analyses the state of accessibility of public transport from the point of view of national disabled organisations, national transport operators, and governmental authorities. For regions where public transport is not accessible PTaccess identifies and analyses applied alternative transport solutions (WP1).

PTaccess also identifies and analyses good practices and innovation in making public transport accessible, and enhances the scientific base of policy by providing a sound assessment of the costs and benefits of making public transport accessible (WP2).

Furthermore PTaccess deepens the understanding of the transport-related contexts of social exclusion of disabled people, and draws conclusions about the effects that accessible public transport has on the employment and social inclusion prospects for disabled people. (WP3).

The PTaccess-project runs from the 1st of February 2007 until the 31st of January 2009.

More information about PTaccess can be found on the project's website: [www.ptaccess.eu](http://www.ptaccess.eu)

The PTaccess consortium:

- FGM AMOR (Austria)
- Independent Living Institute ILI (Sweden)
- TU Dresden, Lehrstuhl für Verkehrsökologie (Germany)
- JMP Consultants Limited (United Kingdom)

This project is supported through the **Research for policy support** heading of the **European Union's Sixth Framework Programme**, PRIORITY 8.1 Policy-oriented research, Scientific support to policies – SSP CALL IDENTIFIER: FP6-2005.SSP-5A

Priority Area 2.4: Quality of life issues relating to handicapped/disabled people, Task 1: Accessibility of public transport systems for people with disabilities]

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## 1 Introduction

This document aims to give an overview on the current state of the accessibility of public transport in United Kingdom (GB)<sup>1</sup>.

This document has been prepared within the framework of the European project PTaccess by FGM-AMOR based on interviews conducted with representatives of people with disabilities, transport operators and governmental authorities in 25 European countries.

In order to draw a comprehensive picture of the current state of the accessibility of public transport in Europe, the following topics have been discussed with the interviewed national experts:

- Statistical data
- Legal and regulatory framework conditions
- Organisational framework conditions
- Accessibility of passenger information
- Accessibility issues in ticketing
- Accessibility of stops and stations
- Accessibility of vehicles
- Safety, reliability and services
- Alternatives to public transport

### How this report has been made

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In order to obtain actual information on the current state of accessibility of urban and rural public transport systems in Europe, the PTaccess team has directly contacted and interviewed national experts within 25<sup>2</sup> EU member states. In each of these 25 member states a representative of a national disabled organisation, a representative of national transport operators, and a representative of a governmental authority have been interviewed and asked to provide their point of view regarding the accessibility of public transport in their country. In order to obtain comparable interview results in each of these countries, interview guidelines and questionnaires have been prepared by the PTaccess consortium. The interviews (at least three per country) have been conducted personally by “national contact persons” in their national language.

For each of the investigated 25 countries the results of all the interviews with the national experts have been compiled into a draft “country report” by FGM-AMOR. These “country reports” describe the state of the accessibility of public transport from the point of view of disabled people, transport operators and governmental authorities. In order to make sure that the interview results have been interpreted correctly, these draft country reports have been checked and corrected by the national contact persons, who had conducted the interviews with the national experts. This is the finalised country report for United Kingdom (GB)<sup>1</sup>.

### What can be expected from this report

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This report gives an overview of the state of the accessibility of public transport in United Kingdom (GB)<sup>1</sup>. However, this report does not provide only “official” data and information, since in most countries such data and information does not exist. Instead the report provides spotlights on the current situation regarding the

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<sup>1</sup> In this report “GB” covers the whole of the United Kingdom including Northern Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of the preparation of the PTaccess-project Bulgaria and Romania haven’t been member states of the European Union, yet. Therefore no interviews have been conducted in these two countries.

accessibility of public transport from the subjective, but informed, point of view of people with disabilities, transport operators and governmental authorities. Since each interview-partner brought in her/his subjective viewpoint, it must not be expected to get an objective overview of the situation in the country. However, by asking different experts (representing three important stakeholder groups) about their point of view, and by taking into account the viewpoints of all these concerned stakeholder-groups the authors of this report hope to be able to draw a picture of the situation regarding the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities in United Kingdom (GB)<sup>1</sup> that is not too biased.

**Important:** The reader of this report must always keep in mind that this report is based on the viewpoints of individual people (i.e. each interview partner has brought in her/his personal point of view and her/his personal experiences), and therefore the information given in this report must not be interpreted as an objective official “national” view!

### How to use this report

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People, who are interested to get **more (detailed) information on the accessibility of public transport in United Kingdom (GB)<sup>1</sup>**, should read this “country report”. There are also “country reports” for each of the other 24 countries, where PTaccess surveys have been made.

People, who are interested to get **a quick overview on the actual state of the accessibility of public transport in Europe**, should read chapter 3 of the summary report “State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in Europe”.

People, who would like to know more **details about the interviews** which form the basis of this report, should read Annex II of the summary report “State of the Accessibility of Public Transport Systems for People with Disabilities in Europe”, where all interviewers, interview-partners and questionnaires are listed.

**2 Accessibility of Public Transport in United Kingdom (GB)**

## 2.1 General Information

### 2.1.1 About the PTaccess interviews

<b>Interviewer:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
PTaccess National Contact Person	Sarah Wixey	JMP
<b>Interview partners:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Representative of Transport Operators	Andrew Page	CETNTROPTE
Representative of People with Disabilities	John Stanford	RADAR
Representative of Governmental Authority	Nigel Dotchin	Department of Transport

**Table 1: Interviewer and Interview-partners in United Kingdom**

## 2.1.2 Statistical Data from United Kingdom

Statistical Data for United Kingdom	
Number of inhabitants	60,776,238 <sup>3</sup>
Inhabitants with disabilities	17 % of the total population <sup>4</sup>
Inhabitants with motor impairments	71 % of the inhabitants with disabilities <b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Inhabitants with visual impairments	11 % of the inhabitants with disabilities <b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Inhabitants with hearing impairments	17 % of the inhabitants with disabilities <b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Inhabitants with cognitive / learning impairments	33 % of the inhabitants with disabilities <b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Inhabitants who are functional illiterates	10 mio. adults <sup>5</sup>
Share of disabled people living in urban areas	data not specific
Share of disabled people at working age	11.4 % of the total population <sup>6</sup>
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	5.68 % of the total population <sup>6</sup>

Table 2: Statistical data for United Kingdom

## 2.1.3 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in United Kingdom

There is no unified anti-discrimination law existing in United Kingdom. There are regulations (different specific laws) regarding the accessibility of public transport.

The Life Chances Agenda provides the framework for improving accessibility of public transport (by 2025 all citizens should have the same rights and opportunities). Current monitoring of accessible services is not really being carried out at any government level.

### Anti-discrimination law

There is no unified anti-discrimination law existing in United Kingdom. Multiple laws cover various aspects of discrimination (e.g. workplace). Some of the major laws include Disability Discrimination Act (1995 and 2005),

<sup>3</sup> Source: CIA Factbook

<sup>4</sup> Source: DPTAC, "Access to PT" 2001-02

<sup>5</sup> Source: Daily Telegraph 14 June 2006

<sup>6</sup> Source: www.shaw-trust.org.uk

Employment Act (2002). Various departments are responsible, but these include Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Transport, and Dept for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

#### Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

The following specific laws for accessible public transport in United Kingdom exist:<sup>7</sup>

- Disabled Persons Act 1981
- Transport Act 1985
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
- Transport Act 2000
- New Roads and Streets Act
- Railways Act 1993
- Channel Tunnel Act 1987
- London Regional Transport Act 1984

General national standards for Public Transport (vehicles, stops/stations, passenger information) are regulated within the DDA 95/05 or the Disability Rights Commission Act 99.<sup>7</sup>

#### “Priority” of the accessibility of public transport on the political agenda

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport the starting point is the Life Chances Agenda (2005) which provides the framework for improving accessibility. The Office of Disability Issues (ODI) has mainstreamed the issue and by 2025 all citizens should have the same rights and opportunities. The 4th strategic objective of DfT is to enhance access to jobs, social networks, including for the most disadvantaged. DDA legislation enshrines law. At local level the LTP guidance (Jan 2006) has a section on improving access.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) the accessibility of public transport agenda is changing, more so at some levels of government than others (e.g. National and Regional). National Level legislation regarding accessible taxis is taking a long time to be adopted. At the Regional Level, accessible public transport is high on the PTE agenda, particularly for Strathclyde. There is quite a lot of work going on in Northern Ireland (e.g. Ulsterbus, Goldline accessible coaches) but not very much taking place in Wales. At the local level there is very little action taking place and Local Transport Plans are a tool for achieving much more. Nottingham trams are accessible, unlike the Tyne and Wear Metro or DLR due to the gaps between the platform and the train. Accessible low floor buses are increasingly being used at Park and Ride sites.

#### Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport published statistics show the large number of buses and trains that are DDA compliant/meet regulations. End dates have been set for the relevant targets of DDA compliance for vehicles.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) monitoring of accessible services is not really being carried out at any government level. At the National level the impact of 'Disability Equality Duty' on public transport services is yet to be assessed. At the Local Level rail companies

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<sup>7</sup> Source: Varioius

are more likely to monitor than bus companies. Due to the number of centralised services there is a lack of overall co-ordination.

#### Special fares and public transport tariffs for people with disabilities

- National: Bus concessions
- London – TfL: Freedom pass (all tube, some bus, and some rail) for free
- Newcastle – Nexus: Concessionary travel on buses (off-peak) or, for disabled persons working/studying over 15 hours a week; get RedCard for all-day free bus travel
- West Midlands: all disabled people have free travel.

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport Part III of DDA sets out the duties and the government now have duties on the promotion of equalities for disabled people. The ODI has an independent living strategy but some issues are not the responsibility of the DfT e.g. transports for healthcare. Community Transport network enables mobility.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) there are regional difficulties with tariffs for people with disabilities.

According to the interview-partner from CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) there are special fares if you are blind or partially sighted; have a severe or profound deafness or speech impairment; have walking difficulties or difficulty in using your arms; have learning difficulties; or had a license refused or withdrawn for medical purposes. This can be used on the Metro, bus and tram within West Midlands county, after 9:30am M-F and all day Sat and Sun.

#### **2.1.4 Organisational framework conditions**

In the United Kingdom as a monarchy there are three different governmental authorities who are responsible for dealing with anti-discrimination and social inclusion issues (same as for public transport). There are many different operators associated for public transport (both for buses and railways).

The cooperation between the government and disability organisations is the key to policy development, although the results of a recent stakeholder review are not available yet. Co-operation exists between transport operators and disability organisations.

There are three different opinions of the stakeholders regarding the importance of accessibility of public transport: funding (ageing infrastructure); attitudes of staff (difference between the attitudes of managers and operational staff); lack of direct control (rail and bus are privatised).

#### **Governmental authorities dealing with anti-discrimination and social inclusion issues referring to people with disabilities**

- Department for Work and Pensions (Disability and Carers Directorate)
- Department for Transport
- Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, etc.

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## Governmental authorities responsible for public transport

- **National:** Department for Transport, Scottish Executive/Transport Scotland, Welsh Assembly Government, Northern Ireland Executive
- **Regional:** London has Transport for London (TfL), there are also other Regional Public Transport Executives: Centro, GMPTE, Merseytravel, Metro, NEXUS, SYPTE, SPT
- **Local:** Local Authorities

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## Main transport operators and Public Transport associations

- **Rail:** Arriva, C2C, Central Trains, Chiltern Railways, DLR, Eurostar, First, GNER, Gatwick Express, Heathrow Express, Stansted Express, Hull Trains, Merseyrail, Midland Main Line, Northern, NI Railways, ONE, Silverlink, Southern Trains, Southeastern Trains, South West Trains, Virgin
- **Bus:** First, Arriva, Stagecoach are major operators, hundreds of other smaller operators. National Express is coach operator.

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## Main disability organisations

- Disability Rights Commission (DRC)
- RADAR
- Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
- Disability Alliance
- UK Disabled People's Council (UKDPC)

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## Cooperation among stakeholders

### Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport (DfT), the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) exists to advise the government and is the key to policy development. DfT have undertaken a recent stakeholder review and the results will be available in the autumn. Steering Groups exist for individual projects e.g. Access for All. The aim is to include people and not just to consult them.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) links between policy and disabled people. According to CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) there is reasonable co-operation (e.g. Scottish partnerships in Shetland has led to accessible ferries and piers - see 'There and Back'.

### Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) cooperation is patchy with the operators: good public sector ethos most times goes together with good co-operation, private sector ethos often goes together with not really existing co-operation. For example "Hull Trains" have a good

reputation; this is a public sector organisation (workers bought the company and turned it into a co-operative) while “Stagecoach” is considered to be an example of poor practice.

According to the interview-partner from CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) there is co-operation; the PTE sits on several national government led initiatives (e.g. DPTAC) and liaises with local disability groups. Feedback is circulated to different organisations.

#### Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport, DPTAC has modal working groups with cooperation from industry and the DfT aim is to involve stakeholders. The aviation code of practise is being revised with industry. As far as airlines are concerned, Easyjet is involved, but Ryanair are not.

According to the interview-partner from CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) there is co-operation between transport operators and governmental authorities: the PTE sits on several national government led initiatives (e.g. DPTAC) and liaises with local disability groups. Feedback is circulated to different organisations.

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#### **Attitude of the stakeholders regarding the importance of accessibility of public transport**

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport there are different opinions:

- Funding - we have an ageing infrastructure which has grown piecemeal
- Attitudes of staff
- Lack of direct control by DfT e.g. over staff. Rail and bus are privatised whilst even local authorities have little influence over buses. DfT gives guidance but it is up to the industry to deliver.

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) there is a difference between the attitudes of managers and the operational staff. Managers consider the accessibility needs of passengers when purchasing new fleets of vehicles and contributing to their designs. Regular training of PT staff is needed, especially new drivers from overseas. For rail there is a requirement to adhere to the 'Disabled Persons Protection Policy' document that is submitted as part of a franchise agreement.

#### Attitudes of the stakeholders regarding the use of public transport by people with disabilities

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport, DfT will be monitoring these - a project later this year will investigate the qualitative dimension of attitudes. But there is the National Travel Survey as well. Also, complaints to the DRC are counted and investigated. DRC have a GoJo campaign to encourage young people to use public transport and this will be monitored. Most disabled people feel public transport is improving but it depends on the location. They are concerned with the level of service. Most complaints are not about the physical attributes but staff attitudes. Part III duties have been monitored since last year.

Public transport operators understand their duties under the DDA. The companies are "on-side" but there is a need to develop more staff training. Train companies are better than bus companies on the whole.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities):<sup>8</sup>

- Transport issues head disabled people's local concerns
- Top transport priorities are frequent and reliable services
- 47% would use public transport more if staff better trained to deal with their needs
- Easiest modes to use are taxis/minicabs, trains are worst
- 40% agree with statement "I am fearful of travelling by public transport"

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<sup>8</sup> Source: DPTAC, „Attitudes of Disabled People to Public Transport“ (2001 – 2002)

## 2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

**Pre-trip information:** The pre-trip information is used quite well but not all of them or everywhere – depending on the company. The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) is trying to fill this gap.

**On-trip information:** Bus and tube stops have beside large maps depicting the network (spider maps) also visual and audio announcements for stops and route information. There exists a guidebook for people with learning difficulties and for those teaching people with learning difficulties how to undertake public transport journeys.

**Ticketing:** Public transport tickets can be bought at ticket machines, online, travel centres, over the telephone, newsagents and on vehicles. However, a lot of vending machines are inaccessible due to their height, positioning and screens.

**Stops and stations:** The accessibility of stops and stations is second in importance to bus and rail. Despite accessibility being good more improvements to stops and over 2,000 railway stations are needed.

**Vehicles:** Regarding the accessibility of public transport vehicles, there is not a national strategy to improve it. The accessibility of public transport vehicles relies on lifts being in order, gaps between train and platform, and the availability of accessible taxis in some parts of the UK (50 % of buses and taxis are now accessible). In London all buses (UK ~ 75 %) are low-floor vehicles, have retractable ramps and one space for wheelchair users.

**Safety, Reliability, and Service:** According to different interview-partners they summarized that there are no regular statistics among these three topics. But there are special plans for aviation and shipping (e.g. “deaf alerter” for hard of hearing passengers) and the reliability and punctuality of vehicles and stops/stations are good although occasionally features do not work properly (e.g. ramps). According to the service most information counter desks are not accessible at tube stations and not all the counters or ticket machines are accessible to wheelchair users. Disabled people can book 24 hours in advance to receive special assistance.

### 2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport generally the information is satisfactory. The Access for All programmes at stations has led to improved signage and announcements. TfL provides easy to read maps and internet sites are available - DfT is aiming to improve these. There is a need to share best practice. Most complaints are about the lack of audio/visual information on buses. TfL are rolling this out but there are no DfT requirements to provide this anywhere else in the country. The technology is available but it is up to operators to introduce the technology. There will need to be a business case for this before the technology is implemented.. Operators would need a partnership with the local authorities. DfT is investigating using mobiles for information provision.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) many have to plan their journeys well in advance and are frustrated that they cannot do spur of the moment trips. Most travel operators offer telephone enquiry contacts, which is the most popular method of information gathering by disabled persons.<sup>8</sup>

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) passenger information on buses is improving all the time.

## Pre-trip information

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport all methods are used although the types of methods vary depending on the company. The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) is trying to pull this together. The Transport Direct site will have accessibility information added. Direct Inquiries provides visual information for those with learning difficulties. There is a need to share best-practice but the expectation is that the same level of service should apply nationwide. DfT is only responsible for England and Transport Scotland and Welsh Assembly Government may be more advanced in some areas.

*Examples for National Travel Planning information sites:*

- **Internet:**
  - Transport Direct: timetables, route information, stop information, journey planner for all types of public transport
  - National Rail online: timetables, ticket information, route information, station information, journey planner for rail services throughout the UK
  - Traveline: timetables, route information, journey planner for rail, bus and coach journeys throughout the UK
- **Telephone:**
  - National Rail Telephone Enquiries: timetables, ticket information, route information, station information, and journey planner for rail services throughout the UK
  - Traveline: timetables, route information, journey planner for rail, bus and coach journeys throughout the UK
- **Mobile:**
  - Transport Direct: Live train departures and arrivals, can check bus times for most of Britain, also can check planned disruptions to public transport
- **Television:**
  - Transport Direct: televisions with a modem in their free-view box, or with Sky/Virgin services with a broadband connection, are able to look up real-time train information and bus timetables
- **Print Products:**
  - Various operators: printed timetables and route maps that can be picked up at stations or information centres
  - RADAR: travel guide for disabled people

*Examples for regional / local Travel Planning Information Sites:*

- A2B is an information site for community transport.
- Travel planning information is also available from local authorities.
- Some taxi firms have their own website with info on accessibility.
- **London-TfL:**
  - Kinds of travel planning information: TfL journey planner, telephone, print, and learning difficulty guide
  - Information about accessibility of stations, stops, vehicles and services: Online and print version of accessibility at each station and for vehicles
  - Information about transport tariffs and tickets: online, at station or telephone
  - Information about customer services for people with disabilities: online, in print and at station and telephone
  - Information about special transport services: internet, in print and phone

- **Newcastle-NEXUS:**

- Kinds of travel planning information: Link on site to Traveline
- Information about accessibility of stations, stops, vehicles and services: book available for motor disability (internet and print); telephone information also available
- Information about transport tariffs and tickets: internet, ticket hotline, NEXUS and other travel shops
- Information about customer services for people with disabilities: internet and telephone
- Information about special transport services: internet and telephone

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) there are the following kinds of travel planning information: Traveline, Journey Planner, Hotline telephone numbers, minicom / textphones, internet, print, travel centres (including interpreters), telephone booking service, access guides - all available in accessible formats.

- **West Midlands - CENTRO:**

- Information about accessibility of stations, stops, vehicles and services: internet information, and can telephone as well
- Information about transport tariffs and tickets: internet, telephone
- Information about customer services for people with disabilities: internet, telephone
- Information about special transport services: internet, telephone

According to the interview-partner from the Public Transport Association, currently no form of information is available on the availability of low floor buses on route. Disabled persons are required to call at the central terminus to enquire at what time a low floor bus will be available. They can also email the Association for this information.

#### On-trip information

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport:

- **London-Tfl:**

- All: Guidebook for people with learning difficulties and for those teaching people with learning difficulties how to undertake public transport journeys
- Bus: many bus stops have spider maps and/or a timetable with linear representation of the routes serving that stop. iBus trials with visual and audio announcements for stops and route information are in progress
- Tube: Stations have large maps depicting the network. Also takeaway maps available. Platform screens depict the destination of the next trains (also on train front). There are also some stations (such as some Northern Line stations) which have audible announcements of the destination of trains and next stops on the platform. Some tube maps on-vehicle may be too far away to read. Next stop announcements are made on all underground lines while some have visual scrolling displays on -vehicle (Northern, District, Jubilee)

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities):

- **London-Tfl:**

- Bus: many bus stops have spider maps and/or a timetable with linear representation of the routes serving that stop, Guide dogs welcome
- Tube: Stations have large maps depicting the network. Also takeaway maps available. Platform screens depict the destination of the next trains (also on train front). Tactile paving is used at stops; while announcements of next stop and destination of next train are made at some stations
- Tram: tactile pave stop strip are used and announcement of next stops given
- All Modes: a Guidebook for people with learning difficulties and for those teaching people with learning difficulties how to undertake public transport journeys is available

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator):

- Tram: Real-time audio and visual announcements, Visual next stop and audio announcements are given; an Emergency intercom is available
- Train: 25 stations have audio announcements while audio and visual announcements are provided on some "Desiro" trains

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### 2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) no information is available about disabled people's attitude regarding purchasing tickets - e.g. preferred method of payment. Disabled people are less likely to have access to the internet, compared to able bodied people (e.g. the number of disabled people in employment who have access to the internet at home are most likely to use it at work, if at all), and therefore tend to purchase tickets using other methods. Telephone payment is most likely due to the need to book assistance in advance through a specialist number. This method allows the person to book and pay at the same time. This call centre can also provide disabled people with information about which interchanges / stations are inaccessible - this may affect the route taken. National Express have a Disabled Person's Advice Line. Some airlines (not Ryanair or EasyJet) sell tickets to disabled people over the phone at internet based prices when assistance is booked. Payment in person is another preferred option. A lot of vending machines are inaccessible due to their height, positioning, and screens.

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) tickets for public transport can be bought at ticket machines, online, travel centres, over the telephone, newsagents, or on the vehicle.

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### 2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations

#### Strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport in United Kingdom

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport, the "Access for All" programme is to improve access - DfT is giving £350m over 10 years. Bus stops are the responsibility of local authorities who should use the Inclusive Mobility guidance. More improvements to stops are needed. Also, with over 2,000 railway stations, there is much more to do, but new stations have facilities built in.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities), there are the following strategies regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport:

- Rail: Assistance with funding;
- Bus: there is no national strategy; in London there are plans for talking bus stops (on-going saga); talking buses (on-board audio and visual route announcements - no.76, 243, 149 in London)

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) the stops and stations are audited (e.g. dropped kerbs, tactile paving, colour contrasts, boarding areas, seating etc). Disabled people are consulted.

80% of West Midlands local stations are level or have ramp access or a lift, 50% of these are fully accessible and 20% are not accessible. 20%-30% of the stations need to be refurbished. DfT have a couple of funds available for rail station improvements (Access for All and Small Schemes Fund).

#### Current state regarding the accessibility of bus stops and stations in United Kingdom

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport access for all programme is to improve access - DfT is giving £350m over 10 years. Bus stops are the responsibility of LAs who should use the Inclusive Mobility guidance. More improvements to stops are needed. Also, with over 2000 railway stations, there is much more to do, but new stations have facilities built in.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) accessibility is second in importance for bus and rail (behind frequency and lower cost, respectively).<sup>8</sup>

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) the PTE refurbish the older stations and all new stations meet Part M building regulations.

### **2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles**

#### Strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of the public transport vehicles

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport rail is covered by the Rail Vehicle Access Regulations and buses by other regulations; both are based on the DDA.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) not a national strategy for improving accessibility but things have improved over the years, since the days of when disabled people had to travel in the guards' van; buses were inaccessible. More is still needed - e.g. Tyne and Wear Metro is inaccessible due to the gap between the train and the platform; the DLR is inaccessible at some stations due to lifts being out of order (reliance on lifts!) and the gap between the train and the platform. Accessible taxis are rare in some parts of the country.<sup>8</sup>

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) implementation and regulations varies:  
ferries - not enough legislation or action is taken in this area.  
airplanes - practices and policies, and management of staff are covered by the DDA.

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) Travel West Midlands have a policy to make all services 100% accessible by 2010. Operators have their own strategies to improve their services via service contracts. New rail franchises for operators must follow Disability Discrimination Act Regulations.

#### Actual state of the accessibility of the public transport vehicles in United Kingdom

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport 50% of buses and taxis are now accessible. In London all buses are low-floor vehicles, and all have retractable ramps. There is no limit on number of guidance dogs allowed on buses.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR<sup>9</sup> (organisation for people with disabilities):<sup>8</sup>

- All Modes: difficult in terms of inconsistent design
- Bus:
  - Sometimes driver does not lower bus, or does not pull close enough to the kerb
  - score poorly in terms of availability of wheelchair and priority seating
  - Difficulty if with a guide dog, due to inconsistent design (e.g., wide open space on bus, good for wheelchair, not for visually impaired)
  - good for people with a hearing difficulty
- Train:
  - problems with availability of wheelchair/priority seats/space
  - Trains also score poorly in terms of availability of wheelchair/priority seating
  - Not enough priority seating, but is good with regard to announcing stops and interchange; gap causes a problem between platform and carriage
  - Poor for those with cognitive/learning disabilities

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) 75% of buses are low floor accessible buses. All services that are provided on behalf of the PTE are accessible and all drivers have been trained in disability awareness.

- All Modes:<sup>10</sup>
  - Ticket please pads<sup>11</sup>: tear-off strips that indicate person may have a disability and also indicates where they want to go
  - Bus hailer - people who have a visual disability can receive a bus hailer placard<sup>12</sup>
  - Wayfinder/talking signs throughout Birmingham for visually impaired
- Bus:<sup>10</sup>
  - 70% of buses are low-floor accessible, Ramp to enable access
  - Bright colour contrasting handrails
  - 1 space for wheelchair users
  - Priority seats for those with mobility difficulties
- Tram:<sup>10</sup>
  - colour contrast doors and handrails
  - priority seating
  - 2 wheelchair accessible spaces
  - assistance dogs permitted
- Train:<sup>10</sup>
  - Member of staff helps board/alight; good internal lighting; hand rails

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<sup>9</sup> RADAR is the UK's largest disability campaigning network, with over 900 individual and organisational members.

<sup>10</sup> West Midlands – CENTRO literature

<sup>11</sup> Centro-WMPTA produces a note pad to assist people with communications difficulties to buy tickets on buses or for train journeys. The pad contains 50 tear-off slips, each of which states that the bearer may have a speech or hearing impairment. The user completes the slip with the required ticket information, and hands it to the person selling the ticket. After payment a ticket would then be issued for the journey. The Tickets Please pad is only available to West Midlands residents.

<sup>12</sup> Centro has developed and produced an innovative 'Bus Hailer' for West Midlands residents who are blind or partially-sighted. They can use the large numbered hailer, which says 'BUS' in bold type and includes Braille to enable them to catch their correct bus easily and in safety.

- colour contrasted doors
- tactile and Braille text

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## 2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport there are no regular statistics. Some cases, e.g. complaints to DRC/DfT may prompt issues. DfT is considering gathering statistics. These are rare occurrences but when they occur they are significant. Level crossings are an issue for those with poor hearing.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) there are not aware of any statistics. Safety is a real concern to some disability groups e.g. perceptions of feeling unsafe (by blind people) at rail stations. A lack of seatbelts for securing a wheelchair on board public transport is a concern. Some disabled people physically cannot use seatbelts (e.g. onboard coaches and in cars) and they are exempt from having to use them.

The interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) is unsure whether this data is collected and recorded. Operators and insurance companies may hold some data but the PTE does not.

### Safety aspects

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport there are special plans for aviation and shipping although for trains and buses it depends on the individual operator. The EU is discussing the aviation sector.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities):

- 40% of respondents say that they are fearful of using public transport
- Approximately 51% of wheelchair users are fearful
- People with disabilities think that riding bus is dangerous: fear of falling over because the driver sets off before the passenger is seated

Airports have started to introduce a 'deaf alerter' (a vibrating pager provided to deaf passengers as they check-in) to notify deaf/hard of hearing passengers that the smoke / security alarm has been activated. Birmingham is an example of such an airport. Could something like this be added to Eurostar? Currently, people who require assistance have to make themselves known to the train crew and travel in the front carriage.

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) Dial-a-Ride services provide driver training e.g. fire evacuation. For buses there are no specific plans. For rail there is a statement outlining the procedures within the DPPP<sup>13</sup>.

### Reliability and Punctuality

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport the level of the accessibility of vehicles and stops/stations is good, although occasionally features do not work - e.g., ramps on buses/taxis. No statistics other than complaints to DRC/DfT. DfT provides statistics by franchise to assess the level of punctuality.

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<sup>13</sup> DPPP = Disabled People's Protection Policy, Network Rail, June 2006

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) the reliability of bus services (e.g. use of ramps) is dependent on the attitudes of drivers. Drivers do not record how often they use the ramp or how often they cannot park close to the kerb.

### Customer Service

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport many of these, e.g. low counters and assistants, are in place. The ATOC logs complaints on bookings. Nevertheless ticket machines are sometimes in the wrong place. Space for luggage on trains is a problem, while at stations security concerns are important. For the underground, most information counters desks/windows are not accessible, although these are available in some stations and others offer assistance. For metro and rail: some stations offer assistance.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) there is a lack of awareness, dependent on the individual member of staff to make the announcements. For telephones there is no reference on operators' websites that they have minicomms / typetalk / textphones available. Virgin, BA and some airports provide minicom and textphone numbers but others don't. Availability of typetalk isn't publicised very well. Customer service desks in larger stations are now widely equipped with induction loops. Information screens are not updated on a regular basis - hearing impaired people often find themselves waiting at the wrong platform. Uncertainty about catching the right bus / train.

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) not all the counters or ticket machines are accessible to wheelchair users. The larger stations and customer service desks are equipped with induction loops, but not all. Disabled people can book 24 hours in advance to receive special assistance.

### Staff Training

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport staff training is patchy, but improving. It is better on railways than on buses. DfT funded an ATOC training DVD. GO-Skills accredit training schemes, including taxi training. There is a need to share best-practice. MIDAS<sup>14</sup> training exists for community transport drivers.

According to the interview-partner from RADAR (organisation for people with disabilities) 47% say that they would use public transport more if staff were better trained to help and attuned to their needs. All information's: DPTAC, "Attitudes of Disabled People to Public Transport" (2001 - 2002)

According to the interview-partner from the CENTROPTE (Public Transport Operator) PTE trains all its employees in customer care / disability awareness. All bus drivers have been trained up to NVQ Level 2 for disability awareness. A new Driver's Standard is coming out next year.

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<sup>14</sup> MIDAS = Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme

## 2.3 Alternatives to public transport

According to the interview-partner from the Department for Transport alternatives to public transport are Community Transport: Dial-a-Ride, taxis. Taxis are heavily used by disabled people in the UK. Problems do exist in rural areas where community transport coverage is poor. DfT has the view that not all disabled persons can use public transport so cars are also important. DfT want disabled persons to continue driving as long as possible. DfT funds Mobility Centres (via the Mobility Forum) to assess the driving capabilities of disabled people (MAVIS<sup>15</sup> has closed). Cars are important for disabled people. Motability<sup>16</sup> provides finance for disabled persons to purchase cars. The Blue Badge scheme (disabled parking) is being reviewed. Mobility scooters are important and the DfT may issue guidance about their use. Larger ones will not fit into buses (or trains). It is up to operators whether to accept scooters. It is an affordability issue for the disabled and DWP/DH<sup>17</sup> give mobility allowances. Shopmobility<sup>18</sup> is helpful.

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<sup>15</sup> MAVIS = Mobility Advice And Vehicle Information Service, Transport Research Laboratory

<sup>16</sup> Motability = The Motability Scheme enables disabled people to use their government-funded mobility allowances to obtain a new car, powered wheelchair or scooter. Motability is a charity.

<sup>17</sup> DWP/DH = Department of Work and Pensions/ Department of Health

<sup>18</sup> Shopmobility is a scheme which lends manual wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and powered scooters to members of the public with limited mobility to shop and to visit leisure and commercial facilities within the town, city or shopping centre. The National Federation of Shopmobility UK is a registered Charity.