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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 Ireland (IE)

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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

The PTaccess consortium:

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

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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 Ireland (IE).

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

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 25¹ 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 Ireland (IE).

What can be expected from this report

This report gives an overview of the state of the accessibility of public transport in Ireland (IE). 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 accessibility of public transport from the subjective, but informed, point of view of people with disabilities, transport operators and

¹ 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.

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 Ireland (IE) 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

People, who are interested to get **more (detailed) information on the accessibility of public transport in Ireland (IE)**, 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.

2.1 General Information

2.1.1 About the PTaccess interviews

Interviewer:	Name	Organisation
PTaccess National Contact Person	Graham Lightfoot	Mendes Ltd.
Interview partners:	Name	Organisation
Representatives of Transport Operators	Eoin Glavey	Bus Eireann
	Dolores Quinn	Bus Ath Cliath/Dublin Bus
	Dervla Brophy	Veolia Transport Ireland
	Neil O Brien	Railway Procurement Agency
Representatives of People with Disabilities	Hugh Mc Guire	P.w.D.I. Ltd., Westmeath Network
Representative of Governmental Authority	--	Department of Transport *

Table 1: Interviewer and Interview-partners in Ireland

* The Department of Transport, which is responsible for the funding and licensing of public passenger transport in Ireland, had been contacted several times - both by the national contact person and by the PTaccess project coordinator – and had been asked to answer the PTaccess-questionnaire (at least in part). Unfortunately the Department of Transport did not react to any of these requests. Therefore, the point of view of a representative of the governmental authority of Ireland could not be included in this report. However, some information regarding the Irish policy with respect to barrier-free public transport was obtained from “TRANSPORT ACCESS FOR ALL” Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport under the Disability Act 2005 (<http://www.transport.ie/upload/general/7760-0.pdf>).

Some general information about the situation in Ireland:

- General information about public transport in Ireland
 - Existing modes and services. City bus services are operated in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford, with town services in some of the smaller towns. There is an extensive inter-urban bus network connecting major cities and towns with some local (mostly community based) services in rural areas. In the greater Dublin area there are commuter rail services, including the Dublin Area Rapid Transit connecting the city centre to suburbs around Dublin Bay and two LUAS (tram) lines connecting southern and southwestern suburbs with the city centre. There are eight main intercity rail routes connecting Dublin with Belfast, Cork, Waterford, Galway, Limerick, Rosslare Europort, Westport and Sligo with a small number of other rail lines connecting smaller towns with Tralee, Limerick and Waterford.
 - Public Transport operators. Most public transport services are operated by the three state owned operators, one for bus services in the greater Dublin area, one for bus services in the

cities and towns outside of Dublin, which also operates the inter-urban bus/coach services and some rural bus services, one for all the interurban, local and commuter rail services. A privately-owned company operates the tram service in Dublin. Privately-owned bus & coach operators provide services on interurban routes, in a small number of cities and towns and in rural areas.

- General information about the PTaccess interviews in Ireland
 - Why have these interview-partners been selected? The representatives of the transport operators are the accessibility officers in their respective companies, which are the three state-owned operators, the tram (LUAS) operator and the design and procurement agency for the tram (LUAS). The representative of people with disabilities is a committee member of the national organisation of people with disabilities in Ireland. The person in the Department of Transport selected for interview is the Head of the Public Access Unit. All of these people were on the Public Transport Accessibility Committee, which reports to the Minister for Transport.
 - General impressions of the interviewer. All of the interviewees were responsible directly for transport and accessibility issues in their respective organisations and were therefore well informed about the situation regarding accessible public transport in Ireland from their respective points of view.

2.1.2 Statistical Data from Ireland

Statistical Data for Ireland	
Number of inhabitants	4,500,000
Inhabitants with disabilities	8.3% ²
Inhabitants with motor impairments	3.5%
Inhabitants with visual impairments	11,500
Inhabitants with hearing impairments	17%
Inhabitants with cognitive / learning impairments	26,000
Inhabitants who are functional illiterates	22.6%
Share of disabled people living in urban areas	8%
Share of disabled people at working age	6%
Share of disabled people at working age who are actually working	1% ³

Table 2: Statistical data for Ireland

² Source: Census in 2006

³ ¾ of 1% are in sheltered employment (i.e. Workshops)

2.1.3 Legal and regulatory framework conditions in Ireland

In Ireland there are two anti-discrimination laws, but there is no specific law for accessible public transport. However, the National Disability Authority published “Recommended Accessibility Guidelines for Public Transport Operators” in 2005. The Guidelines are intended to help public transport operators provide a good, comprehensive and readily usable service to people with disabilities. They cover information provision, infrastructure and buildings, vehicle design, customer relations, disability awareness training and procedures for disruption and emergencies.

In Ireland the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities is a mainstream topic on the political agenda – the government document “Transport Access for All - Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport” sets out policy, objectives, and proposals of the Minister for Transport for accessible transport. Transport 21 is the national Government's transport investment programme for the period 2006 to 2015. This programme ensures that all investment for public transport, covering rail and road passenger transport, will ensure full accessibility in all new facilities and vehicles.

Regular monitoring of the accessibility of public transport at national and regional level is mandatory in Ireland.

People with disabilities and their accompanying spouses or companies are eligible for the national Free Travel Scheme, which allows them to travel by public transport free of charge.

Anti-discrimination law

There are two anti-discrimination laws existing in Ireland: the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Disability Act 2005.

Regulations regarding the accessibility of public transport

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd there is no specific law for accessible public transport.

The “Sectoral Plan” has been developed in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Act 2005 and addresses the accessibility needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments across the transport modes. The Plan sets out policy and objectives for accessible transport and defines the concept ‘Transport for All’. It sets out for each area of transport covered, the specific accessibility issues relevant to those areas and the proposals of the Minister for Transport, and the agencies under his aegis, in relation to the rolling out of a comprehensive programme of accessible transport.⁴

⁴ Source: „Transport Access for All“ - Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport (<http://www.transport.ie/upload/general/7760-0.pdf>)

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

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd the accessibility of public transport is a mainstream topic on the political agenda in Ireland.

The Department of Transport’s high level policy goal for accessibility is the development of accessible public transport services for the greatest number of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in the shortest possible time, having regard to resource, technical and other constraints.⁵

Monitoring of the accessibility of public transport

According to the P.w.D.I. Ltd, monitoring of the accessibility of public transport is done on a national and regional level (Mandatory: Transport 21). Consumer Panels: Disability Working Groups in the Department of Transport of which P.w.D.I. is a member of e.g. Rail Bus Taxis Ferries and airlines in Ireland.

Special fares and public transport tariffs for people with disabilities

The interviewed representatives of the transport operators and the interviewed representative of people with disabilities stated that people with disabilities and their accompanying spouses or companions over 16 years are eligible for the national Free Travel Scheme, which allows them to travel by public transport free of charge. The Free Travel Pass is issued by the Department of Social & Family Affairs, which reimburses operators that accept the FTP.

2.1.4 Organisational framework conditions

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Equality Authority are responsible for anti-discrimination and social inclusion issues referring to people with disabilities. The Department of Transport is responsible for public transport issues on a national level.

Most public transport services are operated by the three state owned operators, one (Bus Ath Cliath/Dublin Bus) for bus services in the greater Dublin area, one (Bus Eireann) for bus services in the cities and towns outside of Dublin, which also operates the inter-urban bus/coach services and some rural bus services, one (Iarnród Eireann/Irish Rail) for all the interurban, local and commuter rail services. A privately-owned company (Veolia) operates the tram service in Dublin. Privately-owned bus & coach operators provide services on interurban routes, in a small number of cities and towns and in rural areas.

In Ireland there are more than 500 disability organisations, and all these organisations are affiliated to the National Disability Authority.

In Ireland there is regular co-operation among the stakeholders (governmental authorities, transport operators, and disability organisations) regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport: Transport operators work with other transport organisations and disability organisations on the Public Transport Accessibility Committee, which has been set up by the Department of Transport. In addition there are also Consumer panels and user groups of disabled people that are consulted on a regular basis by the transport operators and by the governmental authorities.

⁵ Source: Sectoral Plan (<http://www.transport.ie/upload/general/7760-0.pdf>)

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

Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform and the Equality Authority.

The relevant legislation is the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Disability Act 2005.

Disability Equality Unit

The role of the Disability Equality Unit is to develop the legal framework in line with Government policy to support the equal participation of people with disabilities in society. It was established in 1997 arising out of a recommendation by the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities in their report of 1996.

As well as monitoring the implementation of disability mainstreaming policy in public services, the unit also administers funding for the National Disability Authority (NDA). The responsibilities of the NDA are:

- to advise and assist with disability equality policy development
- to undertake relevant research
- to support the development of standards in services for people with disabilities.

The NDA was established in June 2000 under the National Disability Authority Act 1999.

The Disability Equality Unit also contributes to and monitors progress in the development of international equality policy at European Union, Council of Europe and United Nations levels and strives to raise awareness of disability equality access issues.

The Equality Authority is an independent body set up under the Employment Equality Act 1998. It was established on 18th October 1999. The Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000 outlaw discrimination in employment, vocational training, advertising, collective agreements, the provision of goods and services and other opportunities to which the public generally have access on nine distinct grounds, including disability.

Governmental authorities responsible for public transport

Department of Transport, 42-44 Kildare Street, Dublin 2: This Department is responsible for the funding and licensing of public passenger transport operations under various Acts from 1932 to the present day and investment under Transport 21. Transport 21 is the national Government's transport investment programme for the period 2006 to 2015. All investment for public transport, covering rail and road passenger transport, will ensure full accessibility in all new facilities and vehicles. It is also responsible for preparing a Sectoral Plan on Transport under the Disability Act 2005.

Main transport operators and Public Transport associations

Main public transport operators in Ireland are: Iarnrod Eireann, Bus Eireann, Dublin Bus, Veolia Transport Ireland, Railway Procurement Agency, PAMBO, FOTO & CTTC (- these last three are the representative associations of private bus operators).

Main disability organisations

National Disability Authority - All (500+) disability organisations in Ireland are affiliated to this authority

Cooperation among stakeholders

Cooperation between the governmental authorities and disability organisations

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd governmental authorities and disability organisations cooperate through the consumer panels.

Cooperation between the transport operators and disability organisations

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd transport operators and disability organisations cooperate through the consumer panels.

According to the transport operators the cooperation is high. Public transport operators and organisation of people with disabilities are represented in the Public Transport Accessibility Committee and there is a User Group.

Cooperation between the transport operators and governmental authorities

According to the transport operators the cooperation of transport operators and governmental authorities is very high through the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC). The PTAC was established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness in July 2000 and is the primary consultative forum on the issue of public transport accessibility. The Committee's remit is to advise the Minister for Transport on the accessibility aspects of public transport investment projects and on other public transport accessibility issues.

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

According to the interviewed representatives of transport operators the Government's Transport 21 Investment Strategy and the Sectoral Plan published by the Department of Transport as a requirement of the Disability Act 2005 ensures that accessible public transport is a national obligation. Transport operators work with other transport organisations and disability organisations in the Public Transport Accessibility Committee, which has been set up by the Department of Transport. There is a LUAS User Group of disabled people, which is consulted on a regular basis.

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

In the opinion of P.w.D.I. Ltd, people with disabilities prefer human assistance. People like the human touch where they can work on a one-to-one basis with someone rather than with a faceless person e.g. computer or laptop. For blind people and for people with cognitive/learning impairments it is likely that they use public transport. The alternative to public transport would be the door to door transport services in Dublin and those offered by some operators under the Rural Transport Programme.

The transport operators think that it is likely that people with disabilities do their daily trips by public transport when appropriate vehicles and services are available.

2.2 Accessibility of Public Transport

Information: The general perception of people with disabilities is that the accessibility of public transport passenger information in Ireland is good. Travel planning information and information about tariffs and tickets is offered by telephone, internet, print and large print. There is also pre trip information available regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles and on customer services offered by the public transport operators for people with disabilities. Accessible passenger information is available at stops/stations and in the public transport vehicles.

Ticketing: People with disabilities in Ireland are eligible for the national Free Travel Scheme, which allows them to travel with their free travel pass free of charge, but they must get a ticket for travelling on both long distance and intercity trains. Ticket vending machines are not accessible for disabled people.

Stops and stations: Most public transport stops and stations in Ireland are not accessible for people with disabilities, but a programme of station improvements is being undertaken at the 18 bus stations around the country, and “Transport 21”, the national government’s investment strategy, covers the upgrading of railway stations. Improvement to stops is the responsibility of local authorities and will take place where new accessible services are being introduced.

Vehicles: Accessibility of urban public transport vehicles (buses and trams) is good in Ireland. The accessibility of trains is assessed as fair by disabled people in Ireland. All regional buses in Ireland are high-floor vehicles; they have a kneeling suspension to lower the height of the first step, but these regional-buses are not equipped for access by wheelchair users. The exceptions are 20 accessible double-decker coaches that operate special commuter services on one route into Dublin.

Safety, Reliability, and Service: Disabled people in Ireland are satisfied with the safety equipment in public transport. Accessible information in emergencies is available in all vehicles and stations. In case of an emergency, there is also a special plan for evacuation of people with disabilities, and there is also training in emergency and evacuation procedures for evacuating people with disabilities. Special training schemes for Transport Operators’ staff regarding the service for passengers with disabilities are ongoing. Disabled people were involved in the design and development of these staff training courses. A training DVD has been developed and is used in all training courses of the main bus operators. The reliability of vehicles and stops/stations is good in all public transport modes in Ireland. Public Transport Operators are offering assistance at the stations: If disabled people ask for the service, customer service will put them on the train, bus or tram and will inform the ticket collector on the train, the bus driver or the tram driver and they will arrange to hand them over to a member of customer service, who will organise their safe egress out of the train station, bus station or tram terminal and, if necessary, will organise a taxi for them to get them to their home.

2.2.1 Accessibility of passenger information

The general perception of P.w.D.I. Ltd is that the accessibility of public transport passenger information is good.

Pre-trip information

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd there is travel planning information and information about tariffs and tickets offered by telephone, internet, print and large print. There is also pre trip information available regarding the accessibility of public transport stations, stops, vehicles and services. Pre-trip information on customer services

is offered by the public transport operators for people with disabilities. Pre-trip information on special transport services is available but special transport services must be booked prior to departure.

According to the transport operators the website displays operating hours & frequencies. Customer care and passenger service guide are available in Braille and audio cassette tape. An accessibility newsletter and a passenger service guide are available in printed format. In Dublin stops have route map displays and Real Time Information on time intervals for the next three trams. Disabled people are entitled to free travel under the national Free Travel Scheme. There is a website and a travel assistance initiative offered by the public transport operators. This Initiative, which is managed by Dublin Bus, offers practical advice on using LUAS and a trained "buddy" to meet and accompany anyone for the first time that they use the service. It is free of charge and is available to everyone aged 18+ from 0800-1800, Monday-Friday. Few special transport services exist in Ireland (Dublin). Information about these special transport services would not generally be available unless you knew about them already. They do have their own websites.

On-trip information

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd, passenger information is accessible for people with motor impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments and people with cognitive/learning impairments at stops and stations for all modes of transport. On-trip information accessible for impaired people is available in all public transport vehicles.

According to the transport operators, accessible passenger information via timetables at bus-stops is only available in urban areas, but this information is not accessible for people with visual impairments. Tram stations have route map displays and real time information on time intervals for the next three trams. Public announcements are made regarding delays and unexpected incidents. There are not any audible announcements about starting times of the next tram or its destination. In city buses and regional buses there is an audible announcement and "bus stopping" sign. In buses and trams real time audible and visual information on the next stop is provided, including details of interchange with other modes of transport.

2.2.2 Accessibility issues in Ticketing

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd, there are no special tariffs for people with disabilities. All People with disabilities in Ireland have a free travel pass but must get a ticket for travelling on both long distance and intercity trains. Ticket vending machines are not accessible for disabled people.

According to the transport operators, people with disabilities and their accompanying spouses or companions over 16 years are eligible for the national Free Travel Scheme, which allows them to travel by public transport free of charge.

2.2.3 Accessibility of stops and stations

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd, the general perception regarding the accessibility of public transport stops and stations is poor. The strategy is covered under Transport 21 regarding upgrading of railway stations and rolling stock.

According to the transport operators, a programme of station improvements is being undertaken at the 18 bus stations around the country. Improvement to stops is the responsibility of local authorities and is related to where new accessible services are being introduced. This is part of Transport 21, the national Government's major

public transport investment programme and is also included in the Department of Transport's Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005. 50% of bus stops in Cork City have Kassel Kerbs, shelters and seating with enough space for manoeuvring, but 0% elsewhere. Although some stops in Cork City have Kassel Kerbs, the design of the access and egress at the stop makes it impossible for the bus to make use of the Kassel Kerbs and so passengers have to step down off a high kerb and then back up into the bus. For wheelchair users this is of course impossible and so the provision of low floor buses and Kassel Kerbs is negated by poor access and egress for the bus. Veolia Transport Ireland & the Railway Procurement Agency added that the strategy regarding the accessibility of stops and stations is a fixed system based on the principles of universal design. Consideration is being given to audible announcements regarding the next tram due - time and destination. The need for such audible announcements will become more important when extensions to the existing lines are built as this will involve splits at the ends to more than one destination.

2.2.4 Accessibility of vehicles

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd, the strategy regarding the improvement of the accessibility of public transport vehicles is also covered under Transport21. In the opinion of the P.w.D.I. Ltd, the general perception regarding accessibility of vehicles is fair. The level of satisfaction of people with impairments is good for all modes of transport. The level of satisfaction of people with motor impairments regarding the accessible interior design of city buses, regional buses, local and long-distance trains is fair. The satisfaction of people with disabilities with the accessibility of trams was assessed as excellent. City buses as well as local and long-distance trains offer space for one wheelchair per vehicle. For trams there are six wheelchair-spaces per tram. The level of satisfaction of people with visual impairments regarding the accessible interior design of city and regional buses is ok. The satisfaction of people with disabilities with the accessibility of local and long-distance trains is good and for trams it's excellent. The level of satisfaction of people with hearing impairments or people with cognitive/learning impairments regarding the accessible interior design is good for all vehicles.

The transport operators indicated that Transport 21 is the national Government's transport investment programme for the period 2006 to 2015. All investment for public transport, covering rail and road passenger transport, will ensure full accessibility in all new facilities and vehicles. This major programme has its own web site, which is updated on a regular basis with progress reports. Ongoing announcements from Government ministers also keep the public aware of progress with the various elements of Transport 21.

According to "Bus Eireann", 100% of buses in cities are low floor with ramps and automatic doors, handrails, high-contrast design, non slip surfaces. Limited number of stops (50% in Cork) has Kassel Kerbs. The interview-partner of "Bus Ath Cliath/Dublin Bus", stated that 60% of vehicles are low floor with ramps and that 870 stops (20%) have Kassel Kerbs. The accessibility-facilities on the buses are checked at each scheduled maintenance event. The ramps are manually operated as the operator felt that the automatic ones would be damaged easily on the roads in Ireland. 100% of regional buses have a kneeling suspension to lower the height of the first step, but then there is a set of steep steps on the bus to reach the passenger area. None of the regional buses are equipped for access by wheelchair users. There are not any accessible stops in rural areas outside major towns and cities. There are 20 double deck low floor buses that operate special commuter services on one route into Dublin.

According to the Veolia Transport Ireland & Railway Procurement Agency, 100% of the tram stops along the route are operating barrier-free boarding (Level access from the platform to the tram; ramped access to all stops; tactile surfaces to indicate location on platform; automatic doors, handrails, high contrast design and non slip floors on the trams). The internal layout of the trams is being changed to remove all bumrests and replace them with tip-up seats and more space for wheelchair users (for two wheelchairs per tram). All of the trams have barrier-free interior design like level floors, plenty of space for manoeuvring, priority seats, handholds, high contrast design and a device to speak with the driver in emergency.

100% of city buses do have barrier-free interior design (According to “Bus Ath Cliath/Dublin Bus” there are 60%). They have handrails, high-contrast design, non slip surfaces, palm operated bell pushes, "bus stopping" indication and priority seating. For people with hearing impairments the bus stopping is visual displayed. In city buses there is space for one wheelchair. The regional interurban services are all operated by high floor coaches with the exception of the 20 double deckers. The coaches have handrails, handholds, priority seats and palm operated bellpushes. Only on the 20 double decker regional buses there is space for one wheelchair.

2.2.5 Safety, Reliability and Service

Safety aspects

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd, there was an accident involving people with disabilities in public transport: A partially sighted person was getting out of a train outside the train station and falling and sustaining minor injuries. This was on an old type train where the window could be let down and the door could be opened from the outside which was the cause of the accident.

P.w.D.I Ltd stated that disabled people do not think that riding by public transport is dangerous. The satisfaction of wheelchair-users with the special safety equipments is good in city and regional buses as well as in local and long-distance trains. In trams the satisfaction is excellent. Disabled people also find the safety equipment excellent. Accessible information in emergencies is available in all vehicles and stations. In case of an emergency, there is also a special plan for evacuation of people with disabilities.

According to the transport operators, city and regional buses have no safety equipments for wheelchair users. All city buses and 8% of regional buses have general safety equipments for passengers with disabilities. City buses are equipped with palm operated bellpushes, designated spaces for wheelchair users, colour contrasted handrails, improved lighting, better grips and the pole adjacent to the wheelchair user's position is being replaced by an electronically operated arm. In emergencies there is an audible announcement and driver's action in city and regional buses. There is also a training in emergency and evacuation procedures for evacuating people with disabilities. All of the trams have safety equipment for wheelchair users (e.g. emergency device to speak with driver; emergency brake lever to stop the tram; CCTV and Customer Service Officers). Trams are equipped with palm operated bellpushes, designated spaces for wheelchair users, colour contrasted handrails, improved lighting and a non slip floor. In emergencies there is accessible information over a public address system, customer care staff in call centre and on the trams. This is also available at tram stops. In case of an emergency the driver opens the doors and the passengers exit.

Reliability and Punctuality

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd, the reliability of vehicles and stops/stations is good in city buses, regional buses, local trains, long-distance trains and train stations in rural and urban areas. In trams it is excellent. The punctuality of city and regional buses is poor, in trains it is reasonable and in trams it's excellent.

According to the transport operators, the reliability of vehicles and stops/stations is high. If equipment fails, the process followed is notification, maintenance crew informed and the item is fixed. City and regional buses have manual or automatic ramps. For city buses there are several problems of congestion in major cities and towns so that an assessment of the level of punctuality can not be made. 2-3% of the regional buses arrive with a delay of less than 5 minutes - this refers to the departure from the starting point only - and 95% of the trams. Should there

be a breakdown, then LUAS⁶ tickets are valid on Dublin Bus to enable passengers to continue their trip. Punctuality statistics of trams are published regularly and displayed on the web site and at stops.

Customer Service

In the opinion of P.w.D.I. Ltd, the general perception regarding the accessibility of customer services is excellent: If disabled people ask for the service, customer service will put them on the train, bus or tram and will inform the ticket collector on the train, the bus driver or the tram driver and they will arrange to hand them over to a member of customer service who will organise their safe egress out of the train station, bus station or tram terminal and will organise a taxi if necessary for them to get them to their home.

The satisfaction regarding the provision of accessible counters and information desks at stations is excellent for people with motor impairments and good for people with visual or hearing impairments. Public Transport Operators are offering assistance at the stations.

According to the transport operators, 50% of the bus stations have left luggage facilities, but they are not all accessible. 50% of the bus stations have low counters so that people with motor impairments can get information and 72% have induction loops for people with hearing impairments. According to the Veolia Transport Ireland & Railway Procurement Agency, the general perception regarding the accessibility of customer car staff and travel assistance service is very good.

Staff Training

The general perception of P.w.D.I. Ltd regarding the training of people working in public transport is good. Special training schemes for Transport Operators' staff regarding the service for passengers with disabilities are ongoing.

According to "Bus Eireann" and "Bus Ath Cliath/Dublin Bus", there are special training courses for existing staff and as an integral part of all induction courses for new staff. There is a driver's handbook and there are regular refresher courses after 4 and 8 month after joining and annually thereafter. Disabled people were involved in the design and development of the course. Training DVD has been developed and is used in all training courses.

According to "Veolia" this is an integral part of "Going for Green" training programme. Customer Service Officers receive this as part of their induction. The Management team have also received this training and by the end of 2007 100% of all the drivers will have received this training. The training includes role play. RPA: All existing staff will have received disability awareness training by the end of 2007; new staff will be trained in blocks of 20.

⁶ The tram service in Dublin is called LUAS.

2.3 Alternatives to public transport

According to P.w.D.I. Ltd, alternatives to public transport are the door to door transport services offered in Dublin and by some Rural Transport operators.