

Report 08.419
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Committee Transport & Access Committee
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Update from Public Transport Disability Liaison Officer

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee on the work carried out on accessibility issues since the appointment of the Greater Wellington Public Transport Disability Liaison Officer.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

At the Transport and Access Committee meeting on 26 March 2008 the Committee noted the allocation of the disability liaison role within the Public Transport Division. **Report 08.162** described the work that is involved with this role and the proposed three-step approach (set out below) that would be undertaken:

Step 1: Define what needs to be achieved

Step 2: Investigate what has already been achieved, and which projects need a 'disability check'

Step 3: Develop a work programme

This report gives a summary of the information collected since the March Committee meeting and describes the next steps.

4. Progress to date

4.1 Step 1: Define what needs to be achieved

4.1.1 The accessible journey

One of the main sources of information regarding making public transport more accessible is the 2005 Human Rights Commission report “The Accessible Journey”. According to that report, an accessible journey:

“covers all the steps needed for a person to get from their home to their destination and return. All steps in the accessible journey are interlinked and are of equal importance. If one link is inadequate, the whole journey may be impossible.”

This requires the collaboration of different stakeholders, as the responsibilities for different parts of the journey are distributed among local, regional and national government, transport providers and operators.

The recommendations in the Human Rights Commission report to provide an accessible journey are very broad and fall only partly under the direct responsibility of Greater Wellington. Important aspects for Greater Wellington are:

- Organising the participation of disabled people in all public land transport planning, funding and implementation processes;
- Development and implementation of accessibility design performance standards for vehicles, bus stops, premises, information services and streetscape. (For the Human Rights Commission timetable of compliance see **Attachment 1**);
- Driver disability awareness and competency training.

The Human Rights Commission plans to undertake a review of progress in implementing the recommendations in 2010.

4.1.2 Consultation

Initial meetings have been held with Community Advisors from different local councils, the Royal Foundation of the Blind, the Wellington City Council Disability Reference Group, NZ Bus, members of the disabled community, the Ministry of Transport and Greater Wellington staff. The information gained at these meetings is incorporated in this report.

4.2 Step 2: Investigate what has already been achieved, and which projects need a ‘disability check’

The current situation regarding the accessibility of the Metlink network is mainly assessed from:

- Information from Greater Wellington officers
- Consultation with external stakeholders

- Recent research (“the snapshot”) carried out by the Ministry of Transport regarding accessible public transport information.

Detailed information about the results of the investigation can be found in **Attachment 2**.

The following preliminary conclusions regarding the current situation, and opportunities for improvements, can be made:

- Improvements for public transport users with disabilities have been made in the last couple of years or are currently planned. Examples are guaranteed wheelchair accessible bus routes, the rising number of accessible buses in general and the new trains. It seems that sometimes public transport users with disabilities are not aware of the options which arise from already accessible services.
- On the other hand, there are still a lot of improvements required to have an accessible system that will enable people with disabilities to use public transport easily. For example, accessible buses are of no use for wheelchair riders if they don't know when the buses are scheduled on a particular service or if the bus stops are not accessible for them.
- Not all potential measures will require huge investments; a lot can be improved by better consulting people with disabilities in early stages of projects or giving better information. A good example is the review of the Metlink timetables, which is scheduled for the financial year 2008/09. Contact has already been made between Metlink and representatives from the Foundation of the Blind and elderly people, to ensure that their requirements are heard.

Currently a Transport Accessibility audit (i.e. a ‘disability check’) is being developed as part of a Land Transport NZ research project. Greater Wellington is one of the Regional Councils where the draft audit will be tested. This exercise will potentially deliver useful additional information regarding the current situation of accessible journeys within the Greater Wellington region.

4.3 Step 3: Develop a work programme

The third step is to develop a work programme. The initial focus will be on quick wins, as they can deliver improvements for people with disabilities in the short term and usually don't require a large budget. The basis of the programme will be the findings outlined in Attachment 2.

A draft work programme will be discussed with the Greater Wellington Disability Reference Group once this group has been established. It is also expected that the Reference Group members will come up with additional information to improve the public transport system.

5. Communication

No external communication is required relating to this report. Stakeholders will be kept informed as part of the process.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. **Receives** the report.
2. **Notes** the content of the report.
3. **Notes** the next steps to advance this issue, particularly the development of a work programme in consultation with the Greater Wellington Disability Reference Group.

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Attachment 1: National Accessibility Design Performance Standards – Timetable for Compliance

Attachment 2: Status quo and opportunities for improvements