

## **Transport for London (TfL) response to House of Lords Committee on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability report: *The Equality Act 2010: The impact on disabled people***

I welcome your Committee's report into the impact the Equality Act 2010 has had on disabled people in the UK.

I would like to offer our response to the recommendations relevant to us and set out what we are doing to meet our requirements under the Act, and surpass them where we can.

London's transport network is one of the most accessible in the world. We have accessible buses and taxis across the city and, with continued and sustained investment, we are making more London Underground and London Overground stations step free. There are now more than 200 London Underground, London Overground, Docklands Light Railway and Tramlink stations and stops with step-free access. Around 40 further stations will be made step free in the next 10 years under current plans.

We recently published *Action on Equality: our commitments to 2020*, which demonstrates our very strong commitment to ensuring our network and services are as accessible as possible, to ensure all disabled Londoners can make the most of what the Capital has to offer in terms of employment, education and culture, as well as ensuring we have a diverse and inclusive workforce. Our vision for our workforce is that there will be a more diverse range of people with the right skills working for us and that they are able to develop to their full potential. This means encouraging more disabled people, as well as women and people from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background, to join us.

### **Tube extensions, Elizabeth line and Crossrail 2**

The Committee's report calls on the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail and us to 'ensure that there is never again a prospect of new rail infrastructure being planned without step-free access being built into the design from the outset'. We agree with this recommendation and are working hard to ensure that accessibility is a core consideration when designing and building new facilities.

New lines, such as the Jubilee line extension, the upgraded East London line and the Docklands Light Railway, were all designed and built to include step-free access. All Elizabeth line stations to Reading will also be step free.

The new Elizabeth line trains will have dedicated space for wheelchairs close to the doors on every train. They will also have dedicated, clearly distinguished priority seats, visual and audio information about the train's journey and the facility to alert and speak to the driver in the event of an emergency. Drivers will also be able to view CCTV images of all carriage interiors.

All 40 Elizabeth line stations along the route will be step free. Customers will benefit from a turn up and go service, being able to travel without booking ahead, with station staff on hand from first to last train to assist as needed. For new stations being built for the line, there will be level access from platform to train, so that customers may independently board and alight the train without assistance. For those stations on the outer sections which

share tracks with other services, staff will deploy a manual boarding ramp to allow safe passage between the platform and train.

In developing Crossrail 2, we have embedded accessibility principles from the outset. Crossrail 2 would make London and the south east's transport network significantly more accessible. Step-free access would be provided at all Crossrail 2 stations and the railway would be served by a new fleet of trains, designed with wide doors and aisles, dedicated wheelchair spaces, be well lit and have on-board passenger information. These requirements have been established early in the scheme development so step-free access is built into the design at the earliest possible stage.

This also applies to other new infrastructure we are planning, including the Bakerloo line and Metropolitan line extensions and the London Overground extension to Barking Riverside.

### **Staff training**

With regards to the Committee's recommendations about staffing, we have made a fundamental commitment to having staff available at all of our stations.

We have recently changed our customer service operating model on London Underground to ensure that we have more staff visible on gatelines, ticket halls and platforms - the places customers need them the most.

This allows us to have a 'turn-up-and-go' system on all our public transport services, enabling customers to travel without pre-booking and allowing disabled people to travel with the same freedom as everyone else. Disabled customers should not have to book in advance to travel on our network - people's lives do not work like that and we therefore provide the ability for spontaneous travel.

We deliver disability equality training so that all our staff can assist disabled customers through stations and on to trains where needed. Staff are also trained in how to deploy the manual boarding ramps, now permanently installed at more than 50 stations.

We work hand-in-hand with disabled people's organisations such as Inclusion London, Transport for All and with our Independent Disability Advisory Group to design and deliver this training.

We have also developed a new week-long customer service training course for our staff which includes dedicated sections on accessibility and assisting our disabled customers, including those with hidden disabilities.

We will also shortly begin delivering a new two-day programme of bus driver training designed in partnership with disabled people's organisations. In this programme, special attention is given to the needs of disabled and vulnerable customers as well as the need to enforce wheelchair priority, pull up to the stop and kerb, and give enough people time to sit down. This programme will run for two years with all garage staff as well as all 24,500 bus drivers participating.

## **Audio/visual announcements**

We lead the country in having equipment for audio/visual announcements fitted on all our buses, trams, trains and stations. Earlier this year we celebrated the tenth anniversary of iBus, which provides real-time next-stop information on our entire bus network.

## **Vehicle accessibility**

Further to the Committee's recommendation that more can be done to make vehicles accessible to wheelchair users, I would like you assure you that all our buses have a wheelchair priority space, allowing wheelchair users to travel safely. The space can be used by buggy users, but they are asked to share the space or fold their buggies if required to allow a wheelchair user to board.

We know this can be one of the biggest barriers to wheelchair users getting around. We are currently undertaking a campaign to encourage parents to buy smaller, lightweight and foldable buggies that are best for using on public transport, and which can more easily make space for wheelchair users. We are working closely with manufacturers, retailers and parenting organisations to encourage them to produce and promote public transport-friendly buggies.

Bus stop accessibility is also vital in ensuring wheelchair ramps can be easily and safely deployed. Eighty-nine per cent of bus stops across our network now meet our accessible stop standards - so the kerb is at the correct height for the ramp to deploy, that street clutter is removed around the stop for wheelchair users to board and alight, and bus stop clearways are introduced so drivers can pull closely in to the kerb without others vehicles obstructing them. We have a target to reach 95 per cent of stops meeting these standards by the end of 2016.

On the Tube and rail network, we have introduced new rolling stock which better serves wheelchair users, along with the infrastructure to support it. We have introduced low-floor trains on the Circle, District, Metropolitan and Hammersmith & City lines, as well as London Overground. These also benefit from wider doors and dedicated wheelchair spaces. At some stations, particularly on the Victoria and Northern lines, we have introduced platform humps to provide level access from trains to the platform. Where this is not possible, we have introduced manual boarding ramps deployed by staff to provide level access.

## **Private hire vehicles**

With regards to the accessibility of taxis and private hire vehicles, we recently launched a campaign to educate private hire drivers and operators about the rules on accepting assistance dogs, telling them about the types of dogs they can expect to see in their vehicles and providing answers to any questions they have around safety and training. I have enclosed a copy for your reference.

This campaign is in response to a number of reports, particularly from Guide Dogs, about private hire drivers and operators either refusing or charging more to carry assistance dogs. We have worked closely with Assistance Dogs UK and others in developing it. We have

successfully prosecuted and removed licences from nine operators and drivers in the past year and we are seeking to prosecute more.

We will follow this campaign with another focussed on taxi drivers and wheelchair users, later on this year. This comes after section 165 of the Equality Act comes fully in to force in September. We will have the power to prosecute and revoke the licences of taxi drivers who refuse to carry wheelchair users, much like we already have with those who refuse assistance dogs.

I trust this demonstrates our commitment to making the services we provide, now and in the future, as accessible as possible.

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