

CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL: TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTE (TAN) 1

Guidance on helping blind and partially sighted concessionaires to apply for and use their passes. (October 2007)

Purpose

- 1.1 From 1 April 2008, an enhanced national bus concession will be in place, entitling residents of England aged 60 and over and eligible disabled people to free off-peak local bus travel anywhere in England. In order to take advantage of the national concession, all concessionaires will need to be issued with a new pass which meets a national design. This includes blind and partially sighted people.
- 1.2 This Technical Advice Note suggests ways in which Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) can help blind and partially sighted people to apply for and use the new passes. It is not a complete guide, but signposts where further advice may be obtained. TCAs are encouraged to contact the organisations listed below for further guidance.

Background

- 1.3 There are over 152,000 blind, and 155,000 partially sighted people registered with local councils in England¹.
- 1.4 There are several proactive organisations working to improve access to public transport for Blind and partially sighted users. These include:
 - the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee – DPTAC www.dptac.gov.uk;
 - the Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People – JCMBPA www.jcmbps.org.uk;
 - the Guide Dogs for the Blind;
 - and the Royal National Institute of the Blind – RNIB www.RNIB.org.uk.

¹ A full breakdown of both blind and partially sighted people by local authority area and age can be found at: <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/social-care/adult-social-care-information/people-registered-as-blind-and-partially-sighted-triennial-2006-england>

- 1.5 In RNIB research, 58% of older blind and partially sighted people felt more awareness of their needs with regard to transport was the single most important factor which would improve their quality of life.
- 1.6 Research conducted for DPTAC, the government's advisory committee on transport for disabled people, found that, while disabled people travel a third less often than the general public, disabled people use buses more often than the general public. Visually impaired people use buses significantly more than other disabled people with 57% using buses at least once a month compared to 43% of disabled people as a whole. DPTAC's research also showed that disabled people did not consider that those responsible for providing and operating public transport sufficiently understand their requirements.

What can TCAs do to support Blind and Partially Sighted Concessionaires?

- 1.7 Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) should consider all elements of the concessionary travel process and how it impacts upon blind, and partially sighted residents. This is in accordance with Section 40 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 which aims to prevent discrimination against disabled people and to ensure bus services are accessible.

Information about the concession and about the need to obtain a new pass

- 1.8 TCAs should consider the ability of their blind and partially sighted people to be able to read the application form, notes, guidance and timetable material associated with applying for and taking advantage of the national concession. The RNIB has produced 'Clear Print Guidelines' which can be found at:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_seeitrig ht.hcsp?printPage=1

- 1.9 Developed by the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) in collaboration with the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT), the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), the London Transport Users' Committee (LTUC) and the Disabled Person Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), a Code of Good Practice relating to timetable books, leaflets, maps and other printed information about bus and tram services was published in 2002. The document sets out the standards which ATCO recommends that Local Authorities adopt in their Bus Information Strategies.

<http://www.atco.org.uk/publications/pubs5.html>

Concessionary Pass Identification

- 1.10 The visual appearance of the national concessionary pass, which was subject to consultation earlier this year, will be set out in Regulations. However, there is scope, within the national design, for TCAs to make it easier for blind and partially sighted people to be able to identify their concessionary pass, and to improve the quality of the boarding experience.
- 1.11 Most TCAs will have examples of existing good practice, and should consider how these can work alongside the national pass design. For example, TCAs may wish to consider:
- the addition, on the back of the pass, of a sticky tape with a suitable Braille message
 - the provision of a wallet combining a visual identifier to the driver that the user may require additional support, with an embossed Braille label identifying that the wallet holds their concessionary travel pass.
 - Agreeing with their pass provider to add a notch somewhere along the edge of the pass in order to allow blind and partially sighted people to identify which way up it should be held. If a notch is added, TCAs should ensure that their pass provider takes care not to compromise the ability of the pass to work as a smartcard.

Boarding Environments

- 1.12 TCAs should work in partnership with their local bus companies and blind and partially sighted representative agencies to review, if necessary the boarding process, particularly where a pass may have to be presented to a card reader. The Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000, prescribe the **minimum** that is acceptable to meet the needs of disabled people on bus.