



Department for Transport

House of Lords
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My Lords,

Thank you for participating in the debate on the Draft Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023 on 16 May. I promised to follow up on questions not answered during the debate.

Lord Borwick asked how many of the Department's disability measures were outstanding, and how long the Department expects to take to bring these forward. We continue to progress the commitments made in recent strategies, including the Inclusive Transport Strategy, National Bus Strategy, and Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail. However, I would like to address three outstanding consultations on disability-related topics that we have yet to respond to.

We consulted on options to help local authorities tackle pavement parking in 2020. We have yet to publish the Government's formal response to the consultation. However, we received over 15,000 detailed responses to our consultation covering tens of thousands of open comments. Every single response had first to be analysed. Since then, we have been giving careful consideration to the findings. Pavement parking is a very complex issue and all of the options on which we consulted, which were recommendations of the Transport Select Committee, have challenges in respect of efficacy and deliverability. We are working through the options and the possible legislative opportunities for delivering them. As soon as those matters are confirmed we will publish our formal response.

Additionally, in early 2022, we consulted on reforms to aviation consumer policy on a range of air passenger rights issues, including accessible air travel. We are analysing the responses to this consultation and will publish our response shortly.

Finally, from March to June 2022 we consulted on updated best practice guidance for taxi and private hire vehicles licensing authorities in England. This included a stronger recommendation that every driver is required to complete disability awareness training. The Government's response to this consultation will be published in due course, along with the final version of the guidance. We are committed to mandating disability awareness training for taxi and private hire vehicle drivers as part of national standards, when Parliamentary time allows.

Turning to Lord Holmes' question about research and analysis of the impact of modal shift towards the bus as a result of these Regulations, I would like to highlight the findings of the economic impact assessment for this policy.

Transport use can have negative impacts on wider society through factors such as congestion, air pollution, and road accidents. Our economic modelling estimates the impacts from this policy arising from journeys moving from cars to bus to be net positive. The benefits from modal shift include less congestion, improved air quality and less noise. There are disbenefits associated with this policy in the form of lost indirect taxation from cars, but these are expected to be much smaller than the benefits from modal shift. These benefits make up less than c.10% of total benefits associated with the policy, with the majority of benefits accruing to existing bus passengers in the form of journey quality improvements.

To calculate the impacts on wider society of journeys moving from cars to buses, the marginal external cost (MEC) values for both transport modes were used. These costs have been estimated based on the values in the Department's Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG). The level of magnitude of benefits that accrue to new bus passengers depends on the level of mode shift generated by the policy. To estimate this, we used national, top-down diversion factors, which are also used in TAG. There is a large amount of uncertainty around the level of mode shift that will be generated for this policy, therefore we ran a wide range of scenarios, with a fairly conservative central estimate.

The benefits to existing bus passengers from this policy are expected to be from journey quality improvements. These can be expressed in terms of the value that bus passengers place on new audio-visual information relative to the counterfactual. These benefits are monetised based on existing methodologies set out in TAG, based on top-down, national studies conducted by DfT in collaboration with various transport research bodies. There is a large amount of uncertainty around the extent to which these journey quality improvements are valued by bus passengers, therefore we ran a wide range of scenarios. I hope that clarifies the analysis the Department undertook, which is available in full [here](#).

Lord Young queried whether we planned to require information provision at bus stops as well as on vehicles, and whether the Department has a strategy to improve the availability of information at bus stops. In relation to the first point, whilst I recognise the role of bus departure screens and, audible information, where provided, in ensuring passengers always have up-to-date information on upcoming services, we do not plan to make provision of enhanced information at bus stops compulsory.

However, in 2021, in the National Bus Strategy, we did set out our view that bus stops should have full timetable information and could be used to advertise the service network, frequency, and fares. We recommended that Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) should consider the impact of roadside infrastructure with respect to accessibility, including bus stops, and the BSIP process allows us to support local authorities to improve the information provided.

We have also commissioned research to understand the impact of bus station and stop design on the ability and willingness of passengers to use respective services. The research findings could be used to inform future policy in this area, including any potential initiatives to improve the accessibility of roadside infrastructure.

Baroness Randerson wished to know what would happen if an audio-visual system broke down during service. In the guidance for these Regulations, we state that operators should try to rectify any issue as soon as possible. If unable to use alternative vehicles with operational systems to continue a service, operators should ensure that drivers are supported to assist passengers who would otherwise be disadvantaged, such as by telling them when their destination is reached. We expect operators to maintain a record of any faults to share with enforcement officers if requested.

It is our view that enforcement should focus on deliberate, sustained and negligent non-compliance with the Regulations and that whilst operators should take steps to ensure they can readily rectify any faults that may occur, we would not anticipate such companies being penalised for a temporary issue which is resolved swiftly.

Baroness Randerson also asked about scenarios in which a driver does not turn the system on, or where the system provides incorrect information for the route. Operators must provide relevant information on board applicable services. If equipment is installed but not used to provide relevant information, the operator in question will not be complying with the Regulations. Our complaints process will enable passengers to highlight apparent non-compliance, and serious issues could be escalated to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and, potentially, the Traffic Commissioner, who will determine the appropriate course of action.

Thank you for your scrutiny of this legislation and your engagement on this important subject. I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

*Yours,
Charlotte*

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON