



Bus Stops

Policy Statement

May 2004

**Joint Committee on Mobility of
Blind and Partially Sighted People**

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**Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People Policy on:
Bus Stops**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People is an independent body consisting of representatives of the principle organisations of and for blind, deafblind and partially sighted people with a specific interest in mobility. The Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People believes that blind, deafblind and partially sighted people should be able to move around safely and independently.
- 1.2 The Joint Committee believes that currently this is not the position and that blind, deafblind and partially sighted people experience enormous barriers to freedom of movement, seriously limiting their opportunities and choices. The Joint Committee believes that all blind, deafblind and partially sighted people should receive the support and skills they need to enable them to meet the challenges of the external environment.
- 1.3 There are 8½ million disabled people in the UK, including over a million blind and partially sighted people. Almost 2 million people with significant sight loss¹ would have difficulty, even with the aid of glasses, in recognising a friend across the street. Many also have additional disabilities, particularly hearing loss, and experience serious problems moving around the built environment. Those engaged in providing services and facilities in the built environment should always take their needs into account.
- 1.4 The Joint Committee, which comprises representatives of organisations of and for visually impaired and deafblind people with a specific interest in mobility, seeks to create an environment that enables blind, deafblind and partially sighted people to move around safely, independently and without restriction.
- 1.5 It is predicted that over the next 30 years
- The proportion of the population over 65 will increase by 40%
 - The number of people aged over 65 will double;
 - The proportion over 80 will increase by 100% and the number will treble
 - Over the same period the overall population will increase by less than 7%.
- 1.6 The growing disabled and older population will have social as well as economic implications if those responsible for the provision of transport

systems and built environments do not recognise and address the need for more inclusive environments.

- 1.7 The Government is committed to social inclusion, and access to goods, facilities and services through the Disability Discrimination Act. The Government is proposing to make it unlawful for a public authority to discriminate against a disabled person in carrying out its functions, and to impose a public sector duty to promote disability equality in such areas as pedestrian environments.
- 1.8 JCMBPS welcomes Government proposals for the Disability Discrimination Act to be amended so that transport services are covered. Currently the DDA excludes any service in so far as it consists of the use of any means of transport. JCMBPS calls on the government to implement proposals to change this as soon as possible.
- 1.9 Access to public transport is an important factor in the mobility of disabled people, and this includes access to bus services. Access to bus services is of particular concern to people with a sensory impairment. These concerns should be taken into account in developing national policies and planning and design guidance.

2 General Principles

- 2.1 The benefits of providing safe access to bus stops are recognised and supported.
- 2.2 Way finding and information systems are of critical importance for locating bus stops and accessing information on the bus services. These should be available in appropriate forms for all disabled people including blind and partially sighted people.
- 2.3 It is vital that people with disabilities can wait at bus stops in safety and get on and off buses in a safe manner.
- 2.4 The provision, design and location of bus stops should be controlled by planning authorities. Proposals for new bus stops, or refurbishment of existing, should be accompanied by an access statement showing the way in which the requirements of disabled people, including visually impaired people, have been incorporated into the proposal.

3 The Issues

- 3.1 Research conducted for DPTACⁱⁱ, the governments 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

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than the general public. Visually impaired people use buses significantly more than other disabled people with 57% using at least once a month compared to 43% of disabled people as a whole. Visually impaired people are also more likely to travel on their own when using public transport, 53% normally travel alone compared to 39% of all disabled people.

- 3.2 Most visually impaired people are unable to use independent car travel and are reliant on friends, taxis or public transport for mobility. It is often necessary, even on short routes which are unsafe or unfamiliar, for blind, deafblind and partially sighted people to use public transport as this option is often the only means for safe and independent travel to the required destination. A bus journey may be necessary simply to cross the road rather than tackle a difficult junction.
- 3.3 RNIB researchⁱⁱⁱ found that a third of blind people surveyed, and almost half of those who were over 60 years old, felt that using the bus was either 'very difficult' or 'quite difficult'. Almost half of those questioned reported difficulties getting information about buses and in using bus vehicles.
- 3.4 Government research (Gallon et al 1995)^{iv} showed that accidents involving buses and people with sight problems all occurred either on the bus or while boarding and alighting.
- 3.5 This policy statement focuses on bus stops. Other issues of concern relating to bus travel include:
- improvements to public transport availability, including services in the evening, weekends and Bank Holidays particularly at Christmas and the New Year period.
 - improved access to transport vehicles
 - accessible and reliable information
 - increased staffing levels and staff training
 - Improved pedestrian environment
 - Fare levels and concessions
- 3.6 Key issues relating to bus stops include
- Travel to the bus stop
 - Locating the bus stop
 - Design of the bus stop and bus shelter
 - Information on bus routes

- Determining which bus is the correct one
- Locating the bus door
- Knowing which stop to alight
- Knowing which way to go from the destination bus stop

4 Specifications

4.1 Location

- 4.1.1 Bus stops should be situated at a reasonable distance from people's homes. Inclusive Mobility^v states no more than 400 metres from people's homes, and if there are changes in level en route, then the distance should be less. Inclusive Mobility also states that research shows that for disabled people bus use falls off sharply if the distance is more than 200 metres.
- 4.1.2 In locations which are likely or known to be used by disabled people, such as residential homes, day centres etc., bus stops should be provided nearby, and there should be controlled crossings to bus stops on the opposite side of the access road.
- 4.1.3 Routes to and from bus stops should conform to good practice recommendations for pedestrians in the external environment. For example, there should be dropped kerbs with blister paving at all crossings, the route should be free of potential collision hazards and the surface of the route should be even throughout
- 4.1.4 Request only bus stops are very difficult or impossible for visually impaired people. Bus operators must stop when there is someone waiting at a bus stop not rely on people, who may be unable to see the bus, requesting a stop.
- 4.1.5 Hail and ride buses, while convenient for many disabled people, are also very difficult or impossible for visually impaired people. The use of regular bus stops must be incorporated in any hail and ride service.

4.2 Design – raised bus stops

- 4.2.1 Where a raised bus stop is provided care should be taken to ensure that any ramps from the surrounding footway have a 1 in 20 gradient (maximum no more than 1 in 12 gradient).
- 4.2.2 No tactile warning surfaces should be used at raised bus stops. Individual local authorities may choose to install the information surface, if they wish, at the point where the entrance door of the bus will be when it is stationary.

4.3 Design – bus shelters

- 4.3.1 Wherever possible shelters should be provided at bus stops, preferably opposite the boarding point.
- 4.3.2 Waiting passengers need to be able to be seen by the driver from the bus. Both the bus stop and shelter must be well – lit.
- 4.3.3 To enable waiting passengers to see and be seen, and for personal security, bus shelters should be mainly made of transparent material. If the bus stop is fully enclosed with a transparent material such as glass then manifestations (bands of contrasting colour at least 150mm wide) should be fixed to the surface at 2 levels. The Department for Transport’s publication ‘Inclusive Mobility’ recommends that the higher one should be at between 1400mm to 1600mm above the ground and the lower one at 900mm to 1000mm above ground level.
- 4.3.4 Where there is a solid end panel this should have rounded edges and be highlighted with a colour/tonal contrast.
- 4.3.5 When seating is provided in a bus shelter it should be in a contrasting colour. Sufficient clear space should be left for use by a wheelchair user. If seating is not under cover it should be designed so that rainwater does not collect on it.
- 4.3.6 The shelter should normally be positioned to the front of the pavement. There should be sufficient space to the rear of the shelter, or in front if the shelter has to be placed at the back of the pavement, to allow easy pedestrian movement. A clear obstacle free passage of 2000mm (preferably 3000mm) should be left. Where this is not possible a clear width of 1500mm must be left with an absolute minimum width of 1000mm for a maximum length of 6 metres.
- 4.3.7 A 100mm yellow line should be provided at the edge of the footway offset 450mm from the kerb.
- 4.3.8 Further guidance on the design of bus shelters, including provision for wheelchair users and other disabled people, can be found in Inclusive Mobility (DfT).

4.4 Design - bus stops, poles and signs (flags)

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- 4.4.1 A good surface should be provided at all stops so that people do not get off the bus onto mud or grass. No tactile paving should be used but the information surface can be used at the stop itself.
- 4.4.2 The Department for Transport's publication 'Inclusive Mobility' recommends that bus stop flags should be fixed as low as possible but remaining visible above traffic.
- 4.4.3 The minimum size of flag is 450mm wide by 400mm high and bus route numbers should be at least 50mm high.
- 4.4.4 The pole and flag should contrast well against its background so that it can be identified by people with a visual impairment.
- 4.4.5 A coloured band should be applied to the pole to enhance visibility. The band should be at least 150mm wide and be positioned with lower edge between 1400mm and 1600mm above ground level. A capital **B** about 20mm high at a height of 1000mm from the ground fitted to the pole will assist people with a visual impairment.
- 4.4.6 The flags should be positioned so that they are visible to passengers inside the bus, so that they can verify where they are.
- 4.4.7 All text and numbering on the flag should use upper and lower case in a clear font, and have good contrast with its background.
- 4.4.8 The flag should contain the minimum information that is necessary which is
- pictogram of a bus
 - route numbers/names
 - name/location of the stop
 - direction of travel
 - any special information
 - telephone number for information

4.5 Information systems

- 4.5.1 Timetable information should be provided in a clear font, and the text & numbers should contrast well with the background.
- 4.5.2 Ideally, braille and tactile information indicating the location of the bus stop and which bus services it serves should be provided.
- 4.5.3 All local authorities and transport providers should be working towards the provision of comprehensive audible information systems at bus stops and on

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buses to assist people with visual impairments. Way finding systems are also recommended to assist people in locating bus stops.

- 4.5.4 JCMBPS urges the government to include a requirement for audible and visual announcements in the PSV Accessibility Regulations. Pilot projects, such as the Announce project, have shown that such provision works and we call on the government to move on this as quickly as possible.

5 Automated ticket machines

- 5.1 In some areas blind, deafblind and partially sighted people have free bus travel, elsewhere concessionary fares apply. For further information on this see the JCMBPSP policy statement on concessionary fares.
- 5.2 In many areas drivers no longer take fares. Automated ticket machines on buses can cause problems for visually impaired people trying to find the correct change. Drivers should be trained to assist.
- 5.3 Pre-pay automated ticket machines must be accessible with clear information and instructions provided in clear print, tactile and Braille. All text and numbering should use upper and lower case in a clear font, minimum type size 16 point, and have good contrast with its background.
- 5.3 Even where these guidelines are followed automated ticket machines are still likely to cause problems for visually impaired people. The Department for Transport 'Inclusive Mobility' Guidance states that transport operators should not penalise disabled people unable to use ticket machines. Free bus travel avoids such problems.

6 Enforcement

- 6.1 Car parking at bus stops creates major problems for blind and partially sighted people. All bus stops should have a 24 hour clearway marking and local authorities should work towards effective ways of preventing illegal parking at bus stops.
- 6.2 All bus drivers should be trained to bring their buses close to the kerb and position the bus, when stopped, at the point where waiting passengers expect to board the bus. This should be lined up with the information surface if this has been installed. Drivers of accessible low floor buses should always lower the floor for all passengers.

7 Staff training

- 7.1 Comprehensive disability equality and awareness training should be provided on a regular basis for all staff involved in the provision of bus services from those involved in design, policy and operation management to frontline staff.
- 7.2 Until audible information systems are installed all bus drivers should be trained to assist people with visual impairments through giving information on the bus service.

Carol Thomas
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ⁱ Figures from the 1999 DSS Research report No.94 'Disability in Great Britain' indicated there were an estimated 1.97 million people with a significant sight loss.

ⁱⁱ Attitudes of disabled people to public transport, DPTAC, 2002

ⁱⁱⁱ Rights of way: transport and mobility for visually impaired people in the UK, Baker, M, RNIB 1999

^{iv} Accidents involving visually impaired people using public transport or walking, Gallon et al, Crowthorne, Transport Research Laboratory, 1995

^v Inclusive Mobility DfT 2002