

Public Transport Access Self Advocacy Tool Kit

Introduction

This guide has been developed to help you help yourself if you experience public transport that is difficult or impossible to use. It includes some practical ways to find out what the problem is, contact the provider and get things fixed.

Public transport

Public transport is an important mobility service for many people with access needs. The New Zealand Transport Authority (NZTA) have policies to make sure people with access needs can use local public transport services including taxis.

Making public transport accessible

To help people with access needs, the Total Mobility Scheme is funded in partnership with local and central government. This scheme assists people who have access needs by paying part of their fare, helping to make transport affordable for people with access needs.

The SuperGold card provides free off-peak travel on bus, rail and ferry services to people aged 65 years and older. Local government, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Social Development, and Treasury, work together to fund this scheme.

Requirements for Urban Buses in New Zealand (the RUB) is New Zealand's common transport standard for urban bus quality. The RUB must be used by regional councils and Auckland Transport in their urban bus contracts. The quality of buses is important for creating a good customer experience. It means people are more likely to use public transport and it is important for accessibility reasons too.

What should I expect on a public transport journey?

It is fair to expect that you can use public transport with the same ease and dignity as those without an access need, including:

- Access to information to plan your journey through telephone information services, websites, apps and customer service assistance
- Easy and stress-free movement when walking to and from transport modes
- Identification of the destination of transport through audio, visual and person-to-person services
- Information about your current location while travelling on public transport through on-board announcements
- The right to be accompanied by a support person or guide dog.

What can I do if I experience a barrier to accessing public transport?

- Contact the closest representative of the transport provider, such as a member of staff, local bus depot, or taxi company
- Express and clarify the barrier as it relates to your access needs, and possible solutions you may have thought of
- Contact the transport complaints and feedback line in your area.

These steps are further explained below. It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong order for these steps, and some might not be necessary.

Contact the provider

If you experience barriers when attempting to access any element of public transport, it is helpful to be clear about all the details such as:

- Where and when you were trying to travel, including to and from
- What happened and exactly what the barrier was
- How it has impacted you as someone with an access need
- Suggested changes that would allow you more fair and equal access.

Start by contacting the transport provider, government transport authority or local authority directly. Find out who is the best person to receive your feedback. Some organisations will take your feedback over the phone, and some have a link on their website home page entitled 'Complaints' or 'Feedback'. This link may take you to a web form or email that you must complete and submit online.

Some organisations have their address, phone, and other contact information on the front page of their website. However many provide contact information via a menu link, often labelled 'Contact Us'.

Some organisations can only be contacted via a web form which is usually provided on the 'Contact Us' page. If you can, save the page containing your enquiry or complaint, and note the time and date you submitted it.

Key information

Information we advise you to include in your communications to a transport provider should include:

- A clear subject line. In your email or letter, the subject should summarise the barrier you experienced as it relates to people with access needs
- An explanation of the relevant details of your access need, and how you use public transport or a transport journey
 - For example, you find out a train's destination by listening to announcements or reading print screens up close.
- Your status as a customer

- For example, you use the bus route on a daily basis.
- How the access barrier has impacted on you as a passenger
- Reasons why the issue that you experienced needs to be fixed, for example:
 - It is a condition of the Requirements for Urban Buses in New Zealand 2014 (RUB)
 - It is good customer service which will benefit all travellers
 - You have been a loyal customer for many years and the transport provider should be enabling you to travel with the same convenience and dignity as the rest of the community.
- A request for action. Ask for an indication of when the transport provider will remove the barrier to accessibility
- A timeframe for the provider to reply to you.

A sample letter is included below, which you can modify with details of your access barrier story.

Sample email / letter

This is an example of a letter to a transport authority concerning the lack of audio announcements on buses. It is a guide only and should be adapted to suit your situation and the access barriers you have experienced. However, we do advise that you follow the form of this sample email/letter, as it may avoid the transport provider having to contact you for clarification of the issue.

Email: <Insert email address>

Subject: Request for Audio Destination and Location Announcements to assist passengers who are blind or have low vision.

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing about difficulties I experience, as a person with a disability, when using your bus services. I am blind and travel from <insert starting point> to <insert destination> on a daily basis.

I find it stressful to travel without Location Announcements. When provided, Location Announcements inform blind and low vision people of the progress of their journey, so they can notify the bus driver of their upcoming bus stop by ringing the bell. As a blind person, Location Announcements are the only way I can travel confidently and safely, knowing that I am getting off the bus at the correct destination.

I am aware that there are other bus services in New Zealand where Audio Destination and Location Announcements are provided, so I believe it is not unreasonable to expect this to be made available on your buses.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises access to transport as necessary for people with disabilities to participate equally in community life.

Would you please advise when I can expect to have access to Audio Destination and Location Announcements on your bus services? Location Announcements will enable me to travel with the same convenience and dignity as sighted people, because I will have access to information about my location while travelling on your buses.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

I would appreciate a response from you by <insert date> so I may consider any next steps.

Yours sincerely

<Insert name>

<Insert your contact information>