

20th MEETING OF THE ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (ACC)

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS)

Online via Starleaf at 11:00 hrs on 08 July 2020

Attendance

Eilis O'Connor (Chair)	Dept. of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS)
Kevin Doyle	DTTAS
David Ball	DTTAS
Priscilla Wolf	DTTAS
Nigel Grogan	DTTAS
Dermot Murphy	DTTAS
Breda Farrell	DTTAS
Anne Kenny	Commission for Aviation Regulation (CAR)
Annette Costello	Disability Stakeholders Group (DSG)
Elaine Howley	DSG
Tara Kerry	Fáilte Ireland
Naomi Rooney	National Transport Authority (NTA)
Sarah O'Donnell	Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
Joan Carthy	Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA)
Brendan Lennon	Chime
Mairead Hayes	Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
Kevin Kelly	National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)
Declan O'Leary	Sport Ireland

Apologies

Nóirin Clancy	Inclusion Ireland
Geraldine Browne	Road Safety Authority (RSA)
Tom Kilfeather	County and City Managers Association (CCMA)
Niamh Fawl	National Disability Authority (NDA)

1. Introductory remarks

a. "Tour de Table" and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting including Ed Wills and Niamh Swords (Go Ahead), and Breda Farrell (DTTAS), whose Division is co-ordinating the DTTAS input to the Initial State Report under the UNCRPD, and noted the apologies received.

This was the first ACC meeting to be held online, and was using the StarLeaf system and the Chair set out some procedural points for the running of the meeting. It was pointed out by some members that other online systems allow for the "pinning" of speakers, e.g. a sign language interpreter for lip reading, and it was asked if StarLeaf has such a facility. **Action-** Secretariat to raise this with DTTAS IT Unit.

b. Minutes of meeting on 22 January 2020

The draft Minutes of 22 January 2020 as circulated previously by the Secretariat - on 7/3/2020, 3/6/2020 and 6/9/2020 - were agreed

2. Go Ahead presentation on Accessibility (with respect to access and services for people with disabilities)

Go Ahead gave a [presentation](#) on its bus services in Ireland – with a focus on accessibility for people with disabilities. The main points arising from this presentation and the subsequent discussion were:

- Go-Ahead’s origins, its Irish operations and presence worldwide. See further details in the presentation.
- Covid-19
 - Very rapid and complicated change with no notice and no prior experience for anyone to call on.
 - Go-Ahead continued to provide services, including for essential workers.
 - The crisis has meant rapid, complicated changes, including restrictions, to operations and services.
- Disability Awareness Training
 - Go Ahead confirmed that there is Disability Awareness Training for staff.
 - As Go Ahead is a new company, it has been able to instil a culture of disability and accessibility awareness from the start.
 - In training, they use an age simulation (GIRT) suit, and wheelchairs, to replicate the difficulties faced by elderly or mobility impaired customers. Emphasis is put on how to deal with customers discreetly and professionally.
 - The drivers have a big impact on accessibility and are encouraged to leave their cabs to assist, if necessary.
 - The quality and level of assistance provided by Go Ahead drivers was praised by a member of the ACC based on personal experience.
 - In response to a query regarding who delivers the disability training, Go Ahead advised that it was in-house, by staff who are trained in Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC), and Road Safety Authority mandated training.
 - In response to a query asking if any of the trainers are people with lived experience of disability, Go-Ahead advised that there is involvement with disability groups in relation to the training, for example there is input from the As I am group. However, with the numbers undergoing training, it has to ensure that its trainers have the necessary understanding of the work involved – all are trained drivers. Outside trainers would not have knowledge of bus driving, and the company has to ensure that its trainers have the necessary understanding of the work involved.
- Disability User Group
 - Go Ahead is setting up a Users Group. This has been delayed by the Covid-19 restrictions.

- Go Ahead has reached out to a number of organisations both generally in relation to its services, for example St Ita's Centre and Dunmore House (for people with intellectual disabilities) and specifically in relation to the User Group.
- In response to a query as to whether it was going to advertise for membership or was it only for organisations, Go-Ahead explained that the focus at present was on getting started. However, it had no prescribed criteria for User Group members. An update on the composition of the User Group was requested in due course
- Fleet
 - All Go Ahead fleet is fully accessible, low floor with wheelchair spaces. A meeting participant noted that the turning space for wheelchair users on the single deck busses was tight and Go Ahead advised that a retrofit would be undertaken to resolve this
 - Wheelchair spaces being occupied by buggies - Noted that difficulties arise for bus drivers when wheelchair spaces are occupied by buggies.
- Audio announcements
 - Audio announcements are regularly checked.
 - 114 route – An issue was raised regarding times when the Covid-19 announcements on the 114 route interfere with the bus stop announcements.
Action – Go-Ahead undertook to check this and revert to ACC.
- Visit to Go-Ahead Depot
Members of the DTTAS accessibility team had visited Go-Ahead before the Covid-19 crisis. In an email subsequent to the meeting, Go-Ahead advised that that it would be happy to facilitate a visit to its Depot by members of the ACC to discuss further the work it is doing, once it is safe to do so. **Action** - Secretariat to forward this invitation to ACC members.
- The Jam Card is used on Go Ahead services. It was noted that difficulties could arise when people who are unable to wear masks use the Jam Card to communicate this. Go-Ahead is working with NTA with a view to expanding the JAM Card to enable people with disabilities to use it to explain why they are not wearing a face covering.
- Face coverings on public transport
A discussion followed regarding the use of and types of face coverings permitted on public transport services. The Go-Ahead representatives took part in this discussion as well, before leaving the meeting.

The Government, at its meeting on 25 June at which it confirmed the proceeding of Phase 3 of the Roadmap, agreed to permit the use of up to 50% capacity of the normal passenger-carrying capacity (seated and standing) of the public transport fleet and that other public health measures should be put in place. These measures included the mandatory wearing of face coverings on public transport, with certain exceptions, including people who have a disability that means using a face covering would be very difficult.

Go Ahead was asked if it had any indications on compliance by its passengers on wearing face masks. The company noted that the legislation was not in place at the moment to enforce this, but from observations it was estimating about 65% compliance. This was slightly better than the comparable UK figures.

DTTAS advised that the Department of Health was drafting the requisite legislation and that it was expected to be finalised in the near future. DTTAS asked the ACC for any views on the use of face masks, particularly for people with disabilities.

Chime noted that there are difficulties for people who are deaf and/or hard of hearing, for example facial expressions (for lip reading etc.), breathing difficulties and sensory difficulties. Chime was of the view that the use of face visors should be considered as an alternative to face masks and had conveyed its views directly to NEPHET in June. It was also stated that older people (who might be hard of hearing) prefer face visors. Another member commented that some people with disabilities found it easier to put on a face visor than a face mask

Action: Chime to forward to DTTAS, its correspondence previously sent to NPHE in relation to face coverings. DTTAS to take this issue up with Department of Health.

3. Work Programme Progress Report (Jan-June 2020)

The Chair advised that the Work Programme is a living document and is updated as the specific strategies and actions in it are themselves updated/changed, for example the commitments in the new Programme for Government (PfG) will replace those from the previous PfG. As Departmental Consultative Committees are set up under the NDIS, the actions in the NDIS are the priority for monitoring at the ACC.

All feedback on the Work Programme format is welcome.

The Chair reviewed progress under each of the 12 Themes of [the Work Programme](#) in detail. There is also a section at the end, “Other Initiatives” covering Agencies initiatives which are in addition to the actions in the Work Programme and which the Chair also reviewed.

Specific areas of discussion included, under Theme 6,

- [Platform train interface](#) – NTA explained that this Irish Rail trial is at Killester station, and that the NTA has provided €1m in funding to Irish Rail in 2020 for this trial.
- [Bus stop accessibility Review](#) - NTA explained that this was an Audit of the approximately 12,000 bus stop nationwide, using a Universal Design accessibility rating. **Action:** In response to a request, the NTA undertook to forward details of how the UD ratings were assigned, to the Secretariat for circulation to the ACC.

4. Department updates

This Agenda item covers any updates which may have arisen after the Work Programme was updated and circulated, and/or Departmental developments more generally.

The Chair noted how this ACC meeting was brought forward from the previously scheduled August date, as the meeting in April had to be cancelled, due to the Covid-19 crisis and restrictions.

(i) Departmental changes/New Minister

- Originally it was proposed that there would be one combined Department entitled Department of Climate Action, Communications Networks and Transport. It was subsequently decided that there will be two separate Departments under one Minister, Eamon Ryan, TD. The Department of Transport (DoT) will remain a separate Department. In DoT, Minister of State Hildegard Naughton will have responsibility for International (Maritime and Aviation) and Road Transport and Logistics.
- The Tourism and Sport functions of DTTAS will become part of the Department of Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht. A Transfer of Functions Order is required before these changes to Departmental structures and responsibilities can take place.
- There is a new Acting Secretary General in the Department, Ken Spratt, until a permanent appointment is made, following TLAC competition. Ken Spratt has been Assistant Secretary with responsibility for Tourism & Sport. The former Secretary General (SG) Graham Doyle is now SG in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

(ii) ACC – Tourism and Sport representatives

The Chair thanked the Tourism and Sport representatives, Declan O’Leary (Sport Ireland) and Tara Kerry (Fáilte Ireland) for their work on the Committee and their support. This ACC will now be focused solely on transport related issues.

(iii) Covid-19 Accessibility/Disability issues

- Special Committee on Covid-19 Response – DTTAS was requested to make Written Submission in relation to people with disabilities. A similar request was made to a number of other Government Departments and State agencies, as well as organisations representing people with disabilities.
- A considerable amount of Covid-19 information has been circulated by the Department of Justice and Equality to members of the NDIS SG and CES IG, including DTTAS, on behalf of the Department of Health and the HSE. DTTAS will continue to forward such emails to members of the ACC for their information and their networks.

(iv) UNCRPD Initial State Report

A draft of the Report was circulated by the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) to all Departments for comments and these are due back to DJE on 10th July 2020.

(v) DTTAS Sustainable Mobility Policy Review

Over 250 submissions were received and these are being analysed by DTTAS. A further consultation will take place in due course

(vi) Local Authority County Development Plans

- Public consultations have commenced on a number of these. As part of these consultations, bodies, such as DTTAS, are asked for their observations.
- DTTAS responses to all of these draft Plans include reference to the obligations on state bodies - including Local Authorities - under the UNCRPD and the key role that Local Authorities have in ensuring a universal design approach to the built environment and the ‘whole of journey’ approach.
- The NTA is also reviewing all County Development plans from the Local Authorities and are ensuring that Accessibility of the Built Environment is being included in them.
- Members of ACC might wish to encourage their organisations and networks to respond to such public consultations.

5. Meeting Actions

As there are two categories of actions arising from ACC meetings, the actions are being split into two sub-sections, to make it easier for monitoring and reporting, i.e.

- a) once-off type actions which arise at particular meetings and which are completed before the next meeting, and
- b) longer term actions which by their nature are ongoing/continuous and/or which would not be completed before the next meeting takes place.

a) Actions from ACC meeting on 22 January 2020 and which have been completed

<u>No.</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
1	Obtain more information about (a) DCC Clontarf to Talbot Street, and (b) Amiens Street to Custom House Quay cycleway (and related works), for circulation to ACC.	NTA	Action finalised. Circulated by Secretariat on 7/7/2020
2	TII to forward information about mystery shoppers including whether they include persons with disabilities, in relation to the	NDA	Action finalised. Circulated by Secretariat on 6/4/2020.

	Motorway Service Areas, for circulation to ACC.		
3	Get update from IR about programme of works on lifts, including information on which are now fully functional and imminent works.	Secretariat from Irish Rail	Action finalised. Irish Rail update circulated by Secretariat on 3/7/2020.
4	Reflect to NTA views reported from an information session on the National Council for the Blind Ireland's proposed National Transport Training Centre (NTTC).	DTTAS	Action finalised. Concerns conveyed to NTA.

NCBI's proposed National transport Training Centre (NTTC)

In response a query regarding the status of the NCBI's NTTC, the NTA advised that the NCBI planned to go ahead with the project. The NTA confirmed that funding is still in place, and that this funding will not impinge on funding for other accessibility projects or on funding for the Travel Assistance Scheme.

Some members expressed their very strong concerns and frustrations with the NTA funding of the project, the lack of a tender process and governance. These concerns include the view that the project itself was not needed; that there was no consultation with people with disabilities and that it would be Dublin centric. Instead they believe that the focus should be on localised training rather than at a centre in Dublin and that a "whole of journey" approach was required. It was stated that neither the NTA nor the NCBI were listening to feedback, including that the project was a waste of money. It was stated that these concerns would not be going away.

It was noted by the Chair that the NCBI representative was no longer at the meeting. However, due to technological difficulties with Starleaf he was unable to inform the ACC, in real time, in advance of leaving the meeting. These difficulties only came to light after the meeting had ended, when he emailed to apologise for not being able to inform the Secretariat in advance of leaving.

b) Ongoing/longer term actions from previous ACC meetings

<u>No.</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
5	<u>Wheelchair spaces - new single deck buses</u> The NTA, in conjunction with IWA, to	NTA	Update from NTA. Action

	seek to identify possible solution to the issue of wheelchair spaces on the new single deck buses in Waterford and the GDA.		carried over.
<p>NTA advised that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Bamford Bus Company (new owners of WrightBus) had to close due to Covid-19 restrictions from March to Mid-June, so this work has been delayed. The NTA will resume discussions with the company to implement the modifications. It is hoped to then bring a vehicle to the IWA for their input. 2) New buses manufactured by Volvo will incorporate all the changes suggested, e.g. - turning space, tip up seat, handrails, and the older ones will be retrofitted. The NTA will bring designs to the IWA again. 			

<u>No.</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
6	<u>Fáilte Ireland building in Cork City</u> Update on access issues in new Fáilte Ireland building in Cork City.	Fáilte Ireland	Update from Fáilte Ireland. Action Finalised.
<p>The accessibility works are finished, and the Cork office now meets all those requirements. While all Fáilte Ireland buildings are compliant, relevant staff have been reminded of these requirements arising from what happened with the Cork office.</p>			

<u>No.</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
7	<u>BÉ's new policy on motorised scooters and motorised wheelchairs</u> Circulate BÉ's new policy on motorised scooters and motorised wheelchairs when finalised.	Bus Éireann re new policy. Secretariat to circulate.	BÉ update conveyed by Secretariat. Action Carried over.
<p>Bus Éireann advised Secretariat that it had not yet finalised its new policy. Due to Covid-19, BÉ will be revising its policy on this issue.</p>			

<u>No.</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
8	<u>Connolly Station/Busáras/Luas</u> Undertake high level review to identify possible solutions to address problems in the vicinity of Connolly	TII and NTA	Action Carried over.

	Station/Busáras/Luas. TII and NTA to discuss setting up of a multi-agency interchange group.		
The NTA previously advised that it is not in a position at present to advance with this project. When that position changes the NTA will advise the ACC. In the meantime, this issue will be kept as a “watching brief” action for ACC meetings.			

No.	Action	Responsible	Outcome
9	<u>Colours on new bus poles</u> NCBI to revert to NTA on further design changes.	NTA & NCBI	Update from NTA. Action Carried over.
NTA previously advised that a formal response is awaited from the NCBI to NTA.			

6. Any Other Business

(i) Dublin City Council’s Interim Mobility Plan

It had been requested that this issue be put on the Agenda for discussion at the ACC.

Some members expressed very strong views regarding Local Authority Back-to-Work Covid-19 Mobility Plans and in particular Dublin City Council’s Mobility Plan. These specific concerns relate to:

- the concept of shared spaces between people with disabilities, and older people, with cyclists. People need to know that footpaths are safe to use as people with disabilities and older people feel more vulnerable. It was very strongly stated that such shared spaces would not work for people with disabilities;
- the lack of engagement with people with disabilities by Dublin City Council (DCC). It was stated that the rights of people with disabilities were only acknowledged, “after the event”, by DCC due to the weight of public opinion.
- Furthermore, there were no consequences for such failures to consult with people with disabilities.

The Chair noted that the issue of consultation by DCC with people with disabilities on this issue had been raised previously, and the Chair had explained the statutory remit of DCC for implementing the Programme on individual streets and provided DCC’s published contact point for its plan covidmobility@dublincity.ie which individuals and groups can use to set out concerns which they have about the implementation of the Programme. The Chair had also advised that the Transport Accessibility Manager with the NTA, could be contacted directly at naomi.rooney@nationaltransport.ie and that she will liaise with DCC.

The Chair advised that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, which oversees the operation of local government, and DTTAS had published an Interim Advice Note on the website of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) to assist Local Authorities in the implementation of mobility plans. The DMURS guides Local Authorities in their design and delivery of public realm improvements and local authorities are required to take it into account in their work.

The Interim Advice Note acknowledges the immediate challenges posed by Covid-19 and advises Local Authorities to take a medium and longer term perspective in order to use these immediate responses to evaluate what improvements might work in a more permanent way, over the medium and longer term.

The DMURS Interim Advice Note includes guidance that designers should ensure that measures align with the principles of Universal Design, consider Government policy on accessibility for people with disabilities and consult with people with disabilities to further appraise measures.

Action - Secretariat to forward the DMURS Interim Advice Note to the ACC.

The NTA advised that when the Dublin City Plan was developed, neither DCC nor the NTA knew how severe the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis would be. However, the pace of change was slower than originally envisaged and that, for example, to date no bus routes had been changed.

The NTA has continued to provide any DCC updates on the Plan to members of the ACC.

The NTA also advised that it has agreed to include as a condition of any new NTA funded projects that a local authority or other public body must meet their obligations to comply with UNCRPD to consult with people with disabilities.

Some members also raised strong concerns regarding bus islands in the context of the “Bus Connects” project.

Action: It was agreed that members who had concerns about these issues would provide examples by way of follow-up correspondence to DTTAS.

The strong concerns expressed by some members regarding the DCC Mobility Plan, the bus islands, the NTTC and the lack of consultations with people with disabilities would be recorded in the Minutes.

(ii) Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 11.00 hrs on 25 November 2020. However the date for the next NDIS Steering Group meeting may change following the appointment of a new Minister for Disabilities. Any such change could impact on the date of 25 November. It was suggested that an additional ACC meeting should be held before November.

a) New Actions agreed at meeting

<u>No.</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible</u>
1	Go-Ahead to revert on concerns re Route 114 audio messages.	Go-Ahead. Secretariat to

		circulate
2	Provide criteria used to assign UD ratings in relation to Bus Stop Audit.	NTA. Secretariat to circulate.
3	Follow up with IT regarding Starleaf's (i) accessibility functions for lip readers (ii) technical issues, e.g. some people not being able to indicate when they were leaving the meeting.	Secretariat
4	Forward Go-Ahead invitation to facilitate a visit to its Depot by members of the ACC.	Secretariat
5	Forward information/examples of concerns re shared spaces and bus islands.	Members who have concerns
6	Chime to forward to DTTAS, its correspondence previously sent to NPHET in relation to face coverings. DTTAS to raise the concerns with Department of Health.	Chime and DTTAS
7	Forward DMURS Interim Advice Note in context of Covid-19 Mobility Plans.	Secretariat

b) Ongoing/longer term actions from previous ACC meetings

<u>No.</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible</u>
8	<u>Wheelchair spaces - new single deck buses</u> The NTA, in conjunction with IWA, to seek to identify possible solution to the issue of wheelchair spaces on the new single deck buses in Waterford and the GDA.	NTA
9	<u>BÉ's new policy on motorised scooters and motorised wheelchairs</u> Circulate BÉ's new policy on motorised scooters and motorised wheelchairs when finalised.	Bus Éireann Secretariat to circulate.
10	<u>Colours on new bus poles</u> NCBI to revert to NTA on further design changes.	NTA & NCBI
11	<u>Connolly Station/Busáras/Luas</u> Undertake high level review to identify possible solutions to address problems in the vicinity of Connolly Station/Busáras/Luas. TII and NTA to discuss setting up of a multi-agency interchange group.	TII and NTA