

Making Rail Accessible

Guide to Policies and Practices



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Introduction

First TransPennine Express (FTPE) is operated by First Group plc in partnership with Keolis SA. We provide rail services between key Northern cities on the following routes:

- * North TransPennine - Newcastle to Manchester Airport, Middlesbrough to Manchester Airport, Scarborough to Liverpool and Hull to Manchester Piccadilly.
- * South TransPennine - Cleethorpes via Doncaster and Sheffield to Manchester Airport
- * North West and Scotland – Windermere, Barrow in Furness and Blackpool North via Preston and Bolton to Manchester Airport; Edinburgh, Glasgow, Carlisle, Penrith and Oxenholme to Manchester Airport.

We currently operate 30 stations and calls at around 70 stations operated by other Train Operating Companies. We operate two different types of rolling stock: 3 car Class 185s and 2 car Class 170s which are both relatively modern fleets by industry standards.

The network on which we operate presents particular accessibility challenges as most of the infrastructure was designed and built when the needs of disabled people were not routinely taken into account.

We have made significant improvements to improve accessibility since the start of this franchise, through investment at stations and in our fleet of Class 185 trains which were brought into service in 2006. We will continue throughout the remainder of the franchise to look for ways to deliver further improvements in conjunction with our industry partners and stakeholders including but not limited to Network Rail, other Train Operating Companies (TOCs), the Department for Transport (DfT), Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) and local authorities.

Station and train accessibility information is detailed in our passenger document:

Making Rail Accessible: 'guide for disabled and older passengers' which is available at staffed stations, on our website and through our Assisted Travel Team.

This policy has been produced based on guidance contained in:

- Accessible Train and Station Design for Disabled Passengers – A Code of Practice, issued by the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland in 2008; and
- How to Write Your Disabled People's Protection Policy, published in November 2009.

Issuing and complying with a DPPP is a condition of our passenger and station operator's licences as required by Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), and has to be approved by Department for Transport.

This policy and our passenger document set out our commitment and the measures that we are taking to meet the needs of disabled passengers as well as the reasonable adjustments we are making to comply with part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended).

We will review the documents on an annual basis at the end of each anniversary year from its approval date. Customer comments and feedback on our DPPP are very welcome, and will be considered when the documents are reviewed. We also continually review our station accessibility information to make sure that our customers are provided with accurate information.

D1 Our strategy

Welcome to 'Making Rail Accessible' guide to policies and practices, part of our Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). We know how important it is to get customers from A to B simply and with the least possible fuss. That is why we are committed to making reasonable adjustments that will improve access to the trains and stations which we operate, to benefit all passengers, including older and disabled passengers.

Our strategy is clear and simple – we recognise the needs and concerns of disabled passengers when using public transport and our goal is to provide services that are as accessible as possible.

Since the start of our franchise in 2004 we have delivered a suite of accessibility improvements to our stations and fleet above and beyond our franchise commitment. The most recent and planned improvements are outlined in section 4 of this document. We are also committed to looking at ways we can continue to make it easier for older and disabled passengers to access our services by working with organisations such as the DfT, Transport Scotland, Passenger Focus, PTEs, Local Access Panels and other focus groups in order to identify the requirements of our passengers, and seek external funding to deliver improvements.

Our business plan recognises the importance of working positively with the communities that we serve and this takes the form of social, environmental and charitable engagement and support. As part of this community strategy we have built a strong relationship with Disability Sport Events (DSE). In each of 2009, 2010 and 2011 a number of our employees have taken part in fundraising activities which have in total raised over £10,000 for DSE. However we believe that corporate partnerships mean more than just financial assistance. That is why we have also supported DSE through the provision of complimentary staff train passes and supplied accessible bus shuttles for events. This support means DSE can concentrate their efforts on coordinating regional, national and international championships for disabled people in sport.

We are also proud to be working in partnership with Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. Since 2008 we have donated complimentary rail passes to the charity so they are able to train their dogs and puppies to be able to handle the railway environment.

In the coming year we have a number of further accessibility improvements planned to our stations at Barrow, Grimsby, Huddersfield, Scunthorpe, Selby, Thirsk, Thornaby, and Warrington ranging from accessible height ticket windows to lifts and footbridge improvements. For specific details by location please refer to Section D.4.

We will continue to monitor all aspects of our policies to make sure that they are current, reflect our efforts and build on best practice within the industry.

We welcome feedback on this policy which is kept under regular review.

D2 Management Arrangements

Disability issues are an integral part of our business activity. Our Customer Services Director is responsible for the company's DPPP, and will ensure that the policy is integrated into business plans at the planning stages of all projects. The Customer Services Director will ensure the requirements of disabled people are represented at FTPE Board level.

The Strategic Planning Manager and Customer Relations Manager work together to develop and ensure delivery of our policies and procedures with regards to accessibility. Disability awareness and customer service training coupled with regular briefing to our employees means we can meet our obligations to disabled and older customers and help them enjoy their journeys with us.

FTPE's cross-functional Customer Service Management Group meets regularly to review customer results and progress against actions to improve customer service, including accessibility improvements. In this way we are able to ensure that the company's progress against its accessibility goals is measured, reported and appropriately adjusted over time. Where appropriate we evaluate the business case of accessibility improvements using such tools as the Passenger Demand Forecasting Model (PDFH).

D3 Monitoring and Evaluation

We record all instances of customer contact with our Assisted Travel Team including praise and complaints broken down by the reason.

We also encourage customers using our Assisted Travel Service to give feedback via an email survey or to contact by telephone or in writing us with their feedback. The information we receive is recorded and used together with all the information from other sources to measure and improve performance.

This information is analysed and evaluated every period in order to address any immediate priorities and integrate long term needs into our planning. It is also analysed to inform training needs.

We set ourselves targets to reduce the number of complaints about accessibility issues as part of our customer service business objective and monitor our progress against this on a four weekly basis. In 2010/11 there were 23 million journeys on our services. Over the same period we received 130 complaints related to accessibility. Whilst this is a small number overall we are committed to learning from these events and improving our service to disabled and older customers. We have set ourselves a target to reduce complaints by a further 10% in 2011/12 and we will publish our performance against this target when our DPPP is reviewed next year.

D4 Access Improvements

We will comply with the TSI-PRM and the Code of Practice when installing or refurbishing rolling stock and facilities at stations.

If for any reason we are unable to meet the standards in the TSI-PRM or Code of Practice, we will apply for derogations against the TSI-PRM, and/or dispensations from the Code of Practice, after every effort has been made to ensure compliance.

We have made significant improvements to the accessibility of our stations as part of our £12m franchise investment in stations, coupled with funding from the Government's 'Access for All' programme and contributions from local stakeholders.

In the last financial year 2010/11 we have delivered the following improvements:

2010/11 Delivered Improvements	
Project	Station (s)
Accessible ticket counters	Dewsbury, Grange over Sands and Scarborough
Automatic Doors	Dewsbury and Scarborough
Lifts and footbridges	Middlesbrough and Huddersfield
Improvements to Disabled Car Parking Spaces	Stalybridge and Thirsk

In the next twelve months we have further accessibility improvements planned as part of the Access for All and National Stations Improvement Programme (NSIP) as follows:

2011/12 Improvements	
Project	Station (s)
Accessible ticket counters	Barrow, Huddersfield, Thornaby and Warrington
Automatic Doors	Huddersfield and Thornaby
Lifts and footbridges	Grimsby
Ramp improvements	Selby (waiting room), Scunthorpe (barrow crossing) and Warrington (station entrance)
Communication	Thirsk (telephone link to ticket office from barrow crossing)

D5 Working with Others

We recognise the importance of working in partnership in order to make continuous improvements to the accessibility of our stations and trains for people with disabilities. As a result, we will continue to work and consult with organisations such as Department for Transport, Transport Scotland, Passenger Focus, Passenger Transport Executives, local authorities and other focus groups in order to anticipate the requirements of all our passengers, including those with disabilities. We will also work with other transport service providers to make sure that the needs of disabled passengers are incorporated into any jointly planned integrated transport initiatives.

D6 Staff Training

We are committed, through the provision of training, to ensure that accessibility issues are understood both by staff who deal directly with passengers and all those in management. Disability awareness training is therefore part of our ongoing learning and development schedule which is accessed by all managers and staff who deal directly with passengers.

Disability awareness training also forms part of our induction for new front-line employees and further training, like the use of ramps and other equipment such as induction loops, is provided locally as part of ongoing coaching and mentoring by local managers.

During their induction training and when they change position or get promoted, staff are trained on customer service which helps them to confidently perform their duties and assist older and disabled passengers.

Our disability awareness training includes an introduction to British Sign Language and this section of the training is facilitated by deaf trainers, to enable our employees to better understand the needs of disabled customers who use our services. These same trainers also run drop-in sign language classes around the network.

We routinely produce staff briefings on aspects of accessibility or changes to legislation in order to keep our staff informed and able to provide the best possible service for our disabled passengers.

We support our employees to gain NVQs in customer service, further demonstrating our commitment to service excellence.

Any staff who answer telephones will be trained in communicating clearly with people who may have difficulty speaking, hearing or understanding.

The number of staff who have received training during the year is reported to DfT when we submit our DPPP for review.

D7 Emergency Procedures

Our staff are trained in evacuation and safety procedures to ensure that the needs of all our customers are considered at all times and particularly at times of emergencies. Our policy is not to move disabled passengers before the emergency services arrive, unless they are in a life threatening position. Our policy applies to both our station and train environments. If an emergency takes place on board the conductor will take responsibility for the safety of all passengers and if there is another member of staff on board the conductor will appoint them to stay with you and assist you to exit the train when it is safe to do so. If there is no member of staff to assist, the conductor will ask another passenger to assist. If you use a wheelchair again the conductor will appoint a member of staff or another passenger to stay with you until the emergency services can evacuate you safely from the train.

D8 Communications Strategy

As part of our ongoing communication strategy, copies of our passenger document are available at all staffed stations that we serve. Copies are also distributed to local community outlets such as libraries and travel centres and the document is also available from our website for download, and can be obtained by writing to us at:

Assisted Travel Team
First TransPennine Express
Customer Relations
Admail 3878
FREEPOST
Manchester
M1 9YB

These documents can be made available in other formats such as Large Print, Easy Read and Audio on request within seven working days from the date we receive the request. We commit to have a supplier available should Braille format be requested.

8.1 Telephone

We provide free telephone and text phone numbers for our disabled customers to allow them to contact us to arrange their travel, including making requests for assistance in advance. Customers with reduced mobility can also use these numbers to give us feedback, buy travel tickets, make enquiries on accessibility of stations and rolling stock, make reservations, and arrange onward travel with other train operators or to obtain a copy of our policy and customer documents.

During times when our Assisted Travel Team is busy or the office is closed, clear automated recorded information will be activated informing customers when the next Advisor is likely to be available and the opening times of the Assisted Travel Team.

8.2 Website

We are committed to making our website as accessible as possible and to achieving the Level A standard of the W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. The site currently includes many features found in AA sites such as colour considerations and easily resizable fonts. We will continue to make improvements to ensure our site conforms to these guidelines.

8.3 Signage

We have good working relationships with local authorities and use our regular meetings and communication structure to ensure that stations within their areas are clearly signposted. We will follow the guidance in the Code of Practice, RNIB Sign Design Guide and RSSB's Wayfinding good practice guide where possible.

D9 Car Parking

We offer free car parking to disabled passengers who display an International Blue Badge Holders permit in the car windscreen. We ensure that parking for Blue Badge holders is in accessible locations close to the station and that spaces are of the correct size. If designated parking spaces are unavailable for any reason, disabled customers displaying an International Blue Badge holders permit may park for free in our pay and display car parks.

We monitor the use of these spaces to ensure that there are sufficient to meet demand, and to discourage non-Blue Badge holders from parking in them. If people are found to be parking illegally we will issue a Parking Charge Contravention Notice (PCCN). If we find that the spaces assigned are not sufficient to meet demand, we will, if possible, introduce an appropriate number of additional spaces.

All of our car parks have closed circuit television (CCTV) which is linked to our Control Centre in Manchester. These are monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The provision of pick up and set-down points for cars and taxis is continuously reviewed, to ensure these are as close to our station entrances as reasonably practicable.

The number of Blue Badge holders spaces available at each location are detailed in Appendix A – Station Accessibility Information included in the passenger document.