

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
An Roinn Iompair

“TRANSPORT ACCESS FOR ALL”

**Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport under
the Disability Act 2005**

July 2006

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Foreword by Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Mr Pat the Cope Gallagher, T.D.



The Government is committed to creating a society in which all its citizens can participate fully in economic and social life. Accessible transport is a vital component in achieving this.

I have great pleasure in introducing *Transport Access for All*, my Department's Sectoral Plan for Accessibility in the area of Transport, which has been produced in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Act 2005. This Plan represents a major step forward in making transport in Ireland genuinely accessible. It sets out a series of objectives and targets across all transport modes, designed to ensure that accessible transport will become a reality for all in our society. Delivery will require a great deal of collaborative effort from a number of Government Departments and Government Agencies, transport providers, representatives of people with disabilities and other stakeholders.

The Plan also sets out mechanisms to ensure co-operation between all those involved to ensure an integrated approach to improving public transport accessibility in Ireland.

Like many countries, we have inherited a transport infrastructure which was originally designed without any thought for the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Over the past decade there has been a radical change in regard to accessibility in the transport sector. The first, and perhaps the most important change, was a change in attitude, as it became generally recognised that access to transport is a necessity for all in our society, if people are to participate fully in economic and social life. At the same time, technological and design advances have made transport accessibility genuinely achievable in ways not considered possible before.

Of course, accessibility isn't just about vehicle or infrastructure design. It is also about ensuring that people can find out about what is available, can be confident that the system will meet their needs and that staff are trained to understand those needs. This Plan sets out the progress that is being made towards that goal and the further actions that are needed.

Under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (NDP), we have brought policy on transport accessibility to a new level. The NDP required that a whole range of new infrastructure and vehicles be accessible and provided specific funding for retrofitting of existing infrastructure, facilities and services. It also led to the establishment of the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC) to advise my Department on accessibility issues.

In November 2005, the Government launched *Transport 21*, our ten-year investment programme for transport infrastructure in Ireland. *Transport 21* will build on the progress of the NDP in developing the transport infrastructure vital to the economic and social life of Ireland. It will promote accessibility in two ways. First, accessibility will be built into new infrastructural projects from the design stage. Second, funding will be provided to continue the phased modification of existing infrastructure to make it accessible.

This Sectoral Plan aims to build on the developments of the past and, in particular, the major improvements made under the NDP. It comes at a time when truly accessible transport is no longer a vision but a real possibility within our grasp. It will operate in conjunction with the investment programme of *Transport 21*. It represents a clear commitment, on the basis of a 'Transport for All' approach, to develop accessible, integrated transport services as extensively as possible.

The real challenge for the coming period is the implementation of the Plan and I look forward to its full implementation as a crucial contribution to social and economic inclusion in Ireland.

My Department and I will continue, with your assistance, to work towards that goal.



Pat the Cope Gallagher, T.D.
Minister of State at the Department of Transport

Executive Summary

Introduction

This Sectoral Plan has been developed in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Act 2005 and addresses the accessibility needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments across the transport modes. It has been prepared following an extensive consultation exercise involving meetings and discussions with a wide range of groups in the sector.

The Plan sets out policy and objectives for accessible transport and defines the concept '*Transport for All*'. It sets out for each area of transport covered, the specific accessibility issues relevant to those areas and the proposals of the Minister for Transport, and the agencies under his aegis, in relation to the rolling out of a comprehensive programme of accessible transport. Specific targets form an integral part of the Plan and these are identified throughout the document and are summarised in Appendix 8.

The Plan is to be reviewed every two years and amended as necessary in the light of progress made, technical advances and developments generally.

Policy

The Department of Transport's high level policy goal for accessibility is the development of accessible public transport services for the greatest number of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in the shortest possible time, having regard to resource, technical and other constraints.

Key terms are defined in the Plan. The Plan has been prepared on the basis that it should accord with the generally accepted concept of '*Transport for All*', a definition developed in consultation with the members of the Public Transport Accessibility Committee. The Department is also promoting the principle of mainstreaming accessibility across all modes of transport that operate under its aegis.

Scope of the Sectoral Plan

This Plan covers the following public transport services and related issues:

- Bus and rail services provided by or on behalf of Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus and Iarnród Éireann,
- Licensed scheduled public transport services provided by private bus operators,
- Light rail services,
- Proposed plans for a Metro for Dublin,
- Taxi and Hackney services,
- Rural Transport Services provided under the Rural Transport Initiative,
- Air transport services,
- Maritime passenger transport services, and
- Parking Facilities and Driver Training.

It also deals with the Department of Transport's corporate responsibilities under Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005 dealing with access to public buildings and services, and Part 5 on public service employment.

Accessibility Measures

The Plan sets out the measures necessary to increase accessibility of the bus network over time, until the whole fleet is accessible. Similar material is provided in subsequent sections in respect of rail services, taxi and hackney services, air travel and maritime passenger transport. This is followed by a section concerned with improving the situation with regard to parking for persons with disabilities. Cross-sectoral issues in transport, such as disability awareness training, the establishment of consultative disability user groups across the transport sectors, accessibility audits, integrated ticketing, and more accessible better quality passenger information are covered in a separate section of the Plan.

Compliance and Redress Procedures

Compliance and redress procedures are essential to ensuring accessibility. This Plan, therefore, includes a commitment to ensure that all bodies or persons to which this Plan applies will have in place by end 2006 adequate procedures and structures to deal with complaints. Reporting measures on complaints, and on measures taken to address issues arising therefrom, are to be put in place. The Department will incorporate disability proofing when developing new policies or reviewing existing policies, practices and services.

Implementation of the Sectoral Plan by the Department of Transport

Implementing the Plan will be a major challenge for all concerned. The Department has appointed a senior official within the Department with specific responsibility for transport accessibility matters, has expanded the membership for the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC) which advises on accessibility matters, and is expanding its role to include monitoring of progress.

The Department will participate fully in the High Level Group on Disability within the Department of the Taoiseach which will coordinate the implementation of the various sectoral plans under the Disability Act 2005.

Implementing the Requirements of the Disability Act within the Department of Transport

The Department has established an Implementation Team for its own responsibilities under the Disability Act 2005. The Department will reflect the requirements of the Disability Act in its strategy statements and business plans. Objectives will be defined in such a way as to allow subsequent assessment as to whether or not they are achieved.

Introduction

Purpose of the Sectoral Plan

Under the Disability Act 2005, the Minister for Transport is required to prepare and publish a Plan in relation to disability matters specified in the Act. In that regard, this document sets out the proposals of the Minister for Transport and the agencies under his aegis in relation to the rolling out over the next number of years of a comprehensive programme of accessible transport for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, together with older people.

Development of the Sectoral Plan

In the preparation of this Plan, the Department held a series of public consultation exercises involving disability groups, transport operators and other stakeholders and participated in a series of regional seminars and workshops in the summer of 2005. These seminars and workshops were organised by the National Disability Authority (NDA) as a means of creating an informed discussion on the six Sectoral Plans being produced under the Disability Act 2005, including the Department of Transport Sectoral Plan. The Public Transport Partnership Forum was also involved in the preparation of the Plan.

A one-day Seminar and series of Workshops with national and international participation was held in Dublin Castle on the proposed Plan on 13 January 2006.

The deliberations on the preparation of the Plan have also benefited greatly from the input received from the members of the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (**Appendix 1**), the National Disability Authority and the Disability Legislation Consultation Group.

Policy Elements of the Sectoral Plan

High Level Policy Goal

The Department of Transport is committed to the development of integrated accessible public transport services for the greatest number of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in the shortest possible time, having regard to resource, technical and other constraints.

Departmental Objective

The Department's objective with regard to Transport Accessibility is:

That all passenger transport operators must provide the highest possible degree of accessibility, taking into account the availability of resources, the constraints created by competing priorities and the rules of practicality.

The obligations arising from this objective will apply to all operators of public transport services, both public and private.

The Department intends to manage the transition to an accessible integrated transport system effectively through the following broad concepts:

- Being proactive in efforts to identify and remove barriers that prevent people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and older people accessing the transport system and to ensure that no future barriers are created;
- Working in partnership with public, private and community-based interests and the statutory transport providers and operators to improve the accessibility of transport services;
- Implementing established best practice when developing policies and implementing plans;

- On-going consultation with the representatives of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and older people;
- Ensuring Value for Money, through targeting available resources at initiatives that are affordable and sustainable and that maximise benefits to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and older people in terms of increasing mobility and promoting independent living.

The “Transport for All” Concept

The benefits of improved transport accessibility extend to all transport users, even to the most able-bodied, and issues relating to transport accessibility go far beyond the needs of people with disabilities. They impact on the transport needs of the entire population because most people, at some point in their lives, are likely to acquire a physical or other impairment or be impeded in some manner, that will make travelling difficult, if not impossible, on what one might call ‘traditional’ type transport vehicles. This is particularly the case as people advance through the ageing process. It is also the case that there is a high correlation between age and disability.

Accordingly, in addressing the issue of transport accessibility, the Department has adopted the term *accessible transport for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments*.

The Department is defining the term as follows:

People with physical, sensory, learning or cognitive difficulties (whether permanent or temporary) and others whose access to traditionally constructed transport vehicles, services and infrastructures is limited, to a greater or lesser extent, on account of age, because of accompanying children or because they are carrying luggage or shopping or are otherwise impaired in their use of the transport system.

This definition has been developed in consultation with the members of the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (**Appendix 1**) and accords with the ‘Transport for All’ concept that is now generally used within the EU and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) as the public policy objective when addressing transport accessibility issues (**Appendix 2**). Such a concept includes a broad proportion of the population and not just people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Thus it removes the notion of “special” provision for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

Accessible Public Transport

Accessible public transport means the following: -

- Full unassisted access for wheelchair users (and for prams and buggies) including, where appropriate, accessible toilets and lifts.
- Features to aid people with difficulties in walking, gripping, reaching or balancing, including slip resistant surfaces, handrails and handholds.
- Facilities to aid people with vision impairments, deafness or hearing loss, and other impairments. These include the consistent use of colour contrasts, clear signing and lighting, non-reflective surfaces, audio and visual announcements, tactile and audible guidance surfaces, warning systems and induction loops.
- Facilities to aid people with learning disabilities or mental health problems. These include clear oral and written information and consistent staff training in recognising and understanding the needs of people.

Mainstreaming of Transport Services

“Mainstreaming” in the transport context means the adoption of an integrated approach to policy-making, transport planning and the provision of transport services for all. In this Plan, the Department of Transport is promoting the principle of mainstreaming across all modes of

transport that operate under its remit. This will be done as extensively and intensely as possible with regard to meeting the transport needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. However, it is inevitable that some people, because of the severity or nature of their disabilities, will not be able to travel on public transport services (or may not be able to do so at all times). In these cases, specialised transport services are the most appropriate complementary form of transport and which are generally provided by specialist agencies.

It is also important to recognise that accessible public transport is not just about vehicles and infrastructure. It also includes elements such as staff training in understanding and meeting passenger needs and information (both before and during journeys) in forms and formats that can be widely understood.

Collaboration and partnership between those with responsibility for public transport and those responsible for the pedestrian environment and for traffic management is also a key element of transport that is accessible for all.

Scope of the Sectoral Plan

This Plan covers the following public transport services and related issues:

- Bus and rail services provided by or on behalf of Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus and Iarnród Éireann,
- Licensed scheduled public transport services provided by private bus operators,
- Light rail services,
- Proposed plans for a Metro for Dublin,
- Taxi and Hackney services,
- Rural Transport Services provided under the Rural Transport Initiative,
- Air transport services,
- Maritime passenger transport services,
- Driver Training and Parking.

In addition, it deals with the Department of Transport's corporate responsibilities under Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005 dealing with access to public buildings and services and Part 5 on public service employment.

The Plan also recognises that an accessible, barrier-free pedestrian environment is fundamentally important to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Unless people can move about on the streets and pavements in safety and with confidence, they will not be able to make full use of accessible transport services.

The Consultative Process

An Outline Transport Sectoral Plan was published on 21 September 2004, in conjunction with the launch by the Taoiseach of the Government's Disability Strategy. Much of the content of the Outline Plan was determined by provisions of the Disability Bill and all interested parties were invited to study the proposals therein and forward views to the Minister. Both the National Disability Authority (NDA) and the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC) took part in the consultation process.

Arising from the consultation process, a Discussion Document was prepared in January 2006, which developed further the outline proposals.

The preparation of the Discussion Document benefited greatly from the input received from the members of the Public Transport Accessibility Committee. The Department also received comments and views on it from a number of other organisations and individuals. Many of these arose from a series of countrywide workshops on the six Sectoral Plans organised by the National Disability Authority in the summer of 2005.

The Discussion Document was presented to a Seminar and Workshops on Accessible Transport in Dublin Castle on 13 January 2006. This event was attended by representatives of the main disability organisations, the Rural Transport Initiative, the Public Transport Accessibility Committee, the National Disability Authority, the Chief Executive Officers of Bus Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath, Iarnród Éireann and the Railway Procurement Agency, together with representatives of the main private bus operator organisations and the State Airports.

The event was chaired by Mr. Jack Short, Secretary General of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) and the main speakers included Ms. Mary Crass, Transport Policy Division of the ECMT, Ms. Ann Frye, Mobility and Inclusion Unit, UK Department for Transport and Mr. Ger Deering, Commissioner for Taxi Regulation.

The discussion document and the comments received during and after the proceedings at Dublin Castle were used as a basis for developing a Draft Plan during 2006 and arising from which this Plan has been developed.

The transfer of responsibility for maritime passenger transport and the commercial seaports from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources to the Department of Transport in January 2006 also means that material on these functions has now been included.

There has been significant public consultation in the preparation of this Plan and while most comments are reflected in the Plan, some of the more detailed points made are valid and will be followed up as part of the implementation process.

Review of the Plan

In this Plan, the Department has set targets for improving the range of accessible services in the bus, rail, air, maritime and taxi sectors. These targets are built on the assumptions that the economic and financial conditions that currently prevail will continue into the future. There will be a need to review the Plan from time to time to take account of the impact of future changes in transport vehicles and technology and to report progress. Accordingly, the Plan will be reviewed every two years and amended as necessary. The Department will prepare a progress report on its implementation.

The need to bring accessibility and inclusion issues into the mainstream of transport policy considerations, no longer treating them in the margins of policy development as additional or secondary considerations, is central to the work of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT). Details about the work of the Conference relevant to disability issues and its charter on accessibility and the principles underpinning this charter, can be found in

Appendix 2. This Plan is consistent with and informed by ECMT policy. The Department of Transport will continue to participate in the work of the ECMT on access and inclusion and any future ECMT recommendations will be included in future versions of this Plan.

A Summary of the specific targets for accessibility in each of the services is contained is at **Appendix 8.**

An Integrated Public Transport Network

A person's quality of life is significantly affected by his or her ability to access the transport network to avail of a choice of modes of transport and to be able to travel easily and with confidence to a chosen destination. By contrast, significant gaps in the network or services can have a detrimental impact, particularly on isolated individuals or vulnerable communities. The needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, people in isolated rural areas and areas of urban disadvantage and of those who do not have access to a car, must be taken into account as transport policies are designed and implemented.

Transport needs vary considerably between users. Urban residents may wish for more frequent and efficient public transport services at peak or indeed at off-peak times, rural dwellers may seek the availability of a weekly public transport service to connect them to the nearest town, city dwellers may seek adequate cycling or walking facilities. People with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments have the same wide range of needs as other members of the traveling public but will, in addition, need services that are accessible to them, both in terms of reaching stops and in terms of physical access to the vehicles. This wide range of very differing needs must be taken into consideration as the Department works with stakeholders to design transport solutions which will contribute to social inclusion.

Solutions will be as varied as the issues they are designed to tackle and may lead the Department in some cases to aim for an increase in the level of commercial services available, in others to opt for support for essential if unviable public transport services, or in still other cases to consider what infrastructure and service changes are needed in order to meet the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Differing solutions will be appropriate to address the needs of different interest groups.

Accordingly, the Department of Transport regards the development of a more integrated and accessible public transport system, with fuller coverage across the country, as an important contribution to address issues of disadvantage and social inclusion. This is one of the aims behind the Department's new 10-year transport investment strategy, *Transport 21*, which was launched on 1 November 2005 by the Government.

Transport 21

The total amount of funding under *Transport 21* is over €34 billion in public transport and roads. It is built around two key strategies:

- The development of a high-quality national transport network with improved regional and local public transport networks and services, and
- The transformation of the transport network in the Greater Dublin Area.

Transport 21 is predicated on making the transport system accessible for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. This will be achieved in two principal ways. Accessibility will be built into new transport infrastructural projects and the acquisition of accessible rolling stock and buses as a matter of course. In addition to the mainstreaming of accessibility into new projects, funding will continue to be provided to enable the phased adaptation or retrofit of existing transport infrastructure and facilities. A provision of € 13 million was made under the National Development Plan, 2000-2006 to part-finance public transport accessibility improvement projects. The Department has been able to expand on this provision and over €20 million has been made available to end-2005 for that purpose. In 2006, a budget allocation of €15 million has been made for accessibility project funding.

To date, most of the projects funded under this programme have involved the retrofitting of bus and rail stations to provide access for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and the adaptation of vehicles. These projects have been developed in consultation with the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC) and reports are received from the operating companies on their progress.

This particular funding has been additional to the ongoing substantial investment in public transport infrastructure and vehicle procurement under the NDP. As an integral part of that latter investment, it is a requirement that the transport needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments are taken into account and accommodated with specific actions and timeframes.

There will of course be continuing capital investment in other aspects of our transport system not covered by *Transport 21* – regional and local roads, airports, harbours and sea ports.

Information on *Transport 21* has been published on the Department of Transport website www.transport.ie.

Regulatory Matters

The Department will ensure that accessibility is a core component of proposals for legislation in relation to modernising the institutional and legal framework governing transport. It is an objective that such proposals should not result in any dilution in the accessibility of transport services but rather in improvements. In this regard, the ECMT Charter on Access to Transport Services and Infrastructure offers useful principles to inform the preparation of legislation.

Further Integration on Cross-Cutting Transport/Accessibility Issues

In its Statement of Strategy 2005-2007, one of the Department of Transport's guiding principles is that it will work across relevant sectors and Departments to develop a coherent policy framework to address all modes and underpin the development of an integrated transport system. In relation to accessibility matters, in view of the involvement of many Departments and agencies in cross-cutting transport accessibility issues, the National Disability Authority has recommended the development of a national policy on integrated accessible public transport for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

This document, along with *TRANSPORT 21*, is the first attempt at putting together an integrated approach to laying down a firm policy foundation for the longer term in dealing with cross-cutting accessibility issues. A number of cross-cutting issues arise, some involving inter-departmental coordination and cooperation, which will have to be pursued separately and further progressed over the next year viz.:

- Co-ordination with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in order to create a better interface between the public transport system, the streetscape, and approaches to and places of access to transport which also includes interaction with local authorities.
- The integration of transport policy with other policies in the area of social inclusion, e.g. the free travel scheme; school transport, rural social policy and grant aid schemes operated by the Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Health Services Executive.
- The need for co-ordination in order to clarify how insurance coverage can allow transport staff such as bus drivers to assist people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments on boarding and alighting from vehicles. This will need to recognise the importance of training, risk assessment and compliance with the relevant Manual Handling Directives
- The development of guidelines and Codes of Practice for Quality Customer Services for all Transport Operators to include, *inter alia*, provision for Disability Awareness Training;
- Accessible Parking, Parking Permits and associated enforcement issues;
- People with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments - Driving standards and formal assessment procedures need to be developed.
- Private transport for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments – adaptations and modification standards;

- Integration of Passenger Information – needed to enable people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments use public transport with confidence and inter-change between modes;
- Overseeing the phased introduction of accessible long-distance coaches by both private and public operators, especially those linked to major centres of population and airports and ferry terminals;
- Co-operation with the relevant transport accessibility authorities in Northern Ireland on matters of mutual interest relating to transport accessibility.

The Department of Transport will address these matters over the coming months in conjunction with the relevant Government Departments and agencies and the National Disability Authority with a view to producing agreed plans and actions and timescales for implementation.

Guidelines for improving access to Bus, Rail and Light Rail services for People with Mobility, Sensory and Cognitive impairments.

The National Disability Authority, in consultation with the Department of Transport, has developed operational guidelines - “Recommended Accessibility Guidelines for Public Transport Operators in Ireland” - for improving access to bus, rail and light rail services for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in Ireland. These Guidelines were published in 2005 and are intended for use by all providers of public transport services.

The guidelines deal with information provision, infrastructure and buildings, vehicle design, customer relations, disability awareness training and procedures for disruption and emergencies. In addition, the guidelines explain the barriers to travel faced by passengers with disabilities and outline the current Irish legal and regulatory position. In implementing the guidelines, the responsible bodies will need to pay particular attention to training, systems

and procedures for informing and assisting disabled travellers at times of disruption and during emergencies.

The publication of these guidelines represents another step in the process of assisting and supporting bus, rail and light rail operators in making their services accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The recommendations are based on the principles of “Transport for All” which focus on the whole experience of a journey, from information that is accessible and vehicles and buildings that are accessible to disability awareness training for staff, and consultation and communication with people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

Although the document is primarily aimed at bus, rail and light rail public transport operators, it contains general principles of good practice which are relevant to all transport modes and other transport providers should look to see how these guidelines could improve the accessibility of their services.

Implementation will proceed by way of voluntary compliance in the first instance. All of the public transport companies have been supplied with a copy of the document and the Department of Transport has reminded the companies that they should take the recommendations into account in the provision of their services.

Compliance will be monitored as part of the overall monitoring arrangements for this Plan. Progress on implementation will be reviewed after two years and if the compliance is unsatisfactory, the Department will consider the introduction of a more prescriptive approach.

A copy of the guidelines can be downloaded on www.nda.ie/standards.

Bus and Coach Services

Urban Bus Services

Bus Éireann and Bus Átha Cliath

Scheduled urban bus services in Ireland, in the main, are currently provided by Bus Átha Cliath in Dublin and by Bus Éireann in the provincial cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. Since the year 2000, all buses purchased by these companies for urban services are low-floor, wheelchair-accessible vehicles. That purchasing policy is now part of the permanent policy of both companies as buses fall to be replaced over time. In addition to having a low floor, the buses can be pneumatically lowered further and a ramp extended to facilitate entry by people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Each bus has a dedicated wheelchair space that can also be used to facilitate boarding of a child in a buggy. Furthermore, low-floor buses are equipped with a range of features to aid the transport of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, such as colour contrasted interior poles, improved interior lighting, improved grip bars and palm-activated bell pushes. The wheelchair accessible buses purchased by Bus Éireann and Bus Átha Cliath for urban bus services conform to the specifications of COST 322 (**Appendix 3**).

Bus Éireann has achieved almost 100% fleet conversion to low-floor, wheelchair accessible buses, both single-deck and double-deck, on its urban services in the cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. In other urban areas currently served with smaller buses that are not wheelchair accessible, Bus Éireann's policy is to replace those vehicles with wheelchair accessible buses. It is envisaged that this process in these urban areas will be completed by 2012.

Bus Átha Cliath has a fleet of almost 1100 buses. At present, over half of this fleet is comprised of low-floor wheelchair accessible vehicles operating on 58 bus routes. Following consultation with people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and with the Public Transport Accessibility Committee, Bus Átha Cliath is introducing new low-floor vehicles on a route-by-route basis to maximise the effectiveness of these vehicles.

When purchasing new buses for its fleet, Bus Átha Cliath now only acquires low-floor, wheelchair accessible vehicles that also incorporate accessibility features to aid people with sensory impairments.

Based on current replacement costs, the company's existing fleet of non- low floor buses should be fully replaced with accessible vehicles by end-2012.

It should also be noted that a European Directive on bus construction (2001/85/EC) which applies to Class 1 buses (those with more than 22 passengers used for urban services) includes accessibility requirements. The Directive is currently optional in Member States but will become mandatory under the Type Approval Framework Directive currently under negotiation within the EU institutions.

On-board Audio/Visual facilities

Bus Átha Cliath is currently carrying out trials on an audio/visual unit that provides information on upcoming bus stops and on specific points of interest along a route. This unit is fully automated and uses GPS technology. The incorporation of a loop system to assist passengers with hearing impairments is also being examined.

Funding of €1 million has been provided by the Department of Transport to facilitate an extension of this field trial to 150 buses. It is envisaged that the trial will take some six to twelve months to complete. During this period a thorough assessment of it will take place and will include an evaluation of the benefits to passengers with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Provided the trial justifies it, full roll-out of the system to the entire BAC fleet will follow.

The Department of Transport is monitoring the BAC initiative, and if it proves successful, will, in conjunction with Bus Éireann and the representatives of private bus operators, examine the possibility of introducing the system as part of the overall programme for vehicle accessibility in other urban areas.

Travel Assistance Scheme for People with Mobility, Sensory and Cognitive Impairments

Bus Átha Cliath is about to launch a pilot project in 2006 called the Travel Assistance Scheme. The aim of the project is to give people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments the information and confidence they need to use accessible public transport independently. The Travel Assistants employed on this project will offer advice on journey planning and will accompany passengers the first few times they use public transport. The assistant will make the passenger aware of the accessible features on both buses and other forms of public transport used in the course of the journey and how to use such features. The scheme will help people to use public transport for the first time and to make the transfer from door to door to mainstream services.

Automatic Vehicle Location and Control (AVLC)

As part of **Bus Átha Cliath's** contribution to progressing Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI), an Automatic Vehicle Location and Control project (AVLC) is underway to develop a system for deployment across its entire fleet. Using satellite-tracking technology, it will be used to track all buses and supervisors will have a real time view of the services being operated. They will then be able to compare actual services with the schedules, identify gaps in services and take corrective actions. It is proposed that each bus will be equipped to provide travel information to the public.

It is envisaged that the first phase of the project - the tracking system - will be completed by end 2009. Over time, it is envisaged that real time information will be presented to the customer through a number of channels, such as Internet browser, mobile phone via SMS, bus stop information display panels, in-vehicle displays.

In accessible formats, such information is a key support for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments when they seek to use public transport and should become a very significant element of an integrated public transport system.

Urban public transport bus services provided by private operators

A growing number of private operators are now providing licensed services in urban areas with accessible buses. In the major urban areas where these services are being provided,

there is significant growth in the use of accessible vehicles. At present, about 505 services are provided with accessible buses. The Department has already had preliminary discussions with the representative bodies of the private bus sector with a view to agreeing timescales for the full realisation of accessible urban services. This process is continuing.

It is intended that, as part of any reform of the bus route licensing regime, that the obligation to use low-floor, wheelchair accessible buses will become a statutory requirement. The Department is currently in discussion with private operators in that regard.

It is expected that the process of conversion to accessible vehicles be completed by end-2012.

Bus and Coach Services Outside Urban Areas

There are a number of separate and distinct bus and coach markets for scheduled transport services operating outside urban areas. In the main, these can be broadly grouped as Inter-City and other Long Distance Services and Other Stage Carriage and Rural Services.

Inter-City and other Long Distance Services

From an accessibility perspective, what differentiates a bus from a coach is that seating on the latter is very high off the ground to allow for under-floor luggage space and entry to the coach is by way of a number of high steps set in a narrow doorway. This, of course, creates obstacles for passengers in wheelchairs and others with severe disabilities to access the vehicle. Because of the high floor in modern coaches, ramped access is not practical. Access for wheelchair users has to be by lift, which has implications for vehicle design, passenger and luggage capacity, safety and costs. Progress on providing suitable accessible coaches for long distance services has up to now proven more problematic for transport operators than any other type of bus service, primarily because of the engineering challenges it presents. For these reasons, touring coach-type buses have been the preferred and, indeed from most perspectives, the only viable option available for long distance inter-urban accessibility.

While there has been significant progress in the development and provision of accessible buses on urban, commuter and other local inter-urban services, the accessibility status of long-distance coaches has required very considerable further development by manufacturers across Europe.

The production of wheelchair accessible coaches, which also incorporate features to aid other people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, is at an early stage across Europe. Until very recently, only one vehicle type with accessibility features that appeared suitable for commercial operations in Ireland or the UK was readily available. However, subsequent field trials identified characteristics of the vehicle, such as the large area needed around the entrance to allow wheelchair users access to the lift together with passenger concerns about safety and height involved in the lifting process, that rendered it unsuitable for scheduled long distance operations.

The COST 349 Report (**Appendix 3**), a major four-year European research project that examined ways to improve access for disabled people to coaches, was published in October 2005. The report examined the case for accessible coach and long distance buses, discussed supporting infrastructure, information provision, and staff training requirements, covered the economic considerations and made a range of recommendations. The recommendations include the provision of at least one wheelchair accessible entrance and a wide range of other accessibility features that reflect a comprehensive approach to disabilities but these are not prescriptive in engineering terms.

Since the report was published, a number of accessible coaches have gone through prototype development and are now in production.

The Department of Transport considers that the recommendations and approach set out in the COST 349 Report, together with the expected developments from coach manufacturers, makes for a practicable strategy to provide the required accessibility outcomes within the most cost effective time frame.

As an immediate step, the following measures are proposed to implement COST 349:

- (1) The Department will arrange for the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC) to carry out an immediate comparative examination of a number of accessible vehicles in a non-operational environment with a view to identifying a suitable model for Irish operating conditions.
- (2) Arising out of (1), Bus Eireann has agreed to acquire a number of the vehicles considered most suitable from an accessibility point of view, while meeting the service providers' other operational requirements, e.g. as to health and safety/size/passenger capacity etc.
- (3) These vehicles will be trialled on one or more routes. The trials will be conducted in consultation with the local authorities with regard to bus stop space to allow for wheelchair access, street signage, location of stops etc. The trials will also include a full assessment and identification of actions necessary to meet the fixed infrastructure requirements.
- (4) An appropriate team under PTAC, including the National Disability Authority, will monitor experience with the trials and any further developments in the design and availability of accessible coaches.
- (5) Bus Eireann will produce a coach accessibility programme in light of the trial experience and its obligations under this Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport.
- (6) The Department of Transport will review the speed limit restrictions for coaches with a view to facilitating, in particular, the scheduled operation of double-deck coaches in Ireland.

As in the case of accessible urban buses, it is expected that once manufacturers begin to produce accessible coaches on reasonable commercial terms, the availability of new non-accessible vehicles will diminish in line with the take up of the accessible vehicles.

Furthermore, it is expected that any price advantage for non-accessible vehicles will also be eroded as increased availability and demand for accessible vehicles reduces their marginal production cost. In any event, consultations with the representatives of the main coach operating groups in preparing this Plan identified a robust commitment on their parts to deliver accessible services in line with the availability of the necessary vehicles.

As a consequence, it is expected that the proportion of the overall coach fleet that is accessible will grow year on year so that by 2015 it will be possible to service all major routes with accessible coaches.

As part of the Department's normal monitoring of the implementation of this Plan, it will keep progress on the provision of accessible coaches under careful scrutiny and, as a priority, consideration will be given to the introduction of a statutory provision requiring the use of accessible coaches in the light of progress in the implementation of this Plan. This will be followed up by PTAC.

During the consultation phase, the Department was asked to look at the possibility of some time-limited incentive for new accessible coaches as a means of stimulating progress in this area and the Department will do so.

Other Stage Carriage and Rural Services

Buses and coaches are used for the provision of stage carriage and rural services. Both Bus Éireann and some private operators have introduced low-floor buses on a number of these routes that were previously served by inaccessible coaches. These services have proven to be quite successful and wheelchair facilities are now available on these routes.

All operators have been asked to explore the scope for expanding the use of low floor buses on these services. Where local road conditions are an impediment to such use, the bus operators, local authorities and local interest groups should engage on the matter.

Bus Éireann, in co-operation with local rural community development groups, has also, over a number of years, introduced some 40 rural services on an experimental basis. These initiatives are funded by Bus Éireann from its own resources and are based on the provision of a service one day each week linking a number of villages and town lands with a market town. Free Travel Passes issued by the Department of Social and Family Affairs are accepted on these services.

The Department envisages that by 2015 practically all vehicles to be used for these stage carriage and rural services will be wheelchair accessible and incorporate facilities to assist people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

The Rural Transport Initiative (RTI)

The Rural Transport Initiative is a scheme which has been operating since 2002. The scheme provides funding on a pilot basis for a number of community transport groups to address the transport needs of people in their rural areas through the provision of local transport services. Developed from a social inclusion perspective, the Initiative aims to provide community transport services on a 'transport for all' basis. The RTI is operational in virtually all counties, with thirty-four community transport groups currently being funded. Public transport services are now being provided for people in rural areas who otherwise would not have access to transport. The RTI is managed on behalf of the Department of Transport by Pobal (formerly Area Development Management LTD) who also provide ongoing training, monitoring and support for the participating groups.

The provision of transport services for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments is a core feature of the RTI and many projects have included representation from these sectors in their management structures and user fora. To ensure greater flexibility, a number of transport models using a variety of vehicle types and sizes are being used. Many of the services are provided on a door-to-door basis and are also responsive to other customer needs. Services are designed to link with existing scheduled services, where possible and other essential public services.

The Department of Transport is currently developing proposals for rural transport services for the post 2006 period.

Following a period for public consultation including consultation with representatives of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, it is planned to develop the existing RTI network on a permanent country-wide basis beginning in 2007.

The strategy within the Initiative for progressively increasing the proportion of all-ability access services includes the following dimensions:

- Developing a clear and realistic policy on accessibility including the setting of time and performance related targets and a monitoring and evaluation system by mid 2007.
- Ensuring a sustained mechanism for the ongoing consultation and participative involvement of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments on project management structures and user fora.
- Promoting the availability of accessible transport services from a physical, spatial and societal perspective by continually:
 - Developing community based responses to identified local needs;
 - Increasing the stock of vehicles that allow all-ability access by ensuring that all new vehicles purchased meet required standards and that incentives and weightings are applied in the procurement system;
 - Providing disability awareness training to all projects;
 - Insisting on mandatory standards of training for drivers and passenger assistants that include a module on disability awareness;
 - Promoting the availability of passenger assistants on services;
 - Supporting the use of a range of accessible vehicle sizes depending on their suitability for the area e.g. hackney and minibuses;
 - Encouraging the development of a range of transport models including demand responsive transport and door-to-door solutions;
 - Strengthening and integrating services with mainline public transport services and essential facilities;
 - Developing the concept of brokerage whereby the resources of the community, voluntary and statutory sector can be shared to provide a more integrated and efficient system;
 - Improving information provision;
 - Examining the use of technology to enhance customer services and service delivery.

During the consultation phase, the differing VRT and VAT regimes operating for minibuses was brought to the attention of the Department as an issue for consideration and the Department will do so.

The Department will examine the question of harmonising the Construction and Use Regulations so that the same passenger vehicle can be used for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. This would remove the anomaly whereby vehicles owned by charitable or statutory organisations can use any seating configuration on their vehicles whereas a vehicle used for commercial or for reward purposes, even if that reward is not-for-profit, must comply with PSV regulations. Harmonisation of the Construction and Use Regulations would also address other issues which require resolution in order to enable any passenger vehicle to be used for both commercial and non-commercial purposes, thus improving the safety of the public and voluntary transport fleet and enabling brokerage opportunities to be created.

Bus Stations and other Customer Facilities

Bus Átha Cliath

All the Bus Átha Cliath premises that provide customer facilities have been made accessible for customers and staff.

The provision of any funding for new Bus Átha Cliath infrastructure and customer facilities under *Transport 21* will be conditional on accessibility for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments as well as older people being incorporated therein from design to implementation.

Bus Éireann

For the last number of years, Bus Éireann has been engaged in a large-scale refurbishment programme to bring its bus stations up to accessibility standards, offering real benefits for bus passengers, in particular those with disabilities. Under this programme, most stations have already been refurbished. In some cases, the station has been entirely redesigned to enhance accessibility for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

- The bus station refurbishment programme generally involves:
- new footpaths and walkways for passenger and staff safety,

- elimination of steps and provision of new ramped areas to assist and accommodate people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and also parents with child buggies, etc.,
- improved site lighting thus ensuring a safer and customer friendly public service facility,
- improved customer and staff toilet facilities and in particular improved toilet facilities for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments,
- increased door widths, internal and external,
- automatic station entrance and exit doors,
- well illuminated internal doors with brightly coloured and illuminated control devices,
- tactile paving in order to help and assist people with visual impairments.
- greatly enhanced customer waiting areas,
- information signage that is large, clear, contrasting in colour and tone,
- improved ticket counters incorporating hearing aid loops, lowered desk height and better visibility, and
- new bus parking bay layouts to facilitate improved marshalling of vehicle movements and provide for more accessible and safer access to passengers to/from buses.

Work is still required at Busaras, Tralee, Ennis, Limerick, Rosslare Harbour and Galway stations. Currently Bus Éireann plans to have all stations, with the exception of Galway and Limerick, refurbished by the end of 2007. It has not yet been determined when work will be completed at Galway bus station as it will form part of a major re-development that will also involve the railway station. The redeveloped bus and rail station will be fully accessible. At Limerick there will also be a combined bus/rail station development. Preparatory work on the joint development in Limerick is well advanced and completion is expected by 2008 and will also be fully accessible.

Bus Stops

“Traffic Management Guidelines” have been prepared jointly by the Departments of Transport, the then Department of the Environment and Local Government and the Dublin Transportation Office, incorporating guidance on the provision of suitably designed facilities for public transport users, including bus stop design and the design of crossing facilities for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

Bus stops that do not properly interact with buses, or that are inaccessible due to illegal parking, create barriers for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. This is the case even if it is a wheelchair accessible vehicle that is providing the services at those stops.

The provision and improvement of infrastructure that will support access by people with disabilities from public roads to public transport vehicles is a function of local authorities. The access audits and implementation plans of local authorities, as provided for in the Dept. of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Sectoral Plan, will identify improvement works required on public roads. Local authorities will, in consultation with the relevant transport authorities, prioritise the upgrading of bus stops on roads where wheelchair accessible buses are in service or are being phased in, having regard to available funding. The Department of Transport will engage with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, with local authorities and with the National Roads Authority with a view to ensuring co-ordination of this programme as regards such matters as prioritising projects, funding and progress. The Department will also engage with private sector bus operators in respect of the provision of accessible bus stops in respect of their services.

As regards progress to date, there are about 4,500 bus stops in the Dublin area. In the urban areas outside the capital city, there are another 1,200 bus stops, with a further 1,000 in rural areas. Most of these have not been adapted for use by people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and most do not interact well with wheelchair accessible buses. However, the situation is improving primarily through the installation of Kassell Kerbing, or similar kerbing improvements, which facilitates level boarding of buses (i.e. no need to deploy a ramp).

Bus Átha Cliath and the local authorities in the Greater Dublin Area are upgrading bus stops through the installation of hard stands, bus shelters and Kassell Kerbing. To date, some 750 bus stops have been upgraded. Bus stops are also being upgraded systematically on routes that form part of the Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) programme. This will continue under the *Transport 21* investment programme, which among other things, envisages a doubling of the

length of the QBC network by end 2009. In some cases, re-design or re-alignment of bus shelters may also be necessary to accommodate wheelchair access.

In the provincial cities, bus stops are generally upgraded in conjunction with the construction of QBCs/Green Routes. Five Green Routes were substantially completed in Cork by the end of 2005, and a further five are due to be completed under the Cork Area Strategic Plan by the end of 2008. The first section of QBC in Galway (on the Dublin Road) was officially opened in February 2005. Work commenced during 2005 on extending this by a further 2km, and is due for completion in 2006. Some initial investigation on the N17 QBC in Galway had also taken place by the end of 2005, and this QBC is due for completion in 2007. Work on the first section of bus lane in Limerick, from Raheen towards the city centre, commenced in late 2005, and is due for completion in 2006. Bus priority consultancy work is currently underway in Waterford. It is expected that specific bus priority proposals for the N25 and the Dunmore Road routes in the city will be supported by these studies.

Illegal Parking at Bus Stops

Responsibility for the issue of illegal parking and its impact on the accessibility of bus stops rests with a number of different bodies, including local authorities and An Garda Síochána. The Department of Transport will work with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, An Garda Síochána and local authorities with a view to developing policies to address this issue.

Rail Services

Heavy Rail

There are three distinct areas of rail operations that have a critical bearing on the accessibility of rail services. These are rail infrastructure ¹, carriage fleet and the interface between the train and the platform.

Rail Infrastructure

Accessibility improvements to date

It is now the established policy of Iarnród Éireann (IÉ) that, in the design and construction of new railway stations and in the refurbishment of existing stations, provision is made for the needs of passengers with mobility and sensory and cognitive impairments. Accordingly, accessibility is now a standard feature in the design of all new and refurbished rail stations.

This policy has been implemented in the course of constructing new stations (e.g. Clontarf Road, Grand Canal Dock, Howth Junction, Bayside and Monasterevan) and in carrying out major general refurbishment work at existing stations (e.g. Heuston, Connolly and Dun Laoghaire).

The policy was also implemented in the course of the recently completed Malahide to Greystones DART Upgrade Project.² Practically all of this work is now completed and accessibility has been improved at the 23 stations.

In recent years major accessibility-specific improvements have also been made at many stations, e.g. Laytown and Skerries.

¹ Such as access to railway stations, condition of platforms, passenger facilities, and access across platforms.

² It will not be possible to complete work on Seapoint and Salthill stations until the resolution of certain planning issues.

Planned railway accessibility improvements

In order to plan a comprehensive programme of remedial station accessibility works on a strategic basis, Iarnród Éireann, supported by the Department of Transport, commissioned a comprehensive accessibility audit of all stations on the rail network in 2003.

The audit details the works that are necessary to bring each station up to an acceptable accessibility standard. In planning the implementation of the findings of the audit, and in line with one of its recommendations, Iarnród Éireann has decided to carry out this work on a line-by-line basis and to prioritise the lines with the highest passenger numbers. In adopting this policy, the company is confident that it is addressing the priority needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

Under this policy, the stations on the Dublin – Cork line will be the first to be completed. Design work has already been completed in respect of these stations and construction work has commenced. This work will complement the introduction of new accessible rolling stock which is currently being brought into service on the route. In this way, the accessibility benefits for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments will be maximised. Also, in 2006 design work will commence in respect of stations on the Dublin - Galway and Dublin – Dundalk lines.

The accessibility upgrade works at each station will concentrate on the following facilities:

- **Station access**, including car parking for passengers with disabilities, set down facilities for passengers and pedestrian access to the station.
- **Facilities** to aid step free passenger movement throughout the station and its environs, including the installation of ramps, automatic doors, facilities for crossing the railway to other platforms, tactile surfaces, improved lighting and improved colour contrasting schemes.
- **Ticket Offices** with split-level counters, non-reflective glass, significant colour contrasting, induction loops, improved lighting and security.
- **Customer Information** and public address systems, help points (with associated CCTV, improved lighting and induction loops) and improved signage.
- **Customer Facilities** including accessible toilets and improved waiting areas.

All the works are being designed to be in conformity with current regulations, guidelines and international best practice. In addition to conforming with the Building Regulations and the provisions of COST 335, the works will also comply with the following: the National Disability Authority's *Building for Everyone*, the UK Strategic Rail Authority's Code of Practice, British Standard BS 8300: *2001 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people* and the UK Department for Transport recommendations on Inclusive Mobility.

It is anticipated that the railway station accessibility programme will be completed on a phased basis, line-by-line, by 2015.

Lightly Used Stations

Following an examination of the passenger figures at some small, lightly used stations, Iarnród Éireann has decided that it would not represent value for money to invest heavily to bring these stations up to accessibility standards. It is important to note that this does not conflict with the company's policy on accessibility; alternative provision will be made for the passengers affected. Passengers with mobility and sensory impairments within the catchment area of these stations, who need an accessible station to help them to board or egress a train, will be facilitated by the company through the provision of a taxi or hackney to the nearest accessible station. A list of these lightly used stations will be available shortly on the Iarnród Éireann website, at www.irishrail.ie.

Carriage Fleet

The carriage fleet is the second area of critical importance to rail accessibility. The useful life of railway carriages can extend up to forty years and this is a significant factor when addressing the accessibility of railway services. Some of the carriages still being operated by Iarnród Éireann are over thirty years old and many of the remainder have been in service since the early 1980s. The older carriages are currently being phased out and replaced by modern units. All carriages purchased since 1995 are wheelchair accessible and all carriages ordered in recent years have been designed to comply with the UK Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR).

Carriages on commuter rail services

All the rolling stock (DART and diesel railcars) on suburban rail serving Dublin and Cork is almost accessible, with the earliest DART rolling stock currently being refurbished.

The newer DART and diesel railcars are accessible with features including equipment to facilitate automated audible station announcements. These accessibility features are being extended to the early generations of DART carriages, as part of Iarnród Éireann's current refurbishment programme. It is envisaged that these DART cars will begin to return to service in 2007.

Carriages on inter-urban rail services

Iarnród Éireann is in the process of replacing the vast bulk of its inter-city carriages. All the new carriages are specified to the UK Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR). Among other things these specifications provide for the following features:

- Up to three wheelchair spaces per train (in fact the new Iarnród Éireann carriages will have a wheelchair space in each carriage.)
- 10% of seating designated as priority seats for disabled people
- Use of contrasting colours for visually impaired people
- Audio and visual passenger information systems
- Handrails and handholds designed for use by mobility and sensory impaired people
- Accessible toilets.

Since their introduction in the late 1990's, the carriages on the Dublin-Belfast Enterprise service have been accessible. The new diesel railcars recently introduced on Dublin-Sligo route are compliant with the RVAR.

Iarnród Éireann has now taken delivery of sixty seven new Intercity carriages. These are currently being brought into service on the Dublin – Cork route progressively over the course of 2006.

A further one hundred and fifty diesel railcars are on order and these will start arriving in 2007 and will be put into operation on the other inter urban routes.

The net effect of this investment is that practically all inter-urban passenger rail services will be provided with accessible carriages by 2009.

In-train audiovisual systems

The Department will continue to press Iarnród Éireann to ensure that the in-train audio and visual communication systems for passenger information is accessible and operational at all times.

Inter-action between platform and train

A further area of potential difficulty on the railway that a mobility or sensory impaired passenger encounters is accessing the train from the platform and vice versa. The problems here are caused by vertical and/or horizontal gaps between the platform and the train. These problems are exacerbated at platforms, which are built on curves.

These problems are being addressed by Iarnród Éireann as part of its extensive platform lengthening and renewal programme, which has been initiated on all intercity routes. Platforms are being lengthened to accommodate longer trains and accessibility improvements are being incorporated in these works. With regard to the physical access from platform to train, Iarnród Éireann has investigated a number of possible solutions to the problems and has concluded that the safest one is provided by the use of mobile ramps. Every manned station now has a mobile ramp in place for the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Station staff will assist passengers in using such ramps.

The company has put in place special procedures (provision of alternative transport or staff assistance, if feasible) to cater for the needs of passengers with mobility and sensory impairments at unmanned stations provided sufficient notice is given. Iarnród Éireann has agreed to publish on its website information concerning its special procedures.

It should be noted that the EU Trans European Conventional Rail Systems technical Specification for interoperability, which is due to be finalised later this year, is likely to include requirements for accessibility, both of rolling stock and infrastructure on certain routes. Its application in Ireland is unclear at this stage but will be pursued as necessary on its adoption.

Light Rail

The Luas light rail network and the Luas trams have been designed from the outset to provide a very accessible public transport service. From its commencement in June 2004, Luas has been providing highly accessible services. Currently two lines are in operation: the Green line from Sandyford to St. Stephen's Green and the Red Line from Tallaght to Connolly.

Transport 21 proposes the linking of both these lines and the construction of a further six new Luas projects. In keeping with the original Luas concept, all of these new services will also be highly accessible for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments to the same standards as the existing Luas services.

The Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) and Veolia Transport (formerly Connex Transport Ireland Ltd) have established a number of accessibility initiatives related to Luas services including disability awareness training for senior managers and front line staff, systems guides in accessible formats and a customer charter.

The major accessibility features of the Luas system are:

- The floor of the tram is at same level as the platform.
- There is a very narrow gap between tram and platform.
- Up to four wheelchair spaces are provided per tram.
- The interior has been colour designed to ensure maximum visibility of grab rails and other features.
- Audio-visual information is provided on board and at platforms.
- All platforms incorporate ramps or lifts for access purposes.
- All platforms feature help points, which incorporate induction loops for people with hearing impairments.
- Changes in level, platform edges and crossing points are highlighted using tactile paving.
- Veolia Transport has produced audio and Braille guides to the system as well as a tactile map of the system.

- The Luas ticket vending machines are equipped with audio support options as well as a user selectable high contrast interface.
- The smartcard validation system incorporates audio and visual function indicators.

The RPA has a policy of continuous improvement informed by representative groups as well as the Luas Disability User Group. Having investigated options for further improving the system in consultation with the NCBI and Irish Wheelchair Association, the RPA recently installed information panels at all stops to improve passenger information.

Luas Accessibility Projects

The Department of Transport has agreed to provide accessibility funding to the RPA for the following improvements to be carried out in 2006/2007 on the existing Luas system:

Tram Threshold Modifications: This project will reduce the platform gaps on the existing Luas tram fleet by modifying the removable threshold at each double door access. The proposed modification was tested in 2005 and was found to have greatly improved the ease with which wheelchair users boarded and disembarked from the tram. The risk of trapping the front wheels in the gap was also reduced. This project has commenced and is due for completion by the end of 2006.

On board Induction Loop project: This project sets out to modify the internal public address system and emergency communications systems on board the tram to interface with an induction loop system so as to assist people with hearing impairments. This will enable those with a hearing aid to hear the on-board automated announcements and manual announcements made by the driver. It also allows two-way communication using the emergency intercom to do the same. This is an innovation for light rail systems. Technical tests were carried out previously and the feasibility of such a system was proven. This project has just commenced and is due for completion in early 2007.

Lift installation at Dundrum: Many complaints have been received about the current access for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments to Dundrum Main Street from the Luas stop. The current access involves a significant detour and is less than optimum. Able-bodied persons with prams and buggies have also complained. It is proposed to construct a

lift to full mobility standards in order to provide a direct link between the Luas platforms and the main street. Planning application documents are being drawn up at present and, subject to planning permission, the project is expected to be completed in early 2007.

New Rolling Stock: Improvements have been made to the specification regarding accessibility features. These have been included in the tender evaluation documentation as one of the assessment criteria for new tram purchases.

Luas Accessibility Newsletter: A newsletter-format users guide to the accessibility features of the Luas system is in preparation by the RPA. It will be published in 2006 and will be available in different formats.

Metro

Transport 21 proposes the development of two new Metro services – *Metro North* from St. Stephen's Green to Swords and an orbital line, *Metro West*, linking the Tallaght Luas line with Metro North. The metro service will incorporate the most up to date accessibility provisions for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in line with those already provided on the LUAS network.

Transport 21 envisages that *Metro North* will be completed by 2012 and *Metro West* will be completed by 2014.

Railway Safety Act 2005

The Railway Safety Act 2005 puts in place a modern regulatory framework for railway safety. It contains a number of provisions concerned with ensuring the safety of rail travel for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The following are of particular relevance in this regard.

Under **Section 39**, the Railway Safety Commission is empowered to publish guidance on appropriate technical principles and specifications and railway undertakings must have regard to such guidelines. The guidelines dealing with requirements for the design of railway infrastructure and rolling stock will be published in the third quarter of 2006. Particular reference will be made in the guidelines to making provision for disabled passengers as regards the construction of:

- Stations (spatial design, entrances, exits and doors as well as stairways, steps and ramps)
- Platforms (platform construction)
- Underground stations (additional general guidance)
- Level crossings (general guidance and tactile thresholds)
- Trains (access provisions, internal environment, sanitation and communications)
- Tramways (pedestrian footways and crossings, pedestrian zones, tramstops, tramstop platforms, platform height, access and egress as well as tram interiors).

Under **Section 69**, the Railway Safety Commission, with the consent of the Minister for Transport, may make regulations in relation to standards, specifications and procedures to be used by railway undertakings to safely facilitate the special requirements of passengers with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. However, to date, the Railway Safety Commission has not found it necessary to make such regulations.

Under **Section 82**, a Railway Safety Advisory Council is being established as a forum for consultation on issues relevant to railway safety and to make recommendations to the Railway Safety Commission or the Minister for Transport as appropriate. At least one member

of the Council will be nominated by organisations representing the interests of persons with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

The Railway Safety Commission is at present drafting guidelines relating to the risks that passengers and third parties are exposed to and that they impose on the railway.

Consultations with Iarnród Éireann, Veolia Transport and transport accessibility organisations will take place in this connection. Guidance for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and people traveling with children will be included in the document.

Taxi and Hackney Services

Improving the accessibility of taxis and hackneys for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments remains a particular challenge, primarily due to the structure and organisation of the sector. Taxis and hackneys have a key role to play in the provision of a door-to-door service for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. For many people they provide the only means by which they can participate in economic, social or cultural activity.

The Commission for Taxi Regulation was established as an independent public body in September 2004 under the Taxi Regulation Act 2003. The principal function of the Commission is the development and maintenance of a regulatory framework for the control and operation of small public service vehicles (taxis, hackneys and limousines) and their drivers. The Commission's mission is "to achieve a first class, professional, efficient, safe and accessible, customer-friendly service for small public service vehicle passengers and service providers".

Improving access to services provided by small public service vehicles (SPSVs) for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments is a key objective of the Commission. Since its establishment, the Commission has conducted extensive consultation and research to establish where new regulations are required, where existing regulations need to be amended and where other initiatives are necessary.

The Commission's National Review³ indicated that people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments do not currently enjoy access to a service that is on a par with services provided to other consumers. The main concerns raised by people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments related to:

- Accessibility,
- Availability, and

³ Commission for Taxi Regulation (2005), National Review of Services and Vehicle Standards in Taxis, Hackneys and Limousines in Ireland; available at www.taxiregulator.ie

- Affordability.

The Commission proposes to put in place a range of measures to improve the quality and accessibility of SPSV services for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments:

Accessibility

Making SPSV services accessible does not simply relate to physical access to the vehicle, though this is a critical element. Booking systems together with information and complaints systems must also be accessible to all. The Commission plans the following actions to improve accessibility:

- Dispatch centres will be required to accept bookings in accessible formats such as fax, sms and email from September 2007.
- The Commission will develop a database of accessible SPSVs. Details including contact details will be made available on the Commission's website and in Braille, large print and audiotape from December 2006.
- The Commission will produce a Passengers' Guide, a Customer Charter of Rights and Responsibilities and fare information in a range of accessible formats including Braille, large print and audiotape from September 2006.
- The Commission will put in place a user friendly and accessible complaints system that will be accessible by phone, fax and email from September 2006.
- The Commission will carry out an audit of taxi ranks and develop best practice guidelines for local authorities to assist in the provision of accessible ranks in 2007. The provision and location of taxi ranks will remain the responsibility of the relevant local authority.
- Drivers will be required to carry assistance/guide dogs and mobility aids when requested. Additional charges for these will not be permitted from September 2006.

The Commission proposes to put in place new vehicle specifications for all taxis and hackneys. This will mean two and possibly three categories of vehicle as follows:

Category 1: This will be a vehicle with specific accessibility features for all passengers including approximately 85% of people who wish to travel in their wheelchair.

Category 2: This will be a vehicle based on the large family car category with a minimum internal, boot and engine size which includes specific accessibility features for most passengers except for those who need to travel in their wheelchairs.

Category 3: The Commission is investigating a possible third category for people with very specific accessibility needs (e.g. power chairs) and not for profit groups.

The Commission will shortly publish a consultation paper on vehicle standards with a view to putting the new standards in place commencing in 2007.

The Commission will develop a system to monitor the level and quality of services available to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and carry out ongoing access audits on an annual basis from 2007.

Availability

There are two issues of concern in relation to availability of SPSVs for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Firstly, there is the issue of the number of accessible vehicles which are licensed and, secondly, the issue of ensuring that vehicles which are licensed as accessible actually provide the service.

The Commission's research indicates that the initial purchase cost of a wheelchair or fully accessible vehicle is proving a serious disincentive to providing such a service. This has led to a dramatic reduction in the number of wheelchair accessible taxis.

The Commission believes that the solution requires:

- A financial incentive, one solution being in the form of VRT relief on accessible SPSVs.
- Increased enforcement to ensure that those with wheelchair accessible licences actually provide the service; the recruitment of enforcement officers will commence in 2006.
- A requirement that all Dispatch Centres provide an accessible service at all times of operation.

The Department is currently in discussion with the Commission on these issues.

Affordability

Affordability can also act as a barrier to accessing SPSV services for some people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. To address this issue, the Commission will investigate the possibility of putting in place some form of subsidy or assistance on a pilot basis. The Commission will work in co-operation with the Department of Transport and the Department of Social and Family Affairs and other stakeholders in this regard.

Additional Initiatives

Training

The Commission will put in place a mandatory Skills Development Programme that will have as a core element disability awareness and training relevant to the provision of a service for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The training will be mandatory for all new SPSV drivers from 2007 and will be a requirement for all existing SPSV drivers from 2008.

Commission Operations

The Commission's offices and communications systems will be accessible and all documents and information will be available in accessible formats from the end of 2006.

Consultation

The Commission will establish a SPSV users group which will include people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. This group will be established later this year and will be consulted on an ongoing basis.

Air Travel

General

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the international regulatory body for civil aviation, obliges Member States to take the necessary steps to ensure that airport facilities and services are adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities and that all necessary steps are taken to ensure that persons with disabilities have adequate access to air services.

Regulation of the Council and the European Parliament concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air (COM 2005/0047)

On 9 June, European Ministers of Transport adopted a Regulation setting out the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when they travel by air. The Regulation will supercede national and local rules in many aspects of air travel.

The key principles of the Regulation are as follows:

- Airlines will not be entitled to refuse bookings from persons with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, except for justified safety reasons prescribed by law, or if the aircraft cannot accommodate them,
- Airlines will be required, where possible, to notify intending passengers at the time of booking whether such safety reasons exist. This is intended to avoid the need to refuse passengers after they have arrived at the airport.
- Airport managers will be responsible for ensuring that disabled persons or persons with reduced mobility receive the necessary assistance from the designated points of arrival at the airport to the point of boarding the aircraft, or in the case of arrivals, the designated points of departure from the airport. The managing body of the airport may provide such

assistance itself or it may contract with one or more parties for the supply of the assistance.

- To be certain that the services will be provided, disabled persons or persons with reduced mobility will be required to notify their requirements to the air carrier, its agent or the tour operator concerned at least 48 hours before the departure time of the flight. If less notice is given, the airport manager must make all reasonable efforts to provide the assistance.
- All these services will be available to disabled persons or persons with reduced mobility at no extra charge. The airport manager's costs will be recovered by means of a charge levied on each airline using an airport proportionate to the number of passengers it carries to or from the airport. The charges must reflect realistic basis to recover the costs involved and to invest in future development for persons with reduced mobility.
- **Airlines and Airport Managing Bodies** will be required to:
 - ensure that all their personnel, providing direct assistance to disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility know how to meet their needs;
 - provide disability equality and disability awareness training to all their personnel working at the airport who deal directly with the travelling public;
 - ensure that all new employees attend disability related training and that personnel receive refresher training courses when appropriate.

Responsibilities of Airport Managers under the Regulation

The Regulation will require airport managers to provide a designated points of arrival and departure which have basic information about the airport available in accessible formats intended for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Airport managers will also be required to put in place the necessary arrangements to enable disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility to:

- communicate their arrival at an airport and their request for assistance at the designated points;

- move from a designated point to the check-in counter;
- check-in and register baggage;
- proceed from the check-in counter to the aircraft, with completion of emigration, customs and security procedures;
- board the aircraft, with the provision of lifts, wheelchairs or other assistance needed, as appropriate;
- proceed from the aircraft door to their seats;
- store and retrieve baggage on the aircraft;
- proceed from their seats to the aircraft door;
- disembark from the aircraft, with the provision of lifts, wheelchairs or other assistance needed, as appropriate;
- proceed from the aircraft to the baggage hall and retrieve baggage, with completion of immigration and customs procedures;
- proceed from the baggage hall to a designated point;
- reach connecting flights when in transit, with assistance on the air and land sides and within and between terminals as needed; and
- move to the toilet facilities, if required.

Where a disabled person or person with reduced mobility is assisted by an accompanying person, this person must, if requested, be allowed to provide the necessary assistance in the airport and with embarking and disembarking. The overall responsibility should remain with the designated service provider.

Responsibilities of Airlines under the Regulation

Airlines will be required to:

- carry recognised assistance dogs in the cabin, subject to national regulations;
- in addition to medical equipment, transport up to two pieces of mobility equipment per disabled person or person with reduced mobility, including electric wheelchairs;
- communicate essential information concerning a flight in accessible formats.

- make all reasonable efforts to arrange seating to meet the needs of individual persons with a disability or reduced mobility on request and subject to safety requirements and availability;
- assist in moving to toilet facilities if required;
- make all reasonable efforts to give an accompanying person a seat next to the disabled person or person with reduced mobility.

Implementation

Under the new Regulation, the obligation not to refuse bookings will apply 12 months from the date of adoption (9 June 2006) and the remainder of the Regulation will apply after two years i.e. in mid 2008.

The Regulation will be implemented in Ireland by means of Statutory Instrument, and this will be done as soon as possible now that the Regulation has been formally adopted by the EU.

In the interim, the Department of Transport will formally notify airlines, airports and other relevant parties of the content and advise them to prepare for implementation. In particular, the Department will advise those airlines and airport authorities who have not already done so to arrange to put in place a programme of disability awareness training for staff as a priority measure.

The European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) is drawing up good practice guidelines and service level agreements to enable airlines and airports to provide a consistent level of service to passengers with disabilities across Europe and this work will also inform policy in this area.

State Airports at Dublin, Cork and Shannon

General

It is Departmental policy that the design and provision of facilities at the State Airports are accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

The importance of delivering a high quality of service to all customers and enhancing the quality of the travel experience for all users has always been recognised at the three State Airports. This is achieved in partnership with the various other service providers at the airports.

The building standards at all the State Airports conform to the accessibility provisions of the Building Regulations 2000 and in building and refurbishment works, the NDA guidance document 'Buildings for Everyone - 2002' is used. Facilities to assist people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments will be incorporated into the design of all future airport projects and the DAA will continue to consult with people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in relation to reviews of existing facilities as well as the introduction of new facilities.

Management at all three airports liaise with local disability organisations in their area with regard to the provision of accessible services. Dublin Airport has set up a disability users group, embracing representative bodies from various organisations, and meetings commenced in January 2006. Shannon and Cork Airports are in the process of establishing formal structures for consulting with disability user groups.

Dublin Airport

Passenger traffic through Dublin Airport is forecast to grow to about 30 million by around 2015. New infrastructure capacity and facilities, both airside and landside, will clearly be needed to cater for this growth including further terminal capacity. As part of the aviation action plan approved by Government in May 2005, the DAA will commission the building of a new Terminal Two at Dublin Airport. All new developments will be designed to incorporate the needs of persons with mobility and sensory impairments.

Airport management have recently commissioned and completed a full accessibility audit at Dublin Airport. This took place in the first 3 months of 2006. While generally favourable, the audit identified some shortfalls in the provision of services for passengers with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and remedial action is being taken.

Cork Airport

In 2001, Cork Airport embarked on a major development project to upgrade the infrastructure and facilities to cater for passenger traffic growth projections. The project design team engaged with all stakeholders to optimise the airside and landside planning of this project including the Cork Access Group (CAG), a group comprised of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. This group is still involved in the ongoing consultation process on the development programme. Upon completion and opening of the terminal this year, there will be ongoing contact with the CAG and a member of the senior management team in Cork Airport will be designated to lead the process.

Cork Airport management is also currently examining a proposal by the CAG for the training of airport staff to develop awareness to the needs of passengers with mobility and sensory impairments.

Shannon Airport

At Shannon Airport, the Airport Terminal Manager is responsible for the provision of services and facilities for passengers with mobility and sensory impairments

When planning a major terminal extension in 2000, the project team involved engaged with all stakeholders including disability groups in the region to ensure that the highest levels of accessibility works for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments were incorporated into the works. On completion of the extension, a programme of improvement works was developed in conjunction with these disability groups and is currently being implemented on a phased basis.

Regional Airports

The regional airport companies will also be required to comply with the new EU Regulation. There is already strong emphasis placed on all aspects of quality customer service in the regional airports, particularly in relation to access for customers with mobility and sensory impairments.

Maritime Passenger Transport

Scope

The Marine Passenger Transport element of this Plan deals with passenger ships on voyages within the State or to and from the State, the international ferry ports which serve these passenger ships and, where applicable, regional ports and harbours. It takes account of widely differing types of passenger ships, which range from modern large international passenger ferries serving ports in Britain and France, to medium sized passenger ships serving our offshore islands and small vessels plying short voyages on inshore waters and lakes. Vessels are almost all in private ownership and none of the international ferries now operate under the Irish Flag. The extent of facilities for passengers varies considerably between the largest and the smallest ships and reflects the length and nature of the trips which the various vessels undertake. The Plan also looks at the different categories of harbours from large commercial ports serving international ferries to smaller regional and local ports from which passenger services operate.

Passenger Ships

General

To be operated as an international passenger ship, the ship must have a current passenger ship certificate from the flag state. To obtain such a certificate, the ship is surveyed on an annual basis to ensure compliance with international safety requirements for construction and safety equipment. The ship may also be subject to inspections by Department of Transport surveyors known as “port state control” to ensure that safety standards are maintained. Domestic passenger ships are surveyed and certified on an annual basis by the Department’s Marine Surveyors under domestic legislation.

Standards for Access to Passenger Ships

Passenger Ships engaged in international voyages

Both Irish flagged and foreign flagged vessels are governed by international agreements on shipping. Arising from these agreements, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has produced recommendations for international passenger vessels. These are contained in the document entitled IMO Circular MSC/735 of 24/06/1996 *Recommendation on the design and operation of passenger ships to respond to elderly and disabled persons' needs*. There are some indications that at least some of these vessels, operating to and from Ireland, already substantially comply with best international practice contained in that Circular. The Circular includes specific guidelines on special car parking spaces for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The annual survey of vessels referred to below will inform the assessment of the level of implementation of the provisions of the IMO circular.

Domestic Passenger Ships

Safety rules and standards for domestic passenger ships are governed by EU Directive 2003/24/EC. This Directive has been transposed into Irish law by Statutory Instrument No. 716 of 2004. The Directive, which is aimed at certain categories of domestic passenger ships not engaged on international voyages, establishes standards of a general nature to assist passengers with reduced mobility. The Directive requires that sea going steel hulled vessels and all high-speed craft, used for public transport, the keel of which was laid or which were at a similar stage of construction, *on or after* 1 October 2004 shall comply, where practicable, with the guidelines in Annex III to the Directive on guidelines for persons with reduced mobility (see Appendix 7 of this document).

Also, in accordance with Directive 2003/24/EC, operators of the same categories of existing passenger ships, the keel of which was laid or which were at a similar stage of construction *before* 1 October 2004 *and which undergo modification*, must apply the guidelines in Annex III of the Directive, as far as is reasonable and practicable in economic terms.

To date, a total of only seven domestic Irish passenger ships fall within the terms of the Directive and only one has been built since the entry into force of the legislation and one is under construction. Notwithstanding the limited number of vessels covered by the Directive, the Maritime Safety Directorate, as a matter of policy, seeks compliance with the Directive on

a voluntary basis during the construction of those categories of domestic passenger ships not covered by the Directive.

Services to Offshore Islands

A number of services to offshore islands are operated under contract with and subsidised by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. That Department has undertaken to include a requirement in all new and renewed service contracts that the operator must be compliant with the Maritime Passenger Transport section of the Department of Transport Sectoral Plan. At this juncture, there is no such specific requirement for passenger ship operators. However, when the data from the annual survey is available (see next paragraph), an assessment will be made on what improvements need to be made to these passenger ship services.

Assessing the standard of services provided for disabled passengers

A key element in the assessment and monitoring of the level of services available to passengers with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments on board passenger ships, both international and domestic, comprises the introduction by the Department of Transport of an annual “Questionnaire on Disability Access on Passenger Ships”. The Questionnaire is designed to facilitate an ongoing action programme of access improvement.

Vessel owners will be asked to complete the Questionnaire during their annual vessel safety inspection conducted by the Department’s Marine Surveyors. This will enable the Surveyors to assess the extent to which the needs of persons with disabilities are being met on the wide range of passenger vessels operating in Ireland and to and from the State. It will also help develop an ongoing strategy to ensure that vessels meet the highest possible standards for access and that vessel operators employ best practice in dealing with people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

The Questionnaire was first used during inspections in January 2006 and will form part of all future surveys and inspections on passenger vessels. A copy of the Questionnaire is at

Appendix 4.

A further initiative in assessing the accessibility of vessels for people with mobility, sensory

and cognitive impairments is the undertaking of a “snap shot” disabled-user survey of three international ports – Dublin, Dun Laoghaire and Rosslare together with Rossaveel Harbour (which is the State’s busiest domestic passenger port) and the ferries operating from them. This work is being undertaken to experience at first hand the facilities available for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments on shore and on ship.

Both the Questionnaire and the “spot check” survey process will yield more precise information on the adequacy of accessibility provisions now in place. The results will help inform the development future policies and strategies.

Recent Developments at EU Level

The European Commission has embarked on a programme of examining the rights of international maritime passengers, including passengers with reduced mobility. In January 2006, the Commission launched a public consultation on the subject, which includes a specific focus on the protection of the rights of persons with reduced mobility travelling by sea and inland waterways.

The Commission acknowledges the limitations in the existing directive (**EU Directive 2003/24/EC**) on safety rules and standards for passenger ships and it proposes now to examine a range of issues including :

- access to ports;
- the right not to be denied permission to travel by sea;
- the right to receive all necessary information and assistance throughout a journey at no extra cost;
- the need to quantify any additional costs and who should bear them;
- the identification of organisations within the sector which should provide assistance e.g. port management and shipping companies; and
- very importantly, a standard legal framework which ensures equal protection of rights throughout Europe.

Clearly at EU level there is now an impetus to assess the adequacy of arrangements for passengers with reduced mobility using passenger ships and to address the question of effective European standards as necessary. Ireland is participating fully in this process. The

Department of Transport is engaging with the Commission and other Member States and will work at European level to ensure that effective EU standards for access to maritime transport are adopted and implemented. Contacts which the Department has had with the EU Commission at Directorate General TREN responsible for transport, suggest that the Commission will prepare a Communication setting out its views on the way forward after it completes the consultation process.

Policy Objective

It is the Department's objective to have clearly established by 2008 the extent to which vessels operating in Ireland and to and from Ireland offer services that are accessible by passengers with mobility and sensory impairments. While responsibility for proposing a regulatory framework for the EU rests with the European Commission, the Department will use this period to press strongly for a comprehensive initiative at EU level to make this happen. The aim will be to include in the 2008 review an expanded and more targeted policy with specific action points for the following two-year period 2008 to 2010.

Passenger Ports

International Ferry Ports

There are four international ferry ports in the country: Cork, Dublin, Dun Laoghaire and Rosslare. The passenger facilities in these ports are operated by state owned companies. These port companies recognise the importance of delivering a high quality service to all passengers including to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

A brief description of the accessibility features at each port follows.

Port of Cork

Access facilities for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments have been installed in the company's offices in the Custom House Building. The Ringaskiddy Passenger Ferry Terminal is all on one level and is accessible. Wheelchairs are available upon request and there is a priority travel system in the car park for people with mobility, sensory and

cognitive impairments. Information regarding ferry operations and sailing times is available in formats such as the public address system and large digital display signs. While the port does not operate an information desk, staff are available in the terminal building to assist people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

Dublin Port

Terminal 1 is the main passenger terminal at the port. It is a purpose built passenger terminal with check in and arrivals located on the ground floor. Parking for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments is provided outside the terminal. The building has accessible toilets as well as a lift to the upper floor where passengers access the ferries. All passenger facilities can accommodate wheelchair users. Port staff are available to provide assistance to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. A new accessible passenger waiting area has been built at Terminal 2 while Terminal 3 is mainly used for freight services and facilities are mainly geared towards freight vehicle drivers.

Dun Laoghaire Harbour

The ferry terminal consists of one building with two main access points. All passenger services are accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. Assistance is available to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments on request. People with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments receive assistance at check in and designated parking is provided adjacent to the lifts on the car deck of the ferry. The harbour police have been given disability awareness training. The terminal evacuation plan has been amended to incorporate the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, including the provision of “evac chairs”. Three of the parking spaces for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments are fitted with a device that audibly informs the driver that the space is reserved for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The Port Operations Manager acts as the accessibility officer.

Rosslare Europort

The port has one main terminal building which has access for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The building has received a Rehab award for providing equity of access in its design. Rosslare Europort is operated by Iarnród Éireann and is bound by Iarnród Éireann’s policy on the provision of services to people with mobility, sensory and

cognitive impairments. The company has appointed both an equality and diversity officer and an accessibility liaison officer. Disability awareness training is provided to staff.

With a view to improving passenger accessibility at the four international ferry ports, the Department of Transport will ensure that each of the port authorities:

- arranges, within six months of the Department's Sectoral Plan coming into force, for an independent accessibility audit of the passenger facilities at its port and finalise an action plan, with clear, realistic, tangible and time-bound targets for achieving any required improvements, within three months of the completion of the audit. Such audits will include an assessment of any port websites used to convey passenger information. In arranging the independent accessibility audits, the port authorities will liaise with the National Disability Authority.
- appoints a senior official with specific responsibility for transport accessibility matters. The appointee in each case will be responsible for delivering on the commitments that are contained in this Plan and in the port action plan in respect of the port concerned and for reporting to, and liaising with, the Department in relation to all transport accessibility matters relating to the relevant port.
- encourages other service providers within their harbour areas to ensure that passenger services provided by them are accessible, as far as practicable, to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

There are also thirteen regional harbour authorities that operate under the Harbours Act 1946. Local passenger services are provided from a number of harbours in this category, often to offshore islands or on sightseeing/activity trips. Facilities in these harbours for people with disabilities will be addressed by the relevant harbour authorities.

Other Ports

There are five fishery harbours centres owned and operated by the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. A number of these harbours have domestic

passenger services operating from them to offshore islands. The Sectoral Plan of that Department includes a section dealing with its proposals in relation to these harbours.

There is also a large number of harbours, landing places and slips owned and operated by local authorities. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is addressing these facilities in the Local Authority Plans chapter of its Sectoral Plan.

Inland Waterways

Waterways Ireland, a North/South Implementation Body, is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of the inland navigable waterway system throughout the island, principally for recreational purposes. The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has responsibility for Waterways Ireland.

Waterways Ireland has been developing an Access for All Improvement Plan over the past 18 months. As part of this process, audit tools have been developed to assess current access against best practice. Engineers have received disability awareness training and use of the Access Audit Tools. A rolling programme of access audits is proposed for implementation over the next couple of years in addition to detailed access auditing at specific sites where work is planned. These audits will facilitate the development of access improvement programs.

Waterways Ireland is committed to the ongoing development of angling facilities for disabled anglers along its waterway network. Wheelchair accessible facilities are currently available on the Grand Canal and Barrow Navigation. These accessible stands and ancillary facilities have been constructed to a high standard and represent the start of an ongoing process that aims to provide anglers with disabilities with access to the best of coarse and pike angling.

Parking Facilities and Driver Training

The Minister for Transport regulates traffic, parking and road traffic signs under the Road Traffic Acts 1961 to 2005.

The Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) Regulations 1997 enable local authorities to provide parking bays on public roads that are reserved for use by people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. For the purposes of these 1997 regulations, a disabled person means a 'person who is suffering from a disability that prevents that person from walking or causes undue hardship to the person in walking.'

The design specifications laid down for a designated parking bay in the Road Traffic (Signs) Regulations 1997 requires that it must display a prescribed on-road marking in the parking bay depicting a wheelchair user symbol in white. Where a designated parking bay is provided perpendicular to the kerb it must have a minimum width of 3300mm. The additional width over and above that prescribed for a standard parking bay is to facilitate the transfer of a person to/from a wheelchair.

The Department will take up with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government the adequacy of the provision by local authorities of parking facilities for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

Disabled Person's Parking Permit

The Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) Regulations 1997 also provide for the operation of disabled persons' parking permits in Ireland. These permits may be issued by local authorities, the Irish Wheelchair Association and the Disabled Drivers Association. The permits have national application. Permits are granted to eligible disabled persons (see above definition) and may be issued to a disabled person who is a driver or to a disabled person who is a passenger.

Only a vehicle displaying a disabled person's permit is allowed to park in a disabled person's parking bay and the vehicle must be parked for the convenience of the permit holder.

The form of the permit (commonly referred to as the Blue Parking Card) complies with EU Recommendation 98/376/EC which allows for its recognition in other EU member states. The Irish legislation in this regard extends to disabled person's parking permits issued by other countries provided the permit contains the recognised pictorial symbol of a person sitting in a wheelchair.

Enforcement

The Road Traffic Act 2002 empowers the Minister for Transport to apply a fixed charge system to breaches of road traffic law and from 3 April 2006 the offence of illegally parking in a disabled person's parking bay was brought within the remit of this enforcement regime.

Where illegal parking in a disabled person's bay is detected a member of An Garda Síochána or a traffic warden employed by a local authority can issue a Fixed Charge Notice. The person liable to be prosecuted for the offence has the option, in lieu of going to court, of making a fixed charge payment in the amount of €80 within 28 days from issue of the Notice or to pay that amount increased by 50%, i.e. a fixed charge in the amount of €120 within the next 28-day period. If no payment is received within 56 days, court prosecution proceedings are initiated.

The fixed charge that applies for breach of parking in other parking bays is €40 (or €60 if paid in second 28-day period) so the level fixed charge that applies to illegal parking in a disabled person's parking bay is significantly higher in order to act as a deterrent against abuse of these designated bays.

The Road Traffic Act 2004 introduces an express power of inspection of permits, including disabled persons' permits, by members of An Garda Síochána and traffic wardens to assist in the detection of misuse or abuse of parking permits. The 2004 Act also provides that the Minister may prescribe a fee for the issue of permits.

Regulatory Review

The Department of Transport is aware from submissions received of serious difficulties with the operation of the disabled person's parking scheme. These include the significant expansion of the numbers of cardholders and the question of the abuse of the system by non-disabled drivers.

As a means of addressing the issues the Department, in consultation with the Disabled Drivers Association, the Irish Wheelchair Association, some local authorities and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has commenced a review of the regulatory framework applying to the scheme.

The aim of this review is to identify changes to the disabled persons parking permit scheme that would safeguard its beneficial operation for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The Department is reviewing both primary and secondary legislation with regard to the operation and enforcement of the disabled persons' parking permit scheme with a view to ensuring that a robust scheme is in place. In addition, the legislation in relation to the provision of parking bays for disabled people is being reviewed with a view to examining the following:

- Whether the current regulatory dimensions for the designated parking space are satisfactory, and
- Whether there is need to amend the content of the present traffic sign (road way markings) that are used to sign a designated parking bay.

It is intended that this review will be completed in the course of 2006 and that, if any legislative amendments are identified, these will be pursued as soon as possible thereafter.

Driver Training

The Department of Transport will take up with the Road Safety Authority issues concerning:-

- Assessment standards in relation to drivers with disabilities,
- Standards for adaptation of vehicles for peoples with disabilities,
- Standards in terms of securing wheelchair passengers in vehicles and standards in relation to use of passengers lifts and ramps etc.,
- Establishment of advice service similar to MAVIS service in UK for the provision of advice for disabled and elderly motorists.

Cross-Sectoral Issues in the Transport Sector

Exchequer and EU funding of Transport Projects

In keeping with the ECMT Charter (see Appendix 2 for full text) adopted by the ECMT Council of Ministers in Warsaw in 1999, all public transport project proposals submitted to the Department of Transport for Exchequer or EU financing must, as a condition of funding approval, include provisions to incorporate full accessibility to approved standards or best practice into the design and construction of the project.

The advice of competent authorities (experts in disability, including people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments) must be sought in respect of each such project, from the earliest design stage and throughout the design and construction processes. Each project must be vetted by the competent authority and any departure from their advice must be based on sound operational or safety considerations. All new projects will be monitored for compliance with these accessibility principles.

Selective post-investment monitoring and evaluation structures will be put in place to ascertain whether the funding has been effective. An assessment of the effectiveness of the funding in increasing the accessibility of transport for all and whether the funding has facilitated an increase in the use of transport by mobility and sensory impaired people will be an integral part of this process.

Disability Awareness Training

While the provision of accessible infrastructure and vehicles is essential for accessing public transport, this access cannot in many cases be affected if the providers of the services adopt negative attitudes to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments or there are interpersonal communication failures. Organisations need to understand the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and to remove communication, attitudinal and physical barriers. Disability awareness training is, therefore, essential for the proper delivery of services. Such training for all operators, while essential for front-line staff, such as

drivers and ticketing staff, should also be a feature of on-the-job training of supervisors and managers.

Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath and Veolia Transport now have disability awareness training programmes in place. Disability awareness training for Railway Procurement Agency staff is scheduled for 2006 with some critical staff having already received training. This training will continue in most cases due to normal staff turnover and rotation etc.

The Department of Transport is considering the question of providing support for disability awareness training for the private bus operator sector to be arranged in conjunction with representatives of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

In relation to the Taxi and Hackney Sector, a mandatory Skills Development Programme will be put in place, which will have as a core element disability awareness and training relevant to the provision of a service for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The training will be mandatory for all new SPSV drivers from 2007 and will be a requirement for all existing SPSV drivers from 2008.

Disability awareness training is also being introduced for staff in the Department of Transport. Staff from the Department's Maritime Safety Directorate, both administrative staff and Marine Surveyors, commenced disability awareness training in 2005 including specialised training in relation to disability needs in the marine transport sector.

Port authorities will be required to arrange disability awareness training for their employees who are engaged in the provision of passenger services or who are otherwise responsible for the implementation of aspects of this Plan. Also, the "Questionnaire on Disability Access on Passenger Ships", among other things, deals with the question of disability equality training and now forms part of the annual renewal survey for a Passenger Ship Certificate.

The proposed EU Regulation concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air (COM 2005/0047) includes a requirement for airlines and airport authorities to provide disability awareness training for staff. The Department will

advise those airlines and airport authorities who have not already done so to put in place a programme of disability awareness training for staff as a priority measure, in advance of the implementation of the Regulation.

The operational guidelines for improving access to bus, rail and light rail services for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in Ireland, published by the NDA, include a full chapter on disability awareness training. As noted earlier these guidelines have been issued for implementation by all public transport operators.

The NDA has also recently published Guidelines for Purchasers of Disability Equality Training. Among other things, the guidelines provide a uniform code of practice for the content and delivery of disability awareness training courses. The Department will encourage the transport operators to adapt these guidelines.

Copies of the NDA Guidelines are available on the NDA website www.nda.ie

Consultation and the Establishment of Disability User Groups

User groups formed from regular public transport users with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments are invaluable in the planning, design and operation of successful public transport services. Since the publication of the Outline Plan, each of the CIÉ operating companies has established a disability users group and the RPA and Veolia Transport have established a joint disability user group in respect of Luas services. While these user groups are providing invaluable advice to the companies concerned in relation to the design and implementation of accessibility improvements, it would appear that such groups do not currently have clear terms of reference, regular meetings or review mechanisms for plans as they are implemented. In this connection, the Department, in conjunction with the PTAC, will develop a 'terms of reference' template for disability user groups and circulate it to relevant transport operators.

Dublin Airport has set up a disability users group, embracing representative bodies from various disability organisations and at least two meetings of this group have already taken place in 2006. It is understood that disability user groups are in the process of being

established at Cork and Shannon Airports. It is proposed to establish a forum later in 2006 to oversee the implementation and review of the Maritime Passenger Section of the Sectoral Plan. The forum will include representatives of the Department of Transport, port authorities, marine passenger service providers and people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

The Department is consulting with the representative organisations of private transport operators regarding the establishment of similar appropriate structures for that sector.

Accessibility Audits

Carrying out an accessibility audit can be an invaluable tool for a transport operator in measuring the extent to which their transport services are accessible. The Department will discuss with the following the way in which these audits should be carried out, their frequency and the development of implementation plans to address any deficiencies identified:

National Disability Authority, National Roads Authority, Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath, the RPA/Veolia Transport, the organisations representing private bus operators, the airport services, port /harbour authorities and marine passenger transport operators.

People with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments that affect their capacity to independently use public transport will have a key role in such audits.

Roads Policy

The National Roads Authority (NRA) also has a responsibility in relation to national roads in ensuring that in delivering a modern, safe road network, the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments are considered. This will be followed up with the NRA.

Integrated Ticketing

Integrated ticketing is the means by which a passenger can undertake journey with the use of a ticket on one or more public transport services. In the countries where such multi-operator

and sometimes multi-modal systems operate it can bring particular benefit to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments because of the improvements it brings to their travel experience. Integrated ticketing, especially a system based on a contactless smartcard, reduces the inconvenience and discomfort associated with queuing and buying tickets. In addition, bus boarding and passage through ticket control points at railway stations can be simpler without the constant need to handle money and to interact with bus drivers and ticket issuing staff. Smartcard reading equipment usually has visual and audio indicators that are activated when smartcards are held close to such devices.

An integrated ticketing system using contactless smartcard technology is currently being developed by the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) and is being introduced on a phased basis with initial deployment in the Dublin area. As part of the phased introduction it has been operating since April 2004 on the public transport services of Morton's Coaches, in conjunction with the RPA. Another important stage in the process was the launch of smartcards on Luas services in March 2005.

Passenger Information

Information, from basic printed timetables to real time on-board information systems, is fundamentally important in giving people the confidence to travel. The Department is committed to the development of an integrated information system for public transport and is considering how best to progress its implementation. Links to the services of various transport providers in the Greater Dublin Area are already available through the Dublin Transport Office website www.dto.ie

From its consultations with the disability sector, the Department is conscious of the need to improve substantially the current inadequacies of public transport travel information systems. Because they can provide timely, accurate and reliable information on a range of travel choices in a range of media (such as on the internet, mobile phones, at bus stops, rail stations and on board vehicles) Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) systems can bring great benefits to passengers with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

Luas uses RTPI displays at all stops to inform passengers of the expected arrival time of the next three trams and their destination. On board displays also show the current and next stops and these are supplemented by audible announcements. The audio announcements on the tram are a combination of pre-recorded and/or driver activated messages and those on the platforms are initiated centrally. Both systems are used to provide other information and can be programmed by the operator to display custom messages. New “standard” messages are regularly updated. Information provided also includes details of interchange locations with bus and rail services. Many automated messages are repeated in Irish as well as in English.

Notice boards at all Luas stops contain local area maps which include nearby landmarks as well as bus stop locations. The posters also give basic information on fares, running times and other statutory notices. It is planned that performance data will be added to these posters in due course.

Luas guides, timetables and newsletters are available in different formats and are either obtained by request or are given out at stops from time to time.

The DART has an RTPI system installed at all stations in visual format only. It also has a RTPI service in text format available from mobile phones. RTPI services are also available on the IE website. On board displays also show the current and next stops and these are supplemented by audible announcements. The audio announcements on the carriage are a combination of pre-recorded and/or driver activated messages. The systems on the carriages and in the stations are used to provide other information and can be programmed by the operator to display custom messages. New “standard” messages are regularly updated. Information provided also includes details of interchange locations with bus and Luas services. Some automated messages are repeated in Irish as well as in English.

Bus Átha Cliath is piloting an on-board audio/visual system and has a mobile phone text service that gives information on the next scheduled services for each route queried. BAC has recently provided orientation maps and detailed scheduled service information at some bus stops on a number of QBCs.

Bus Éireann is in the process of rolling-out satellite navigation technology across its national fleet (GPS System).

The Department will continue to press the operating companies to ensure that all information and announcement systems are at all times operational and accurate.

The integration of passenger information across transport networks should be consistent and enable passengers with disabilities to complete a journey with integrated ticketing options allowing the completion of a journey using different modes of transport. The provision of information, in the preferred format of the passenger for journey planning, to assist him or her to identify accessible transport – particularly where more than one mode of transport is involved is essential and should form part of future policy.

The need for information on the accessibility or otherwise of routes, stops and interchanges, and how modes and services connect, also needs to be made available and published in alternative formats to enable people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments plan and undertake journeys.

Websites

CIÉ and its three operating companies, Iarnród Éireann, Bus Éireann and Bus Átha Cliath, have upgraded their Internet websites in recent years. Each website now includes

- Timetable information (with RTPI for DART and certain Dublin suburban services on the IE website);
- Information on fares & promotional offerings as well as the purchase & delivery of some tickets;
- A seat reservation service in the case of Irish Rail;
- Information relating to the companies accessible services;
- Special features to assist the visually impaired; and
- Links to the websites of the other companies.

All these web sites are accessible through the CIE website at www.cie.ie or at www.buseireann.ie, www.irishrail.ie or www.dublinbus.ie. Both Bus Éireann and Irish Rail websites contain journey-planning services.

The Luas website (operated and maintained by Veolia Transport) can be accessed at www.luas.ie while the website of the Dublin Transportation Office, which contains timetable information for a number of public and private transport operators, can be accessed at www.dto.ie.

A number of licensed private bus operators have dedicated websites that provide passenger information & fare information on scheduled services and, in some cases, facilitate the purchase of tickets.

While the work undertaken to date on all these sites represents significant progress, further improvements are required to facilitate journey planning particularly for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. As recommended by the National Disability Authority, the Department will encourage all passenger transport providers to achieve conformance with the Web Accessibility Initiatives (WAI) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for its HTML-based information and services, including public websites, HTML based e-mail and newsletters. The WCAG can be accessed at www.w3.org/WAI

The Department will continue to consult with relevant bodies including transport operators and the Public Transport Accessibility Committee with a view to progressing improvements in website design and use.

Public Transport Interchange

Public transport interchange is the process whereby passengers transfer from one transport service to another in making a journey. A complete public transport journey will frequently consist of a succession of smaller trips. Where there are discontinuities in this process that cause inconvenience for passengers, interchange can be major deterrent to promoting increased use of public transport. However, such discontinuities create particular difficulties for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The most common interchange

problem experienced by these groups of passengers is where there are different spatial levels in the interchange infrastructure and where signage is poor.

An advice note published by the Dublin Transportation Office addresses the special needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments in this regard and particularly with regard to the planning and design of interchange facilities. The Department recognises that the difficulties are not confined to infrastructural issues but also encompass operational matters such as ensuring, for instance, that buses which serve train stations/ports are timetabled to take account of train/ship arrival and departure times.

Transport 21 places a special emphasis on the integration of the various elements of the public transport system particularly in the Greater Dublin Area and there are a number of proposals therein, which when completed, will facilitate passenger interchange between those elements. As with all new public transport infrastructure facilities, in funding developments in this area the Department will ensure that the accessibility needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments will be an integral part of the construction of interchange facilities.

Compliance and Redress Procedures

Officials responsible for Plan

Bus Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath, Iarnród Éireann, the Railway Procurement Agency/Veolia Transport, the Dublin Airport Authority (in respect of the three State Airports) and the Commission for Taxi Regulation have each already appointed a senior official with specific responsibility for transport accessibility matters. Each marine port authority will also be required to appoint a senior official with specific responsibility for transport accessibility matters. The appointee in each case will be responsible for delivering on the commitments contained in this Sectoral Plan in respect of the company concerned and for reporting to, and liaising with, the Department in relation to all transport accessibility matters. Marine port authority appointees will also be required to encourage other service providers within their harbour areas to ensure that passenger services provided by them are accessible, as far as practicable, to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

Memoranda of Understanding

The Department of Transport has in place a Memorandum of Understanding with each of the CIÉ companies which links performance standards and quality of services with subvention payments made by the Department to the companies. The Department proposes to extend the range of performance targets when the Memoranda are next issued to include the provisions of this Sectoral Plan, insofar as they pertain to the companies' areas of responsibility.

The indicators against which accessibility performance will be measured will be developed in line with the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) criteria developed under the Customer Charter initiative of the Department of An Taoiseach in 2003.

Complaints and Redress Structures

The Minister will ensure that all State transport companies and Veolia Transport will have in place adequate complaints and redress structures to deal with issues concerning access by people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments to their services. The companies will be asked to incorporate, within the existing complaints mechanisms, procedures that will be available to persons who consider that they have been adversely affected by any failure on the part of the transport operator to comply with any aspect of this Sectoral Plan.

A person dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint in relation to the accessibility of public transport services provided by these companies will be entitled to appeal the outcome to the Office of the Ombudsman. Section 40 of the Disability Act 2005 relates to the application of the Ombudsman Act 1980. In this regard, it should be noted that the Ombudsman's role covers complaints about all bodies, organisations and other persons to which this Plan applies, including private passenger transport services providers.

Within each company the outcome of each complaint should be forwarded to the senior official responsible for accessibility matters who, in turn, will consider the matters complained of and, if necessary, will bring forward proposals to change the operational procedures of the company to ensure improved access to services for mobility and sensory impaired people.

The Ombudsman has underscored the importance of preventing a breakdown in communications between public bodies and their customers in dealing with complaints before those complaints reach her Office. Many complaints could and should be easily and speedily settled at a very early stage by public bodies themselves.

To ensure a degree of consistency across the transport sector in relation to the complaints procedures, the Minister will ensure that all bodies or persons to which this Sectoral Plan applies, will have in place by 31 December 2006 adequate procedures and structures to deal with complaints of alleged non-compliance with the provisions of this Sectoral Plan. In the case of private transport companies and other persons providing passenger transport services, similar procedures and structures may be established, either under the auspices of organisations representing private transport operators, or regulatory bodies with responsibility

for individual passenger transport sectors or other bodies or organisations approved by the Minister.

All the procedures and structures, prepared in accordance with the above, will be published by the relevant bodies or persons and will include the following:

- (a) procedures for the making and investigation of complaints and such other matters relating to complaints as are considered appropriate,
- (b) the name and contact details for the person (“complaints officer”) within the company, representative organisation, regulatory body or other body or organisation, to which complaints may be addressed. Complaints Officers will be responsible for the conduct of investigations in accordance with the above-mentioned procedures, and will be independent in the performance of their functions.

When drawing up procedures in accordance with the above, the relevant bodies and persons should be have regard to the *The Ombudsman's Guide to Internal Complaints Systems* (see **Appendix 5**), also available at <http://www.ombudsman.ie>

Procedures and structures, prepared in accordance with the above, will be required to be submitted to the Minister as soon as may be but in any case not later than 31 December 2006.

A person may make a complaint to the Ombudsman in relation to a decision of a complaints officer in relation to this Sectoral Plan. Procedures prepared in accordance with the above will make provision for informing all complainants of this right.

The decision in each complaint will be notified by the complaints officer to the appropriate person with responsibility for accessibility matters (within company, representative organisation, regulatory body or other body or organisation) who will be required to consider the matter(s) complained of and, where appropriate, bring forward proposals to ensure compliance with the complaint officer’s decision, having regard to the *The Ombudsman's Guide to the Provision of Redress* (available at <http://www.ombudsman.ie>).

Each company, representative organisation, regulatory body or other body or organisation that carries out a complaints investigation function under this Plan will be required to report to the Minister annually in relation to complaints concerning alleged non-compliance with the provisions of this Plan, and the changes brought forward, or proposed, to ensure improved access to the services covered by this Plan.

Each company, representative organisation, regulatory body or other body or organisation that is required by statute to prepare and/or publish an annual report will be required to provide a yearly progress report on the implementation of this Sectoral Plan in their annual reports.

All organisations that are required to have compliance and redress procedures in place will also be required to ensure as far as practicable that information on complaints procedures is available in alternative formats to enable disabled people to access them.

Implementation of the Sectoral Plan by the Department of Transport

In meeting its commitments under the Sectoral Plan, the Department of Transport will implement (or has already implemented) the following measures:

- It has appointed a senior official with specific responsibility for transport accessibility matters within the Department who, among other things, is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the Plan.
- In the drafting of new transport legislation, the Department will ensure that the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments are fully addressed.
- In establishing any new bodies with responsibility for transport matters, the Department will ensure that each body will have a specific remit with regard to transport accessibility.
- It has expanded the membership of the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC) to include representation from the Commission for Taxi Regulation, people with cognitive disabilities, the Dublin Airport Authority, private bus operators and areas of the Department dealing with marine passenger transport.
- The remit of the PTAC will be extended to include a monitoring role in relation to progress by the agencies under the aegis of the Department in implementing the Sectoral Plan and evaluating the impact of the Plan on people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.
- The Department will incorporate disability proofing into any regulatory impact analysis when developing new policies, practices and services and in its reviews of existing policies, practices and services.

- The commitments, relevant to the Department in the Sectoral Plan, will be included in the Department's Statement of Strategy and related Business Plans when next prepared and progress on implementation will be included in the Department's Annual Reports.
- The Department will request each agency under its aegis that is required by statute to prepare and/or publish an annual report, to provide a yearly progress report on the implementation of this Sectoral Plan in their annual reports.
- Funding for projects will be provided in accordance with Department of Finance guidelines on public expenditure and EU obligations as regards such matters as public procurement and State Aid Rules etc.
- Progress reports on the implementation of the Plan will be considered by the Department's Management Board on a six monthly basis.
- In the roll-out of the Sectoral Plan and in developing policies and standards for accessible transport, the Department will continue to liaise very closely with the National Disability Authority.
- The Department will continue to participate in interdepartmental co-ordinating and monitoring structures for the National Disability Strategy, including the sectoral plans under the Disability Act, 2005. It will also participate in arrangements to be put in place to ensure a continued constructive relationship with stakeholders in relation to progress on the National Disability Strategy as a whole. This will include bi-annual meetings between senior officials and other stakeholders in line with the commitments contained in the social partnership agreement, Towards 2016.

Implementing the Requirements of the Disability Act in the Department of Transport

The Disability Act 2005 General Requirements

The key requirements for Departments and public bodies generally are as follows:

Part 1:

- Section 5: identify and report required expenditure in the annual estimates for the provision of services under the Act.

Part 3:

- Section 25: develop a programme of work on access to public buildings, and identify any building to be exempted.
- Section 26: public bodies are required, where practicable and appropriate, to ensure that their services are accessible for people with disabilities.
- Section 27: public bodies are required to ensure that the goods or services that they purchase are accessible.
- Section 28: communications by a public body to a person with a hearing or visual impairment must, as far as practicable, be provided in an accessible format, following a request. Information provided electronically must, as far as practicable, be compatible with adaptive technology. Published information, relevant to persons with intellectual disabilities, must be made available in easy to read formats.

Part 5:

- Section 47: take all reasonable measures to employ people with disabilities. A minimum 3% target will apply initially.
- Section 48: establish a monitoring committee to encourage compliance by public bodies with the 3% employment target. Monitoring committee to report to NDA by 30 June each year. Each public body must report by 31 March to the monitoring committee. Each public

body must have a system in place for monitoring, recording and reporting on its measures relating to the employment target.

Approach to Implementation

1. A cross cutting team approach has been adopted for the implementation of the requirements under the Act which apply to Departments and public bodies generally. The specific requirements of the Transport Sectoral Plan are managed separately in the Public Transport Planning Division.
2. An Implementation Team has been established consisting of representatives of those areas of Corporate Services with functional responsibility for the relevant Departmental actions.
3. The Team reports to the Principal Officer, Communications and Information Division, who advises the Assistant Secretary Corporate Management of progress as required.
4. It is intended that membership of the Team be representative of the business units most affected by the Act. Membership can vary according to the need at any particular time.
5. The team will meet at least twice per year and may revise the above terms of reference as required to meet the needs of the Department.

The National Disability Authority (NDA) has developed a Code of Practice in order to support public bodies in fulfilling their statutory obligations under sections 26, 27 and 28 of the Disability Act, 2005. Compliance with this Code will be considered as compliance with the relevant provisions of the Act.

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform has declared by statutory order (S.I. No. 163 of 2006) that the NDA Code relating to sections 26, 27 and 28 of the Disability Act, 2005 is to be the approved code of practice.

The implementation team will use the NDA Code of Practice as its guide in relation to compliance.

Terms of Reference of Implementation Team

The terms of reference for the Team are:

- To identify and define what is to be undertaken in each business area in order to be compliant with legislation, and identify the timescales involved;
- To identify the potential costs involved, on both programme and administrative budget sides, in the context of the Estimates process for 2006 and later years.
- To outline a programme of work required to meet the legal requirements and to indicate the tasks appropriate to the different business areas of the Department in order to complete the programme of work.
- To submit proposals arising from the above to the Principal Officer, Communications and Information Division, for onward reporting and action as required.
- To contribute material on the above indicated Departmental actions for inclusion, as appropriate, in the Transport Sectoral Plan.
- To recommend a structure for monitoring and accounting for the implementation of the Disability Act in the Department and its agencies.
- To receive and consider reports of activities in each business area on the progress of the work.
- To ensure that Business Plans across each business area reflect the work of the Implementation Team in meeting the Department's obligations under the Disability Act.

Key Activities of the Implementation Team

The key activities in progress or already undertaken to ensure compliance with the Act include:

- Key stakeholders both internally and externally have been identified and responsibility broadly assigned for the delivery of the necessary internal actions, inputs and deliverables.

- A mechanism for reporting the Department's funding requirement for the implementation of the Disability Act 2005, in the context of the Estimates process, is in place in Finance Division and data for 2005 and 2006 have been collated and reported.
- The line divisions with administrative responsibility for State agencies have been contacted with a view to developing a process for populating the required monitoring committee with an appropriate membership as described under the Act. A meeting with the agencies that come under the remit of the Department will be scheduled subsequently.
- A review of the procurement procedures will be conducted and this will incorporate the specific requirement under the Disability Act to ensure goods and services that are procured are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- The Department's existing customer service charter will be updated to include actions to meet the requirement of the Department under the Act in support of both the external and internal customer.
- The next internal customer service survey will be used to identify any deficits that may exist in service delivery and allow for these to be comprehensively addressed in accordance with the Code of Practice on Accessibility.
- A review of the existing information services and formats, to assess whether these are adequately accessible to all persons with disabilities and in the appropriate mediums, is being planned as part of a planned overhaul of the Department's websites in late 2006.
- An analysis of the extent to which buildings, used by the Department's customers and staff are fully accessible, will be undertaken. Again where such deficits exist these will be addressed in a Programme of works to be undertaken in conjunction with the OPW.
- A revised Training Strategy was completed in February 2006 and it includes disability awareness training modules. An organisational disability awareness campaign will be organised and repeated every two years. Typically this will include disability awareness activities, with an emphasis on taking up training and development opportunities.
- A review of the Department's compliance with the target for the employment of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments is carried out annually and reported as required under Sustaining Progress. This process will continue and reports will be made to NDA as required under the Act.

Regulatory Impact Analysis

RIA is being applied to all proposals for primary legislation involving changes to the regulatory framework, all significant Statutory Instruments and all proposed EU directives and significant regulations. In addition, the Department has adopted the Guidelines issued by the Department of the Taoiseach in October 2005, in relation to consultation on policy issues in this area.

Preparation of Statements of Strategy

The Department of Transport's approach to reflecting the requirements of the Disability Act in its Strategy Statements is based on the general guidelines issued by the Department of the Taoiseach concerning the preparation of Strategy Statements. The following text is largely drawn from those guidelines.

Legal

The Public Service Management Act, 1997, provides that existing Strategy Statements be reviewed and updated no later than 3 years after the last statements were prepared or within six months of the appointment of a new Minister. Secretaries General and Heads of Office are obliged under Section 4, Public Service Management Act, 1997, to submit statements to Ministers within six months of the Minister coming into office.

Essentially, a Strategy Statement is a forward-looking document that serves as a framework for action by the Department/Office. While the primary focus of the statement relates to delivering the key Government policy objectives for Transport, the statement should be consistent with key Government initiatives which cut across some or all Departments and Offices. These include, in particular, the requirements of the Disability Act 2005 in respect of public bodies and relevant guidelines issued by the National Disability Authority, in particular their Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services.

Cross- Departmental Issues

As there is a cross-departmental approach in place to progress the disability agenda the next Statement of Strategy will be consistent with the approach taken across the administration generally. The statement will highlight this fact and identify other organisations having a key role in tackling the issue. Where relevant, the Statement will be consistent with the agreed priorities identified by the appropriate Cabinet Committee and the appropriate Cabinet Committee may be a forum for considering the treatment of key cross-cutting issues in the preparation of the Strategy Statement.

Stakeholders

The views of customers, representative bodies, advisory bodies and other stakeholders on disability issues will be taken into account when preparing the Strategy Statement.

Consultation with the NDA will be important in this context and will be explicitly referenced in the Strategy Statement. The statement will clearly show how customer/client expectations and needs (including internal customers) have been assessed. This assessment will be based on research of customer needs and wherever possible consultation with customers will underpin and inform the Strategy Statement. To this end, the Statement will illustrate a clear linkage between the Customer Service Action Plan and the development of associated objectives.

Internal

When dealing with the development of human resource management policies and practices, including staff development and training, the disability agenda will be addressed and specific measures proposed will be included. In relation to internal consultation with staff, we will ensure that there is participation by staff with disabilities throughout the Department in this process, possibly via the partnership structure if appropriate.

Specifying objectives, actions and performance indicators

The Public Service Management Act, 1997, specifies that a Strategy Statement shall 'comprise the key objectives, outputs and related strategies (including the use of resources) of the Department of State or Scheduled Office concerned.' Explicit recognition will be given to the objective of making transport more accessible. Anticipated outcomes, in terms of the

benefits or changes for individuals or groups arising from pursuing the particular proposed policy will be quantified, where possible. Actions to deliver the outcome will be specified, such as progressing the implementation of the Sectoral Plan for Transport or promoting the use of the NDA's Recommended Guidelines for Public Transport Operators in Ireland. Objectives will be defined in such a way as to allow subsequent assessment as to whether or not they are achieved. Objectives may sometimes usefully be supplemented by the setting of specific, quantified targets or key performance indicators.

The Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC)

The Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC) was established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness in July 2000 and is the primary consultative forum on the issue of public transport accessibility. The Committee's remit is to advise the Minister for Transport on the accessibility aspects of public transport investment projects and on other public transport accessibility issues. It is comprised of representatives of the following organisations:

- Comhairle
- Department of Transport
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Irish Wheelchair Association
- National Council for the Blind of Ireland
- National Council on Ageing and Older People
- National Disability Authority
- National Association for Deaf People
- People with Disabilities in Ireland
- Inclusion Ireland
- Vantastic
- CIE
- Bus Éireann
- Bus Átha Cliath
- Iarnród Éireann
- The Railway Procurement Agency
- Veolia Transport
- Commission for Taxi Regulation
- Dublin Airport Authority
- Main Private Bus Operator Organisations
- Maritime Safety Directorate

The Chairman of the Committee is a senior official of the Department of Transport.

PTAC's remit under this Plan is being expanded to include a monitoring role in relation to progress by the agencies under the aegis of the Department in implementing the Sectoral Plan and evaluating the impact of the Plan on people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT)

(1) Background Note on ECMT

The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) is an Inter-Governmental organisation founded in 1953. It comprises the Ministers of Transport of 43 full member countries and seven associate member countries. It operates as a forum in which European Ministers for Transport co-operate in the development of policies for the inland transport sector. Ireland hosted the European Council of Ministers from 15-18 May 2006. *“Improving Transport Accessibility for All- Guide to Good Practice”* was included in the ministerial agenda. At the end of this item of the agenda, Transport Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to implementing decisions by the ECMT on improving transport accessibility and they approved the policy signals from the “Guide to Good Practice” and in particular those relating to priority areas for action by Governments in the document.

ECMT Access and Inclusion Objectives

- Achieve greater understanding and recognition of the transport and mobility needs of disabled and older people as an integral part of transport policy and planning across all modes.
- Identify key social, structural, operational and financial issues affecting the mobility of disabled and older people as well as individuals facing temporary mobility difficulties (e.g. use of public transport, private vehicle use, pedestrian activity) and exchange experience and promote best practice in these areas.

The ECMT has produced many reports and recommendations which provide guidance on achieving barrier-free travel, among them a [Charter on Access to Transport Services and](#)

[Infrastructure](#) (**see below**) and a [Guide to Good Practice on Improving Transport for People with Mobility Handicaps](#). Political support for this work has been given through the adoption of several formal resolutions by the Council of Ministers. Many of these recommendations have been incorporated in this Plan.

Recent ECMT Reports

- **“Improving Access to Public Transport – Guidelines for Transport Personnel”**
Recently, the ECMT has published a set of guidelines intended to be a good practice guide for staff employed in the passenger transport industry – rail, road, air and maritime. The approach taken in the guidelines is based on the so-called “social model of disability” that recognizes that people are not disabled by their impairments alone but by the environment and society in which they live. The guidance for transport personnel is written with frontline members of staff foremost in mind, though they are valid as well for all staff and management. They provide a practical approach to providing good customer care.
- **Updated Guide to Good Practice on Travel for Disabled and Older People**
An update of the ECMT's 1999 publication "Improving Transport for People with Mobility Handicaps: A Guide to Good Practice" was presented to Transport Ministers at the ECMT Dublin Council in May 2006. The new Guide *“Improving Transport Accessibility for All”* is intended to show how barriers to movement and the use of public and private transport can be removed. It is meant to provide guidance for anyone who is concerned with transport whether as a designer, planner or operator, to give good advice and some details of the more important aspects of accessible transport infrastructure, vehicles and information, and to provide a list of sources where more detailed and specific information can be found.

Areas covered in the Guide include access to travel information, the road and pedestrian environment, transport infrastructure, vehicles, new/innovative transport services, and the role of the Government. The guide has been taken into account in preparing this Plan.

- **Cognitive, Learning and Mental Disabilities**
For the first time, the ECMT is carrying out an examination of "Cognitive, Learning and Mental Disabilities in Transport".

The study will attempt to better understand how the needs of individuals with these disabilities are (or are not) addressed in transport planning and practice, in transport policy, in the institutional, regulatory and legal framework, and in research. Ireland is participating in this work in the framework of the Working Group.

- **Improving Access to Taxis**

A major study was launched by the ECMT in June 2005 in co-operation with the International Road Transport Union (IRU) on "Improving Access to Taxis". This work follows up the joint report published by the ECMT and IRU in 2001 on *Economic Aspects of Taxi Accessibility*.

A joint task force comprised of representatives of governments, regulators and the taxi industry is overseeing the work, an important part of which will involve dialogue with automobile manufacturers on vehicle design. The Commissioner for Taxi Regulation participates in the work of this Task Force.

(2) Charter on Access to Transport Services and Infrastructure

This Charter was adopted by the ECMT Council of Ministers on 19 and 20 May 1999 in Warsaw.

It underlines the political commitment in Europe to ensuring that all new transport infrastructure should be constructed to take into account the needs of people with disabilities.

1. The number of disabled people is growing

Disabled people make up a significant and growing part of Europe's population. With the ageing population, this number will increase substantially over the next 50 years. By 2020, there will be twice as many people over 65 in Europe as there were in 1960.

2. Everyone must have an opportunity for independent living

It is an unequivocal and agreed political objective to create a Europe in which all citizens, regardless of disability or age, have the opportunity for independent living. To

achieve this, public buildings, the transport systems and infrastructure must be barrier-free.

3. New infrastructure must take account of the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.

There are many new transport and infrastructure projects being planned or constructed in Europe. The lifetime of transport equipment and infrastructure can be extremely long and projects being considered now will remain in service well into the next millennium. It is therefore essential that these are built to meet the needs of disabled people. In any case, improvements in accessibility add to the system's quality and usually benefit all travellers.

4. Governments must ensure access

All governments have a clear responsibility to ensure that these projects are designed and constructed to the highest standards of accessibility.

5. Accessibility principles must be followed

Fundamental principles applying to any project must include:

- a) All projects considered for public funding (at national or international level) must, as a condition of this funding, agree to incorporate full accessibility, to approved standards or recognised best practice, into the design and construction.
- b) The design concept, from its earliest stage and throughout the design process, must be vetted and approved by experts in accessibility, including people with disabilities. National governments will propose and approve suitable sources of advice. Where national governments do not have sources of advice, the EU or the ECMT will provide them.
- c) The accessibility requirements must incorporate, as a minimum:

- full access for wheelchair users (up to and including those using wheelchairs of ISO standard dimensions) including, where appropriate, accessible toilet facilities and lifts;
- features to aid people with difficulties in walking, gripping, reaching or balancing (including non-slip surfaces, hand rails and handholds);
- facilities to assist blind and partially sighted people (including consistent use of colour contrast, clear signing and lighting, non reflective-surfaces, audible as well as visual announcements and tactile and audible guidance and warning surfaces and systems (where appropriate));
- facilities for people who are deaf or hard of hearing (including visual as well as audible announcements, induction loops and clear signs).

6. Public funding will be conditional

Projects will be monitored for compliance with accessibility principles. Continued public funding will be made conditional on achieving satisfactory progress with the inclusion of access features.

The ECMT's web site can be accessed at www.cemt.org

European Co-operation in the Field of Science and Technical Research (COST).

COST is an intergovernmental framework for European Co-operation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research. It facilitates the co-ordination of nationally funded research on a European level. COST Actions cover basic and pre-competitive research as well as activities of public utility. The goal of COST is to ensure that Europe holds a strong position in the field of scientific and technical research by increasing European co-operation and interaction.

To date there have been three COST actions in the field of accessible transport. These are COST 322 on urban buses, COST 335 on railways and COST 349 on long distance buses and coaches. In each case the reports provide guidance and recommendations with regard to developing accessible transport. Iarnród Éireann participated in the working group on COST 335 and Bus Éireann participated in the working group on COST 349.

The COST web site can be accessed at www.cost.esf.org.

Questionnaire on Disability Access on Passenger Ships

Company Name _____
 Number of Passenger Ships operating to and from Ireland _____
 Name(s) of Passenger Ship(s) _____

Question Nr.	Question	Response
1	Does your company have a specific written policy with regard to carriage of people with disabilities? If so please provide a copy of the policy.	
2	If not, does your company have a non-written policy in this area? If so, please provide details.	
3	Do any of your staff undergo specific disability training e.g. disability awareness training? If so please provide details.	
4	Are there written plans and procedures for the staff of your company to follow when dealing with people with disabilities? Please specify/supply copies of the plan/procedures.	
5	What measures, physical or otherwise including communications, to address the issue of disability access both on board the vessel(s) and in the shore facilities used by the vessel(s)? Please provide details.	
6	Has your company a specific booking policy/information on web/leaflets aimed at people with disabilities.	
7	Specifically what type of disabilities does your plans, procedures, measures and training address?	
8	Is there a disability officer within your company to oversee disability access provisions and to deal with complaints from people with disabilities? If so, please provide contact details.	
9	Do you have a complaints procedure, which people with disabilities can access? If so, please provide details.	
10	What specific provisions have been made for emergency situation handling of people with disabilities?	
11	Is your company and are your staff familiar with IMO MSC Circular 735. ¹ To what extent is this document used as a guide in the development of measures, procedures, plans and training?	

¹ IMO MSC Circular 735 of 24 June 1996 entitled "Recommendation on the design and operation of passenger ships to respond to elderly and disabled persons' needs"

The Ombudsman's Guide to Internal Complaints Systems

Settling Complaints

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Foreword

Many of the complaints which come to my Office result from a breakdown in communications between public bodies and their clients. Usually these complaints are quickly resolved when the facts, evidence or circumstances are established. In most cases the outcome is either a reversal of the original decision of the public body or an acceptance on the part of the complainant that the decision in respect of his or her case is correct.

Many complaints could and should be easily and swiftly settled at a very early stage by public bodies themselves. The number of relatively uncomplicated complaints which my Office receives could be reduced if public bodies were to establish efficient and credible internal complaints handling systems. I have statutory authority to examine a complaint only where the complainant has taken reasonable steps to seek redress, and has failed to obtain it. Normally I require a complainant, if he or she has not already done so, to ask the public body in question to review the original decision. In many cases this review is carried out by the same official who made the original decision and the complainant often remains dissatisfied and returns to my Office. However, internal complaints systems have been set up by some

public bodies to deal directly with complaints from the public. Most notable of these are the Social Welfare Appeals Office, the Complaint Appeals Office in the Eastern Health Board and the Headage and Premia Appeals Unit in the Department of Agriculture and Food. In general these complaint systems enable a particular decision to be reviewed by a person other than the original decision maker and provide a readily available and easily accessible means whereby disputes, misunderstandings and mistakes can be resolved. These systems have the added advantage that, if the original decision is upheld, the complainant is informed of his or her right to refer the matter to my Office. This step is not always taken by public bodies generally within my remit although I would encourage them to do so.

Other public bodies are now considering setting up internal complaints systems under the Government sponsored Strategic Management Initiative with its strong emphasis on citizens and their needs as clients or consumers of public services. Government Departments and Offices are committed to the principles of quality customer care and have agreed to establish well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use systems for dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided. They have also agreed to introduce formalised systems of redress for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions.

In my 1996 Annual Report, I published a guide to standards of best practice for public servants in their dealings with the public. I was very pleased by the positive response to the guide from the public service and I am aware that many public bodies have incorporated the standards into their customer service plans. In the guide I suggested that, in order to deal fairly with people, an internal review system was required so that adverse decisions could be looked at again and reviewed by someone not involved in the making of the first decision. Good complaints handling must be accepted as an integral part of customer care. In conjunction with my 1997 report, I am publishing this guide on internal complaints systems. In my report, I illustrate the value and features of such systems by reference to cases which my Office has examined. I hope that this guide will be of assistance to public bodies in their efforts to improve the quality of the service which they provide. The guide is cast in general terms and is intended to be advisory rather than prescriptive. While it contains a number of practical suggestions, each public body should aim to devise a system best suited to its own needs.

1. The benefits of having an internal complaints system

In the past, public bodies may have considered complaints as irritants interfering with their normal work and/or as criticisms of their decisions against which they had to defend themselves. While there is greater emphasis nowadays on improving the quality of service, the standards of service provided for the public are usually set by the public bodies themselves and they also devise the systems and procedures for achieving these standards. The effectiveness of these procedures and the relevance of the standards set can, however, be judged or assessed properly only by reference to the very people - the public - for whom the service is provided. A good internal complaints system will provide essential feedback from the public and will benefit the body by:-

- * providing a means through which the public can tell the body how well it is doing in its efforts to provide an improved quality service;
- * serving as a quick and efficient means of resolving difficulties which may arise;
- * avoiding the extra time and cost involved in further appeals;
- * promoting good relations and communications with the public;
- * encouraging a positive attitude towards the administrative system;
- * indicating where problems exist in the provision of services;
- * highlighting shortcomings in the administrative system and areas which might need improvement and
- * helping the public body to avoid unfavourable publicity.

The public will also benefit because the system will:-

- * provide a quick, easy, and cost-effective means of resolving difficulties with public bodies and obtaining redress where necessary;
- * foster a greater sense of inclusiveness or partnership on their part with the public service;
- * promote a sense of empowerment in the individual by enabling him or her to have a role in contributing to improvements in the public service and
- * give them the assurance that their complaints are being taken seriously and that they are being treated properly, fairly and impartially.

2. Preparations for setting up an internal complaints system

Some public bodies may be inclined to view internal complaints systems as an inconvenience and may merely go through the motions in order to be seen to be doing what is deemed to be a "good thing" for their image. This attitude and approach should be seen for what it is - a lost

opportunity. There are real and tangible benefits to be gained from having an effective internal complaints system but, for maximum benefit, certain essential conditions have to be met. These include:

Commitment by Management

Internal complaints systems will not be effective if they do not have the commitment of the organisation at management level. A commitment to the principle that dealing effectively with complaints from the public is an integral part of the service provided should underpin the body's mission statement. Management should foster a positive and receptive attitude to complaints. The ability to acknowledge that a mistake was made should be seen as a strength rather than a weakness on the part of the body concerned.

Commitment by Staff

Commitment by staff within the organisation is vital. All staff, and particularly those in the front line, should be encouraged to take a positive attitude to complaints. Staff is more likely to do so if they know that there is top level commitment to complaints handling and if they are fully involved in the setting up of the system.

Provision of Resources

The complaints system will soon lose the confidence of the public if it cannot deliver on what it promises. It must be provided with the resources, both material and human, to enable it to achieve results. Management must ensure that accommodation, equipment and finances are appropriate and that the staff are highly motivated.

Training

In addition to being highly motivated, the staff involved should have specialised training in customer care, interpersonal and communications skills. Initial training in basic skills and techniques should be complemented by in-service training to enable staff to keep up to date with new advances in the area of complaint handling.

Clear Objectives

The success of any complaints system usually depends on those involved in its operation being clear as to what it is intended to achieve. It would be useful at the initial stages of

setting up a system to define what a complaint is. The term 'complaint' may cover a wide range of items not all of which may be appropriate to the complaints handling system, e.g. requests for information or matters for which there is a statutory right of appeal, for example, a planning appeal. In this context a working definition might be that a complaint exists where:-

'a decision or action is taken which relates to the provision of a service or the performance of a function which, it is claimed, is not in accordance with the rules, practice or policy of the organisation or the generally accepted principles of equity and good administrative practice and which adversely affects the person concerned'

This definition is not intended to be comprehensive but public bodies might consider using it as a starting point in the context of their own structure and the services they provide. It may also be necessary to review the definition as the complaints system develops.

3. Setting up and operating the complaints system

Structure

Much will depend on the size of the public body, its staffing structure and the nature of the services being provided. Some bodies may find it worthwhile to have identifiable, designated complaint co-ordinators who will refer initial complaints from the public to the head of the unit or section responsible for the original decision. If the complaint is not resolved there the co-ordinator will refer it to the internal complaints handling unit. Either the co-ordinator or the complaints unit should be responsible for monitoring progress and keeping the complainants up-to-date on developments.

The internal complaints unit should be headed by a senior officer in the organisation and should not have any direct working involvement in the areas where the decisions which give rise to complaints are made. The officer should have the authority to alter the original decision if the circumstances suggest that this is warranted, to award redress in appropriate cases and to determine the parameters within which other staff might have the authority to provide redress.

Publicity

The maximum amount of publicity should be given to the setting up of the complaints system. This can be done in a number of ways, for example:-

- including a reference to the system in the body's information leaflets and application forms;
- advertising the availability of the system in the body's public offices, in local papers and on radio and
- arranging information sessions with interest groups.

In particular, the public should feel encouraged to complain; they should believe that it is worthwhile complaining and they should be assured that they will not be victimised as a result of any complaint they make.

Consultation

Complaints arise from the interaction of those providing the service and those for whom the service is being provided. A complaints system will not be effective without prior consultation with these two participants in the system. There should be consultation with staff across the public body and their representative associations or trade unions on the one hand and with the public and specific interest groups on the other. It is important to build up public confidence in the system by guaranteeing fair and impartial treatment.

Review

A good complaints system needs to respond to changing circumstances and events. It needs to be continually reviewed by the person with ultimate responsibility for its organisation and management. The system should be sensitive to factors which can affect its smooth running e.g. maintenance of time schedules for dealing with complaints, staff mobility, morale and the emergence of new sources of complaints of which management may not be aware.

4. The essential features of a good internal complaints system

A good system should be:

Accessible

Simple instructions about how to make a complaint should be available to the public. These should clearly identify the designated complaint handlers and explain how they will operate. The various ways in which a complaint may be made should be stated. Suitable accommodation should be provided for receiving and interviewing complainants who wish to

make a complaint in person. Complainants who wish to pursue their complaints using the Irish language should be catered for and the needs of those, for example, with disabilities and literacy difficulties should be given careful consideration. Accessibility will be improved if FREEFONE and Lo-call numbers and freepost facilities are also available. At all times it should be emphasised that complaints are welcome by the public body as a means of improving the quality of service provided.

Simple

The various stages in the complaint handling process should be kept to a minimum with each stage in the process clearly identified. It is essential that internal disputes about the handling of the complaint do not develop. When the receipt of a complaint is being acknowledged, an outline of the various stages the complaint will go through should be sent to the complainant.

Speedy

Targets should be set for acknowledging receipt of complaints and the completion of their examination. Where it is not possible to meet the target for completion, interim letters, updating the complainant on progress, should be issued.

Fair and Independent

Complaints, which have not been resolved by the original decision maker, should be examined objectively by persons not involved with the original decisions or actions. The examination should have regard not only to the rules governing the scheme but also to considerations of equity and good administrative practice. In particular, the principles outlined in the Ombudsman's Guide to Standards of Best Practice for Public Servants (circulated with his 1996 Annual Report) should be taken into account.

Confidential and Impartial

All complaints should be treated in confidence (except where the complainant wishes otherwise). The public should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their future dealings and contacts with the body concerned. Correspondence about the complaint should be filed separately from other information held on the complainant as a client of the body.

Effective

The complaints system should have the authority to address all the issues giving rise to the complaint. Where the examination finds that the fault lies with the public body, the system must have the power to provide appropriate redress. A complainant who remains dissatisfied should be advised of his or her right to refer the case to the Ombudsman where appropriate.

Flexible

While rules are necessary to ensure consistency, too much rigidity should be avoided and there should be a degree of discretion given to those involved in the system to adjust to the changing needs and demands of complainants and to adapt to new situations.

5. Achieving and assessing the benefits

A public body should expect its internal complaints system to: -

- achieve a satisfactory, speedy and low-cost resolution of complaints from service users;
- provide accurate information for management on the quality of the services provided and whether the correct services are being provided and
- enable changes to be made in procedures and systems to ensure that similar complaints do not continue to arise.

Members of the public will expect that they will receive:-

- a fair hearing and a clear explanation of the outcome even if it is not favourable to them;
- an appropriate remedy where it is found that they were not treated fairly or properly and
- an assurance that other people will be spared the adverse affect which complainants may have suffered.

Remedies

The appropriate remedy should aim, in so far as this is possible, to restore the complainant to the position he or she would have been in had things not gone wrong. In many instances, a letter of apology may be sufficient. In some cases a detailed explanation of the basis for the action or decision may be needed. In other cases a change in procedures which would benefit clients generally may be appropriate. Financial compensation may sometimes be warranted

in cases, for example, where specific financial losses have been incurred. If there has been a delay in the receipt of a payment, the payment of interest may arise. Where the complainant has had to spend a considerable amount of time in pursuing the matter, payment in recognition of "time and trouble" may need to be considered. Compensation for exceptional worry, distress or inconvenience caused to the complainant should also be recognised.

To avoid delay in the provision of remedies, public bodies should delegate to staff at appropriate levels the power to award redress within predetermined parameters. Front line staff, in particular, as the first point of contact with the public in service delivery and receipt of complaints, should have some discretion within specified limits to settle complaints.

Changes in procedures

Where a complaint has been resolved in favour of a complainant, the result should be noted for reference in similar cases. If a particular issue becomes a regular source of complaint, a review of the operation of the relevant scheme might be undertaken. The complaints unit should build up data on the operation of different schemes and the volume of complaints so that accurate feedback can be given. The use of computerised complaints databases should be considered.

Reports

To ensure accountability and to enable the benefits to be assessed, complaint handling units should publish reports on their activities at least on an annual basis. These reports should detail how the system performed during the year by reference to set targets. Such reports have a useful role to play in building up public confidence in the system and should be made widely available within the organisation and circulated to user groups and other interested parties.

The Ombudsman's Guide to the Provision of Redress

(This Guide was published by the Ombudsman with his Annual Report for 2001)

Redress - Getting it wrong and putting it right

The Ombudsman's Guide to the provision of redress when public bodies make mistakes in their dealings with the citizen

Where a person has been wronged by a public body, that body should provide appropriate redress. This leaflet gives some very broad guidelines on the provision of redress to help public servants develop a consistent approach towards remedies.

Redress and public administration

Public bodies deliver a vast range of services and benefits to the citizen. Even where people are not entitled to a particular service or benefit, they are entitled to be told the reasons why they do not qualify and be informed of alternative services, where possible. Where they may be entitled to the service or benefit but a delay in the decision cannot be avoided, they should be told when the decision is likely to be made. In cases of need, other possibilities for short-term relief may have to be examined. Public service providers must always bear in mind that citizens usually do not have the option of taking their business elsewhere. Citizens are entitled to proper, fair, impartial and expeditious treatment by public bodies. Where there is a shortfall in these standards, and the fault lies with the public body, it should remedy the shortfall through the provision of redress. The general rule of thumb should be to put the person back into the position he/she would have been in if the public body had acted properly.

Apologies and explanations

When it turns out that the service or benefit has been wrongly denied or delayed, the public body should always give a detailed explanation and/or apology. Explanations and apologies should include the following:

- the reasons why the public body got it wrong;
- an apology for any hurt, inconvenience or hardship caused;
- an acceptance of responsibility for the fault which has occurred;
- an undertaking to make good any loss which may have resulted;
- an acceptance that, where time limits apply, any undue delay on the part of the public body will be discounted where possible.

When should compensation be paid?

In some cases an action (including an inaction) of a public body wrongly taken may affect a person in a manner which can easily be quantified and payment of compensation may be appropriate. Compensation may be considered for:

- **Financial Loss** - where there is a specific amount of money denied to a person as a result of the action, compensation should make good the specific loss which has occurred.
- **Loss of purchasing power** - where refunds or payments of benefits have been delayed or withheld over an unduly extended period of time as a result of an error, misinterpretation, oversight or other similar action on the part of a public body.
- **Loss of a non-monetary benefit or service** - where costs are incurred by a person in securing alternative services for non-monetary benefits or services normally provided by public bodies, e.g., school transport, housing repairs, refuse and water supply, hospital services, facilities for people with disabilities etc. and where these are initially denied or delayed and subsequently restored or granted.
- **Loss of opportunity** – where the action of a public body has the effect of preventing an eligible person from taking advantage of special arrangements or participating in a particular scheme or has resulted in the loss of an opportunity to exercise a right of appeal.
- **Costs incurred** - where a person complains or appeals he/she may need to seek professional advice, for example, from a solicitor, accountant, architect or engineer in order to vindicate his or her position. If, at the end of this process, the decision of the body is reversed or varied, the question of refunding costs incurred in obtaining professional advice should form part of the public body's redress proposals. The key consideration

should be whether the costs arose as a result of an unreasonable attitude by the public body.

- ***Time and trouble*** – where writing letters, making telephone calls, carrying out interviews, research and getting legal or other professional advice are integral parts of the complaint/appeal process, these and other related activities involve time and trouble on the part of the complainant. Where it becomes clear that the complainant had to go to unusual lengths or suffered distress in making his/her case, compensation in the form of payments for time and trouble reasonably expended in pursuing the complaint, and associated vouched costs, should form part of the redress proposals.

Keeping it Right

An effective complaints system which offers a range of timely and appropriate remedies will save the public body time and money in the long run. It will enhance the quality of service to its clients, it will have a positive effect on staff morale and improve the body's relations with the citizen. It will also provide useful feedback to the body and enable it to review procedures and systems which may be giving rise to complaints.

**EU Guidelines on the Safety Rules and Standards for
Passenger Ships**

**Annex III - Guidelines for Safety Requirements for
Passenger Ships and High-Speed Passenger Craft for
Persons with Reduced Mobility.**

ANNEX

"ANNEX III

GUIDELINES FOR SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR PASSENGER SHIPS AND HIGH-SPEED PASSENGER CRAFT FOR PERSONS WITH REDUCED MOBILITY

(as referred to in Article 6b)

In applying the guidelines of this Annex, Member States shall follow the IMO circular MSC/735 of 24 June 1996 entitled "Recommendation on the design and operation of passenger ships to respond to elderly and disabled persons' needs".

1. Access to the ship

The ships should be constructed and equipped in such a way that a person with reduced mobility can embark and disembark easily and safely, and can be ensured access between decks, either unassisted or by means of ramps, elevators or lifts. Directions to such access should be posted at the other accesses to the ship and at other appropriate locations throughout the ship.

2. Signs

Signs provided on a ship to aid passengers should be accessible and easy to read for persons with reduced mobility, (including persons with sensory disabilities), and be positioned at key points.

3. Means to communicate messages

The operator should have the means onboard the vessel visually and verbally to provide announcements, such as those regarding delays, schedule changes and on-board services, to persons with various forms of reduced mobility.

4. Alarm

The alarm system and alarm buttons must be designed so as to be accessible by and to alert all passengers with reduced mobility, including persons with sensory disabilities and persons with learning disabilities.

5. Additional requirements ensuring mobility inside the ship

Handrails, corridors and passageways, doorways and doors shall accommodate the movement of a person in a wheelchair. Elevators, vehicle decks, passenger lounges, accommodation and washrooms shall be designed in order to be accessible in a reasonable and proportionate manner to persons with reduced mobility."

Summary of Sectoral Plan Targets

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
Bus			
Urban Bus Services			
Make all urban buses accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only purchase low-floor, wheelchair accessible buses that have on-board features to assist people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. 2. Introduce accessible buses on a route-by-route basis to maximise the effectiveness of these vehicles for 	Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Private Operators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Currently over 50% of the Bus Átha Cliath fleet is composed of low-floor, wheelchair accessible buses and in excess of 50 routes are now served by such buses. BAC envisages that its entire fleet will be composed of such buses by 2012 and the company will continue to introduce new accessible buses on a route-by-route basis as agreed with the Public Transport Accessibility Committee.

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
	<p>people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.</p>		<p>2. Practically 100% of Bus Éireann's fleet in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford is composed of low-floor, wheelchair accessible buses. The company will continue to purchase only accessible buses as the fleet is replaced and expanded over time.</p> <p>3. In other urban areas currently served with smaller buses that are not wheelchair accessible, Bus Éireann's policy is to replace those vehicles with wheelchair accessible buses. It is envisaged that this process will be completed by 2012.</p> <p>4. It is envisaged that any licensed scheduled bus services run by private operators in the main urban areas will be</p>

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			provided by low-floor, wheelchair accessible buses by 2012.
Bus Stops			
Bring all bus stops up to accessibility standard.	Install wheelchair accessible Hard Stands together with Kassel Kerbing as well as Shelters with seating and good lighting. Ensure that the bus shelter and bus stop pole incorporate appropriate colour contrasts and are orientated to facilitate deployment of ramps and movement of wheelchairs.	Local Authorities, An Garda Siochána, Bus Operators, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the National Roads Authority and the Department of Transport.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some 750 bus stops have already been upgraded in the Greater Dublin Area and work in that regard is on-going. Bus stops are being upgraded systematically on routes that form part of the Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) Programme. Bus stops are also being upgraded in the provincial cities in conjunction with the construction of QBCs/Green Routes. 2. The Department of Transport will continue its policy of funding accessibility upgrades to bus stops in the Greater Dublin Area and on QBCs/Green

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			<p>Routes in all the provincial cities as well as at appropriate stops on all National Roads and will explore ways in which to accelerate the provision of upgraded bus stops. The objective is to double the length of the QBC network in the Greater Dublin Area by end 2009.</p> <p>3. The Department of Transport has already met with officials of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government with a view to ensuring co-ordination of upgrading by local authorities of bus stops on roads where wheelchair accessible buses are in service or are being phased in.</p>

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
Inter-City Coach Services			
Replace inaccessible coaches with coaches that are accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	Only purchase wheelchair accessible coaches that have on-board features to assist people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	Bus Éireann and Private Operators	This Plan envisages that the entire scheduled service coach fleet in Ireland will have been replaced by wheelchair accessible coaches by 2015.
Bus Stations			
Make all bus stations accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retro-fit existing bus stations or completely rebuild them. 2. Ensure that accessibility for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments is a core feature in the design and construction of new bus stations. 	Bus Éireann	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With the exception of those in Limerick and Galway it is envisaged that all of Bus Éireann's bus stations will have been brought up to accessibility standards by end 2007. 2. Preparatory work on a major joint bus/rail station development in Limerick is well advanced and completion is expected by 2008. 3. Galway will also will entail a combined

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			<p>bus/rail station development. However, it will also form part of a wider re-development project in Galway City. A date for completion is currently not available.</p>
Illegal Parking			
<p>Ensure that access to bus stops and disabled parking bays is not obstructed by illegal parking.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Substantially increase fixed charge fines for such offences. 2. Better enforcement. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Department of Transport. 2. An Garda Síochána and Local Authority Traffic Wardens. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Effective from 3 April 2006, the Minister of Transport has increased the following fixed charge fines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Illegally parking a vehicle other than a bus at a bus stop - €40 (was €19). b) Illegally parking a vehicle in a disabled person's parking bay - €80 (was €19). 2. The Department of Transport will liaise with An Garda Síochána and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and local Government

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			concerning improved enforcement.
Heavy Rail			
Suburban Passenger Trains			
Make all suburban trains accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	Only purchase wheelchair accessible trains that have on-board features to assist people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	Iarnród Éireann	Apart from the refurbishment work to some older DART (electric) carriages to be completed in 2007, all DART carriages on the Dublin suburban rail network are already accessible. The diesel railcars on suburban rail serving Dublin and Cork are already accessible.
Inter-City Passenger Trains			
Make all Inter-City passenger trains accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	Only purchase wheelchair accessible trains that have on-board features to assist people with mobility, sensory and cognitive	Iarnród Éireann	Iarnród Éireann is in the process of replacing the vast bulk of its Inter-City passenger rolling stock. All of this new rolling stock is being specified to the UK Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations. Practically all

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
	impairments.		inter-urban passenger rail services will be provided with this rolling stock by 2009.
Railway Stations			
Make all railway stations accessible to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that all new railway stations are designed and constructed in accordance with accessibility standards/best international practice. 2. Retro-fit existing stations in accordance with accessibility standards/best international practice. 	Iarnród Éireann	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Since 2000, all new railway stations have been designed and constructed in accordance with accessibility standards/best international practice. 2. An accessibility refurbishment programme to make the existing railway stations accessible is underway on a railway line by railway line basis. Physical work on the Dublin-Cork line is about to begin while design work for stations on the Dublin-Dundalk and Dublin Galway lines will be undertaken in 2006. Given the

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			<p>nature of many of our railway stations, this will require a significant amount of work. It is anticipated that this programme will be completed before 2015. Practically all stations on the Dublin suburban DART line have already been upgraded.</p>
Light Rail			
<p>Dublin's light rail service, LUAS, is an accessible service and has been designed from the outset to be so.</p>		<p>The Railway Procurement Agency and Veolia Transport.</p>	<p>While the existing service is already accessible, developments in technology and best international practice are being monitored with a view to improving the Luas system. Accessibility will be a core design feature of any extensions to the system.</p>
Metro			
<p>Ensure that accessibility for people with mobility, sensory and</p>	<p>1. From the outset, incorporate the most up-to-date accessibility</p>	<p>Railway Procurement Agency, Department of</p>	<p>Transport 21 envisages that:- 1. METRO North (St. Stephens Green via</p>

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
cognitive impairments is a core design feature of the system.	provisions. 2. Liaise with representatives of disability organisations in designing the system.	Transport, Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government and the Public Transport Accessibility Committee.	Dublin Airport to Swords) will be completed by 2012. 2. METRO West (linking Tallaght Luas and METRO North) will be completed by 2014.
Rural Transport Initiative			
Accessibility for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments must continue to be a core design feature of the RTI post 2006.	Ensure that one of the principal criteria for the assessment of funding applications under the RTI is the degree to which transport accessibility for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments is to be addressed.	Department of Transport, Pobal, Public Transport Partnership Forum Subgroup on Rural Public Transport & the Public Transport Needs of Older People and the Public Transport Accessibility Committee.	Criteria to be set by end 2006 following a wide public consultation process.

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
Taxis and Hackneys			
<p>Improve the accessibility of taxis and hackneys for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.</p>	<p>Ensure that there is adequate provision of taxi and hackney services that are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accessible, 2. Available, and 3. Affordable. 	<p>Commission for Taxi Regulation, Department of Transport, Local Authorities, Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Department of Finance and the Department of Social & Family Affairs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dispatch centres will be required to accept bookings in accessible formats such as fax, sms and email from September 2007. 2. The Commission will develop a database of accessible SPSVs. Details including contact details will be made available on the Commission's website and in Braille, large print and audiotape from December 2006. 3. The Commission's offices and communications systems will be accessible and all documents and information will be available in accessible formats from the end of 2006. 4. The Commission will produce a Passengers

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			<p>Guide, a Customer Charter of Rights and Responsibilities and fare information in a range of accessible formats including Braille, large print and audio tape from September 2006.</p> <p>5. The Commission will put in place a user friendly and accessible complaints system that will be accessible by phone, fax and email from September 2006.</p> <p>6. The Commission will carry out an audit of taxi ranks and develop best practice guidelines for local authorities to assist in the provision of accessible ranks in 2007. The provision and location of taxi ranks will remain the responsibility of the relevant local authority.</p> <p>7. Drivers will be required to carry</p>

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			<p>assistance/guide dogs and mobility aids when requested. Additional charges for these will not apply from September 2006.</p> <p>8. The Commission will publish a consultation paper on vehicle standards in mid-2006 with a view to putting the new standards in place commencing in 2007.</p> <p>9. The Commission will develop a system to monitor the level and quality of services available to people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments and carry out ongoing access audits on an annual basis from 2007.</p> <p>10. To address the affordability issue, the Commission, in conjunction with the Department of</p>

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			<p>Transport and the Department of Social & Family Affairs and other stakeholders, will investigate the possibility of putting in place some form of subsidy or assistance on a pilot basis.</p> <p>11. A new licence category for wheelchair accessible hackneys will be introduced by the Commission early in 2007.</p>
Air Travel			
<p>Implementation of the Regulation of the European Council and the European Parliament setting out the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when they travel by air.</p>	<p>Ensure that the Regulation is implemented in Ireland.</p>	<p>Department of Transport</p>	<p>EU Regulation:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formally adopted on 9 June 2006. 2. Article 3 (Prevention of refusal of carriage) and Article 4 (Derogations, special conditions and information) of the Regulation will come into effect 1 year after adoption. 3. Remainder of the

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			Regulation will come into effect 2 years after adoption.
Maritime Passenger Transport			
Review the current accessibility state of maritime passenger transport services and develop action plans to address any deficiencies identified where practicable.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Audit existing port facilities. 2. Develop a data base of accessibility levels onboard relevant vessels. 3. Establish a forum (to include representatives of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments) which will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess existing standards; - Identify improvements needed; - Prepare remedial action plans as 	Department of Transport, port authorities, marine passenger service providers, National Disability Authority and representatives of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each port authority to undertake an independent accessibility audit of the passenger facilities at its port within six months of the Department's Sectoral Plan coming into force. 2. Each port authority to develop an implementation plan for remedial actions within three months of the completion of the accessibility audit of the passenger facilities at its port. 3. A Forum to be established by end 2006 (see disability user group targets below)

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
	necessary		
Disability Awareness Training			
Improvements to infrastructure and vehicles must be augmented by appropriate training if public transport services are to become as accessible as possible for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.	Ensure that all providers of public transport services put in place appropriate disability awareness training for both staff and management.	Department of Transport, the Public Transport Accessibility Committee and various providers of public transport services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disability awareness training already underway in Bus Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath, Iarnród Éireann, Railway Procurement Agency and Veolia Transport. 2. Disability awareness training for Department of Transport staff to begin in May 2006. 3. Provision of Disability awareness training for private bus/coach operators of public transport services to be addressed 2006/2007. 4. The Commission for Taxi Regulation will put in place a mandatory Skills Development

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
			<p>Programme that will have as a core element disability awareness and training relevant to the provision of a service for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. The training will be mandatory for all new SPSV drivers from 2007 and will be a requirement for all existing SPSV drivers from 2008.</p>
Disability User Groups			
<p>Providers of public transport services should be advised by Disability User Groups in the design and provision of their services.</p>	<p>Ensure that all major providers of public transport services establish a disability user group to advise them and that other providers of public transport services have access to and consult with a mode/service specific disability</p>	<p>Department of Transport, the Public Transport Accessibility Committee and various providers of public transport services.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disability user groups have already been established by Bus Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath, Iarnród Éireann, Railway Procurement Agency / Veolia Transport and by the Dublin Airport Authority. 2. In 2006, the Department of Transport will establish

What needs to be done?	How can it be done?	Who is going to do it?	When will it be done?
	user group.		<p>a forum to oversee the implementation and review of the Maritime Passenger Transport section of the Sectoral Plan. Representatives of the Department, port authorities, marine passenger service providers, National Disability Authority and people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments will comprise the forum.</p> <p>3. In 2006, the Commission for Taxi Regulation will establish a small public service vehicles users group which will include people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments.</p> <p>4. Consideration to be given to the appropriate formats of disability user groups for other private transport operators.</p>

