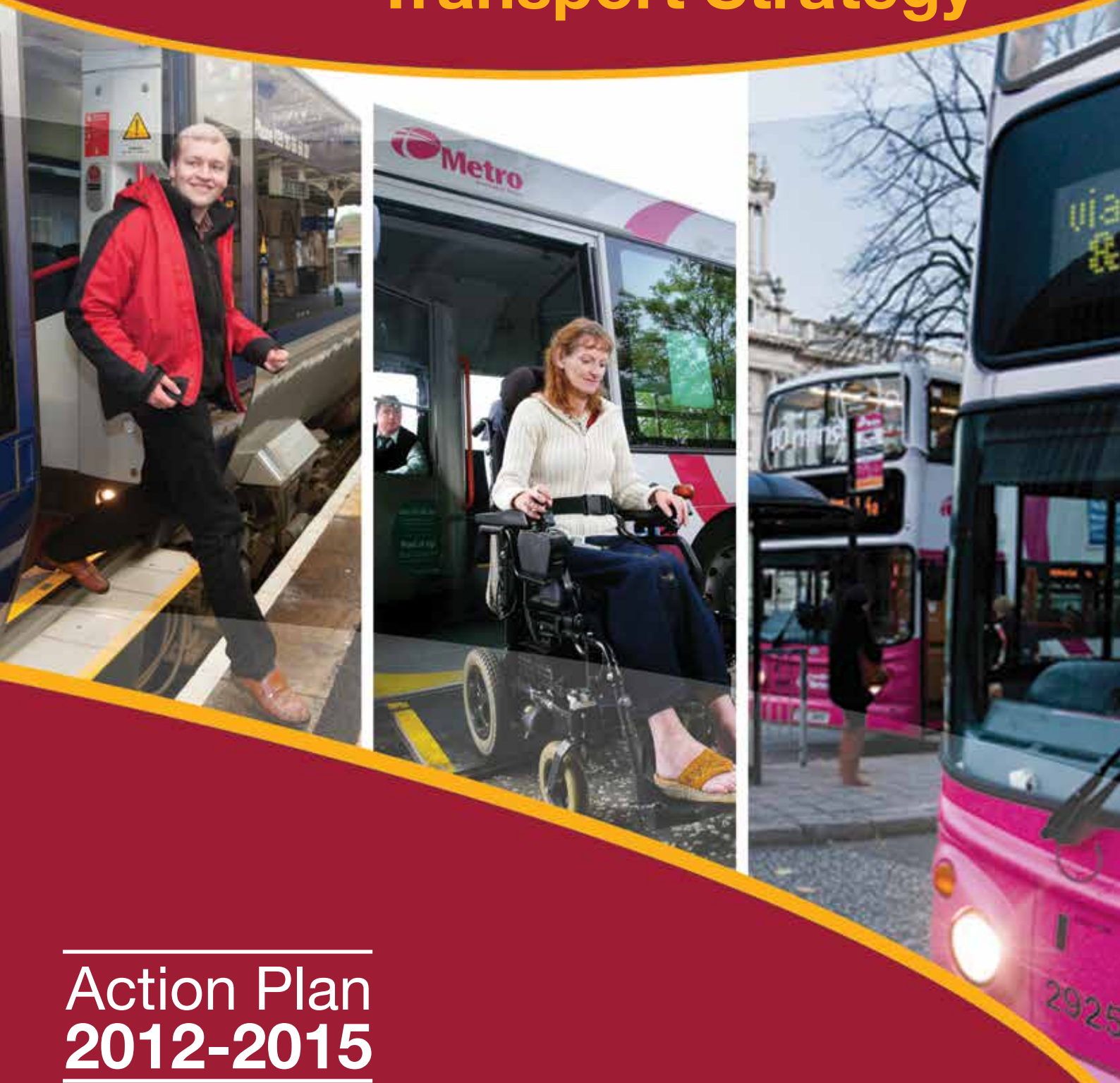


Accessible Transport Strategy



**Action Plan
2012-2015**

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The document is also available on the following Internet address in both audio and written formats: www.drdni.gov.uk/ats

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Glossary

ATS	Accessible Transport Strategy
BIC	British Irish Council
BMTP	Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan
CTA	Community Transport Association
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DPTAC	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
DRD	Department for Regional Development
ECNI	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
IMTAC	Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee
PSR	Public Service Regulations
PTR	Public Transport Reform
RNIB	Royal National Institute for the Blind
RTP	Rural Transport Partnerships
RTS	Regional Transportation Strategy
SNI	Shopmobility Northern Ireland
SRTP	Sub-Regional Transport Plan
STB	Sustainable Transport Branch
TFGD	Transport Finance & Governance Division
TPD	Transport Projects Division, DRD
TPSLD	Transport Policy, Strategy & Legislation Division
Vol Sec	Voluntary Sector
VSB	Voluntary Services Bureau

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1 . Chapter 1

1 . 1 Introduction

In 2005 the Department for Regional Development published the Accessible Transport Strategy. This Strategy sought to address the wide ranging barriers that impede the use of the transport system by older people and people with disabilities, barriers which prevent them from carrying out their everyday functions or leave them feeling excluded from activities that others are able to enjoy.

The Strategy has been implemented through a series of Action Plans and this document represents the fourth action plan which will complete the current Strategy. It identifies policies and actions to be progressed for the period 2012-2015.

1 . 2 Progress Achieved to Date

Since 2005, the accessibility of the transportation system in Northern Ireland has been radically transformed with improvements to the network, coupled with changes to legislation. Huge investment has also been made which has seen the introduction of over 800 new fully accessible buses and 43 new trains. A further 92 buses are expected to be introduced in the coming year.

The investment in the Translink bus fleet is making travel easier for many. The average age of the bus fleet has fallen from 9.6¹ years in 2007 to 6.59 in 2012. This investment has also offered improved access for many older and disabled people to the network with over 94% of the bus fleet now being wheelchair accessible, an increase of 47% from 2007.

The introduction of new services such as Door-2-Door and improvements to rural transport has enhanced access for older and disabled people in urban and rural areas. These improvements coupled with the introduction of the concessionary fares scheme has led to over 12 Million² journeys being made on the bus and rail network in 2011 by older and disabled people.

Many other improvements have also been made to the physical environment, the accessibility of bus and rail stations and to town and city centres.

The Department and others have also sought to improve the type and range of information available about the transport network. This includes providing information in a range of accessible formats including Braille, audio CD and easyread formats. In 2010, the Department launched a "Travel Safe Guide" for people with learning

¹ Source: Translink

² Source: Department for Regional Development

disabilities which provides information on how to stay safe when out and about and how to use the public transport network. Translink also produced an access guide which gives advice to older and disabled people on how to use its bus and rail services and what levels of service they can expect when travelling by public transport.

1 . 3 Future Context

Despite the progress which has been made in the transport network since 2005, more remains to be undertaken to fulfil the Strategy's vision. Too many disabled people and older people continue to find it difficult to get around because of the design of services, lack of suitable information and the cost of travel. Some have a lack of confidence to travel, with gaps in the travel chain still making services difficult to access.

In the years ahead it is likely that the economic climate will mean that there will not be the same level of funding available for transport that has been available. This will require us to focus on finding alternative and innovative solutions to meet the transport needs of older people and disabled people while continuing to maximise the investment already made. The actions included within this action plan will therefore be subject to appropriate appraisal, statutory processes and the availability of resources.

1 . 4 Remaining Barriers to Travel

The Strategy originally identified 5 specific areas where barriers existed to travel by older people and disabled people. These included: physical, attitudinal or psychological barriers, information provision, type of transport services available and their affordability. Extensive efforts have been made to reduce many of these barriers through the introduction of new training schemes, production of new accessible information and introduction of new accessible services.

This latest Action Plan seeks to further reduce the barriers to transport which remain for people with mental health and learning disabilities and older people. It has been developed as a result of discussions with disabled and older people's organisations, service providers and business areas across the Department. For each action the key stakeholders have been identified and a timescale for implementation provided.

1 . 5 Principles

In implementing the Strategy the following principles continue to be adopted:

Being proactive in our efforts to identify and remove barriers that prevent older people and people with disabilities accessing the transport system and to ensure that further barriers are not created;

Working in partnership with public, private, voluntary, community and statutory transport providers to improve transport services, making them easier to use and understand so that people's confidence about using them is increased;

Implementing best practice by making sure that we keep up-to-date with best practice and reflect this when developing policies and implementation plans;

Good consultation, working openly and in partnership with people who provide transportation services and facilities and those who use them. We strive to maintain good communication with older people and people with disabilities to listen to their views and exchange information; and

Value for money by targeting available resources towards initiatives that are affordable sustainable and which maximise the benefits for older people and people with disabilities.

1 . 6 Strategic Objectives

The Strategy identified seven Strategic Objectives and supporting policies that remain relevant. These include:

Strategic Objective 1

To manage effectively the transition to a fully accessible transport network in partnership with key stakeholders to maximise the benefits for older people and people with disabilities;

Strategic Objective 2

To ensure that the Disability Discrimination Act requirements are met and affordable adjustments are made so that accessibility for people with disabilities is a condition of public money being spent on all new public transport investment;

Strategic Objective 3

To develop, in partnership with key stakeholders, an integrated, fully accessible public transport system which will enable older people and people with disabilities to travel by bus, train, taxi, private and community transport services in safety and in comfort and move easily between these modes;

Strategic Objective 4

To enable older people and people with disabilities to travel safely using cars and other means of private transport;

Strategic Objective 5

To address attitudinal and psychological barriers that prevent or discourage older people or people with disabilities from using transport services and facilities that are available to them;

Strategic Objective 6

To ensure that information in a range of formats is available for all public transport services, including the full range of accessible services

supported by the Department, to enable people to plan and make these journeys easily; and

Strategic Objective 7

To provide help with travel costs to enable older people and people with disabilities to use the transport services available to them.

1 . 7 Monitoring

The Department retains responsibility for monitoring progress on the Strategy. The Department's Sustainable Transport Branch (STB) will continue to provide regular updates on progress on the implementation of the Strategy.

1 . 8 Regional Transportation Strategy Review

The Accessible Transport Strategy was developed within the context of the Regional Transportation Strategy published in 2002. The Regional Transportation Strategy has recently been reviewed and a New Approach to Regional Transportation has been developed. As part of the public consultation process, the Department proposed amalgamating some transport strategies, including the Accessible Transport Strategy, within the proposed new approach but continuing with targeted Action Plans.

1.9 Equality

A full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was carried out on the original Accessible Transport Strategy. This can be accessed on the DRD website at www.drdni.gov.uk.

1.10 Consultation

The ATS draft Action Plan 2012-2015 was subject to a full public consultation process. This process started on 19 January 2012 and concluded on 12 April 2012.

As part of this consultation process, the Department carried out a series of public meetings across Northern Ireland and advertised in the local press and on the Departmental website.

The Department is pleased with the number of responses to the consultation process. A list of those who responded is to be found at **Annex A**. A full description of the consultation events and a summary of the consultation returns can be found in Chapter 3 of this document. **Annex B** details each reply to the consultation and **Annex C** provides the Department's response to the issues raised and notes where any changes have been made to the Action Plan.

2 . Chapter 2 - Accessible Transport Strategy Action Plan 2012-2015

The following schedule sets out the actions for 2012-2015 to take forward each of the strategic objectives.

Strategic Objective One

To manage effectively the transition to a fully accessible transport network in partnership with key stakeholders to maximise the benefits for older people and people with disabilities.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
1.1	Continue to support IMTAC as the Department's main source of information for issues relating to the mobility of older people and people with disabilities.	DRD (TPSLD & TFGD)	Ongoing
1.2	DRD & Translink to continue to meet with older people and people with disabilities and their representatives when developing transport policies and projects.	DRD & Translink	Ongoing
1.3	DRD to benchmark current accessible transport initiatives with best practice elsewhere within the UK and beyond.	DRD (TPSLD)	Ongoing
1.4	Undertake research into the transport needs of younger disabled people and consider outcomes.	IMTAC & DRD (TPSLD)	2015
1.5	Undertake research into the transport needs of people with Autism and consider outcomes.	DRD (TPSLD)	2015
1.6	Explore with IMTAC and Translink how information provision on transportation issues can be improved for people with learning disabilities.	IMTAC, DRD (TPSLD) & Translink	2015
1.7	Provide a New Approach to Regional Transportation and a Policy Prioritisation Framework tool to take better account of accessibility issues when prioritising strategic transport spend.	DRD (TPSLD)	2013
1.8	Develop and implement an Active Travel Action Plan for the period 2012-2015.	DRD (TPSLD)	2013
1.9	Continue to provide disability awareness and equality training to all frontline staff including drivers, ticketing and station staff.	Translink	Ongoing
1.10	Undertake research to examine and assess the attitudes of disabled people and older people about accessible transport and any	IMTAC & DRD (TPSLD)	2013

Strategic Objective One

To manage effectively the transition to a fully accessible transport network in partnership with key stakeholders to maximise the benefits for older people and people with disabilities.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
	barriers to travel they face.		
1.11	Monitor progress of new taxi driver training legislation in 2013/14.	DRD (TPSLD)	2014

Strategic Objective Two

Ensure that Disability Discrimination Act requirements are met and affordable adjustments are made so that accessibility for people with disabilities is a condition of public money being spent on all new public transport investment.

Task	Description	Lead Organisation	Timescale
2.1	Engage with disability groups and organisations in relation to the design and implementation details for Belfast Rapid Transit to ensure that the system is accessible to all.	DRD (TPD)	2012-15
2.2	Engage with disability groups and organisations in relation to accessibility issues during the development and implementation of the "Belfast on the Move" transport masterplan.	DRD (TPD)	2012-13
2.3	Require trains undergoing substantial refurbishment to be made as compliant as possible with the passenger Reduced Mobility Technical Standard for Interoperability or the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations.	Translink	Ongoing
2.4	Continue to work towards achievement of RTS target of 100% accessibility target for the bus fleet	DRD Translink	Ongoing

Strategic Objective Three

To develop, in partnership with key stakeholders, an integrated, fully accessible public transport system which will enable older people and people with disabilities to travel by bus, train, taxi, private and community transport services in safety and in comfort and move easily between these modes

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
3.1	Develop regulations on access to Translink's passenger facilities by private and other operators.	DRD (PTR)	2013/14
3.2	Monitor the use of bus stops and implement improvements targeted at older people and disabled people.	Translink/ Roads Service	Ongoing
3.3	Introduce into operation 79 new buses across the network, which are fully compliant with PSV accessibility regulations. While there is no budget allocation in the next two years, the Department will continue to ensure that any bus purchases funded through the in-year bidding process are 100% compliant.	Translink	Achieved 2012
3.4	Introduce 35 new Goldline Express coaches which are wheelchair accessible (these buses are included in the overall target for new bus numbers in task 3.3).	Translink	Achieved 2012
3.5	Introduce 20 new trains which are fully compliant with the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations which will improve the frequency and capacity of rail services.	Translink	Achieved 2012
3.6	Review IMTAC's research into flexible forms of public transport for people with disabilities and older people.	DRD (TPSLD)	2012/13
3.7	Continue to improve the pedestrian accessibility of town and city centres as outlined in SRTP & BMTP.	DRD (Roads Service)	Ongoing

Strategic Objective Three

To develop, in partnership with key stakeholders, an integrated, fully accessible public transport system which will enable older people and people with disabilities to travel by bus, train, taxi, private and community transport services in safety and in comfort and move easily between these modes

Task	Description	Lead Organisation	Timescale
3.8	Review IMTAC's research conclusions highlighting the current barriers to the pedestrian environment and work with partners to identify areas for improvement.	DRD (TPSLD)	2013/14
3.9	Review of urban Door to Door to consider how resources can be targeted more effectively towards those most in need, while encouraging those who can to make greater use of mainstream public transport.	DRD (TPSLD & TFGD)	2012/13
3.10	Continue to roll out Puffin Controlled Crossings at newly identified sites and where existing crossings are being replaced to assist the safe crossing for road users, particularly older and disabled people.	DRD (Roads Service)	Ongoing
3.11	Introduce 9.96km of new footways throughout Northern Ireland by March 2013.	DRD (Roads Service)	2012/13
3.12	Roads Service will continue to implement a programme of pedestrian measures within the limitations of available funding to 2015.	DRD (Roads Service)	2015
3.13	Resurface 77km of existing footways to improve the walking environment by March 2013.	DRD (Roads Service)	Achieved 2012
3.14	Roads Service will continue to implement a programme of improvements to the walking environment within the limitations of available funding to 2015	DRD (Roads Service)	2015
3.15	Provide 49 new controlled pedestrian crossing facilities to improve the safety at road	DRD (Roads Service)	2012/13

Strategic Objective Three

To develop, in partnership with key stakeholders, an integrated, fully accessible public transport system which will enable older people and people with disabilities to travel by bus, train, taxi, private and community transport services in safety and in comfort and move easily between these modes

Task	Description	Lead Organisation	Timescale
3.15	Provide 49 new controlled pedestrian crossing facilities to improve the safety at road crossing by March 2013.	DRD (Roads Service)	2012/13
3.16	Roads Service will continue to implement a programme of controlled crossings within the limitations of available funding to 2015	DRD (Roads Service)	2015

Strategic Objective Four

To enable older people and people with disabilities to travel safely using cars and other means of private transport.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
4.1	Extended access times for Blue Badge Holders in pedestrian zones to be made permanent Nov/Dec 2012	DRD (Roads Service)	Complete
4.2	Continue to support an effective driver assessment service and driving school for people with disabilities through the NI Mobility Centre.	DRD (TFGD)	Ongoing
4.3	Review the adequacy of current parking provision for people with disabilities in car parks, owned by DRD, and improve where appropriate.	DRD (Roads Service)	Ongoing
4.4	Continue to support Shopmobility (NI) services.	DRD (TFGD)	Ongoing
4.5	Consider the impact on the eligibility criteria for a Blue Badge of any proposed changes to the Disability Living Allowance.	DRD (Roads Service)	2012/13

Strategic Objective Five

To address attitudinal and psychological barriers that prevent or discourage older people and people with disabilities from using transport services and facilities that are available to them.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
5.1	Provide improved information to the general public on the needs of older people and people with disabilities when using public transport.	Translink / DRD (TPSLD)	Ongoing
5.2	Apply enforcement procedures to deter car users from driving and parking in a manner that compromises access to the transport system for older people and people with disabilities.	DRD (Roads Service)	Ongoing
5.3	Blue Badge enforcement team to enforce the misuse of Blue Badges in all towns and cities.	DRD (Roads Service)	Ongoing
5.4	Translink marketing team to continue to reflect older people and disabled people in the promotion of services through accessible information, images and advertising and in timetabling information.	Translink	Ongoing
5.5	Continue to promote safety on and off buses by incorporating best practice design in the development of bus & rail stations.	Translink	Ongoing
5.6	Continue to tackle problem behaviour on buses which discourages travel by older or disabled people by working with schools and youth organisations through the Translink safety bus campaign.	Translink	Ongoing campaign
5.7	Review DRD staff training to ensure that its contents cover the needs of people with learning disabilities.	DRD (Training Branch)	Ongoing
5.8	Undertake research to examine options for improving the provision of travel training schemes.	DRD (TPSLD) & IMTAC	2015

Strategic Objective Five

To address attitudinal and psychological barriers that prevent or discourage older people and people with disabilities from using transport services and facilities that are available to them.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
5.9	Review the Transport Buddying scheme and consider recommendations.	DRD (TPSLD & TFGD)	2013/14

Strategic Objective Six

To ensure that information in a range of formats is available for all public transport services, including the full range of accessible services supported by the Department, to enable people to plan and make journeys easily.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
6.1	Consider options to improve the current Passenger Information Systems for buses following completion of the on bus Audio Visual Pilot and, subject to funding, assess any subsequent opportunities offered by new technology to enhance the existing systems.	DRD (TFGD & PTR) Translink	2013/14
6.2	Produce all new public information leaflets in a more accessible format.	DRD (Roads Service)	Ongoing
6.3	Review and reproduce Translink's Access Guide for bus and rail services.	Translink	April 2014
6.4	Work with Older People's Organisations to provide better information about accessible public transport to key services.	Translink Door 2 Door, RTP, IMTAC & CTA	Ongoing
6.5	Increase the availability of information for use by older people or people with disabilities through development of websites, real time information systems, social media services and mobile phone applications etc.	Translink	Ongoing
6.6	Continue to update the NI Direct Website to provide clear information relating to transport. Test this information provision with older people and people with disabilities.	DRD	Ongoing
6.7	Work with charities, schools and education authorities to distribute the Travel Safe Guide to people with learning disabilities to encourage independent travel.	DRD (TPSLD)	Ongoing

Strategic Objective Six

To ensure that information in a range of formats is available for all public transport services, including the full range of accessible services supported by the Department, to enable people to plan and make journeys easily.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Lead Organisation</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
6.8	Update and distribute transport factsheets regarding transport	IMTAC	Ongoing
6.9 (a)	Phase 1 -launch improved web information for disabled people travelling within the British Isles to Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Republic of Ireland.	DRD (TPSLD)	Achieved 2012
6.9 (b)	Phase 2 – launch improved web information for disabled people travelling within the British Isles to England, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey.	DRD (TPSLD)	2013

Strategic Objective Seven

To provide help with travel costs to enable older people and people with disabilities to use the transport services available to them.

Task	Description	Lead Organisation	Timescale
7.1	Consider the impact of the concessionary fares scheme and the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities following any proposed changes in the Disability Living Allowance.	DRD (TPSLD)	2012/13
7.2	Evaluate the Assisted Rural Transport Scheme in association with DARD.	DRD and Partners including TFGD	2013/14

3 . Chapter 3 – Consultation Process

This chapter summarises the consultation process of the ATS draft Action Plan 2012-2015 and the responses received.

Consultation Period

The ATS draft Action Plan 2012-2015 was published for consultation on 19 January 2012. Consultation concluded on 12 April 2012.

Document Distribution

The draft Action Plan was distributed to a range of stakeholders and individuals contained within the Department's Section 75 and IMTAC's contact lists.

Attached to the consultation document was a letter informing the consultees on how they could receive further information on the action plan and where alternative versions of the document were available.

A short questionnaire was also developed to help the draft Action Plan. Questions included were:

1. Over the recent years do you think the accessibility of the transport system has improved for all?
2. What are the remaining barriers to making public transport accessible for disabled people and older people?
3. How can these barriers be overcome?
4. The new ATS draft Action Plan includes new actions to improve the accessibility of transport, do you agree with them? Please provide reasons.
5. Are there any actions which have not been included within the draft Action Plan that you would like to see included?

Public Meetings

The Department and its advisors IMTAC hosted a number of public consultation meetings to discuss the issues contained within the

draft Action Plan. These meetings were held in March 2012 at the locations, dates and venues below:

Date	Location	Venue
6 March 2012	Londonderry	Millennium Forum
7 March 2012	Omagh	Community House
12 March 2012	Belfast	Grosvenor House

The meetings were publicised through local and regional newspapers, on the Department's website and through contacts from representative's disabled and older people's organisations.

Focus Groups

To supplement the public meetings the Department also undertook a variety of other methods to hear the views of specific individuals on their views of accessible transport. A number of focus groups were organised with young people with learning disabilities and discussions occurred with their representative organisations.

The Department also presented its action plan to the main IMTAC committee which is the main source of advice for the department on accessibility issues. The IMTAC committee has representation on a pan disability front and also includes representatives of older people.

Departmental officials also attended a Pensioners Parliament meeting in Cookstown organised by Age Sector Platform and the Disability Equality forum in Down District Council.

Over 170 people including disabled people, older people and their representative organisations attended public meetings or focus groups on the ATS. The meetings were facilitated by a mix of Departmental officials and IMTAC secretariat and Age Sector Platform representatives.

Alternative Formats

The Department provided the ATS draft Action Plan in a number of alternative formats including Braille, Easyread, Daisy, Audio CD and large print. The Department also trialled uploading an audio version of the action plan onto its website. Feedback from many disability groups welcomed this and suggested that an audio version of the document was particularly useful for people who had sight problems or those who cannot read.

Summary of Public Meetings Consultations

The public meetings held throughout March 2012 proved a good opportunity for the Department to hear at first hand the issues which the general public were facing when using the transport system here.

There was recognition from all groups that over the past number of years there had been a substantial improvement in the accessibility of the public transport network, particularly with the investment in new buses and trains, introduction of new transport services and the redevelopment of bus and rail stations.

Many attendees stated that they also rely heavily on a number of alternative services such as Door-2-Door, Rural Transport Partnerships and the Assisted Rural Transport Scheme.

A number of issues were raised at the meetings about the lack of availability of transport in rural areas and also of the Door-2-Door service. It was felt that this limited the opportunity for many older and disabled people to get out and about.

Strong support was highlighted for the continuation of the concessionary fares scheme with many older people who attended stating that they would not support this system being reduced or capped as suggested recently in the media. A number of consultees also queried why concessionary fares were limited to half fare for disabled people.

In general it was felt that there had been an improvement in the customer focus bus driver's attitudes recently however there were still instances of poor customer service especially when priority seating was not occupied by someone used and some interaction with disabled people.

Most consultees stated their concern at the cost of getting a taxi, particularly if one was required to carry a wheelchair.

The misuse of the blue badge scheme was also highlighted by many consultees as an issue. Incidences were recorded when badges were being used by non disabled people to avail of the priority parking.

An issue which was highlighted in most public meetings was that of introducing audio visual information on buses. It was reported that this system was very successful on the current train network and should be expanded onto buses. There was recognition that this would improve the accessibility of buses for many people who are

blind or partially sighted and would encourage them to use the transport network more often.

Many respondents also highlighted that problems still exist on the pedestrian environment for people who are disabled. In particular it was stated that narrow pavement, poor design and street furniture were causing particular problems for people a range of disabled people.

Finally it was felt that the range of information on transport had improved however there were still problems getting timetables in accessible formats in reasonable time.

Conclusions from Written Responses

A total of 23 written responses were received by the Department during the consultation period. Four of these responses were on the enclosed questionnaire. The other nineteen responses were in letter format. **Annex A** lists all those who submitted a written response to the consultation and **Annex B** details the issues that they raised.

All of the responses to the consultation were analysed against the questions asked and the departmental response considered. Where appropriate, amendments have been made to the draft ATS Action Plan. The Department's response and subsequent changes are set out in **Annex C**.

A breakdown of the profile of respondents is shown below:

Respondent	Number of Respondents
Service Providers	5
Voluntary Organisations	7
Individual	1
Local Authority/District Council	7
Public Body	2
Other	1
Total	23

ANNEX A

LIST OF CONSULTEE RETURNS

Consultee Reference Number	Consultee
1	NIJAC
2	Autism NI
3	Cedar Foundation
4	Paul Moules - Individual
5	National Disability Authority
6	Disability Action
7	Shopmobility
8	Newtownabbey Borough Council
9	Lisburn City Council
10	Consumer Council
11	Patient and Client Council
12	Strabane District Council
13	Omagh District Council
14	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
15	Equality NI
16	Guide Dogs for the Blind
17	IMTAC
18	Greater Belfast Senior Citizens Forum
19	Parkinson's UK
20	Ballymena Borough Council
21	Fermanagh District Council
22	Antrim Borough Council
23	British Medical Association Northern Ireland

Annex B

Detailed Responses to ATS Consultation

Consultee Reference Number	Consultee	Summary of Comments
1	NIJAC	Acknowledgement only.
2	Autism NI	As a result of the Autism Act (NI) 2011 the ATS Action plan should take account of social and communication barriers for those with Autism Spectrum disorder in accessing public services and public facilities. For example there should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved visual signage. • Clearly structured public areas delineated by function • Assessment based on social functioning not just mental and physical ability.
3	Cedar Foundation	The organisation supplied information on connexions, an action-research based project focused on reducing barriers for people with disabilities to access the local community to inform the consultation process.
4	Paul Moules - Individual	Concerns raised regarding duplication of services, lack of planning and lack of surveying.
5	National Disability Authority	Queried addressing the attitudinal or psychological barriers that prevent or discourage older people or people with disabilities from using public transport.
6	Disability Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commended the Department on its good practice in providing information on accessible formats. • Recognised the difficulties faced by the Department in a depressed economic climate. • Suggested rewording Working in Partnership section (Page 5: Section 1.5) • In relation to the contents of the draft Action Plan, Disability Action would make the following comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1: Advised that disability equality not disability awareness should be delivered (Pg 10), to interact directly with disabled individuals and to use the opportunity to work cross – departmentally with DHSSPS on Autism policy.

Summary of Comments	
Consultee Reference Number	Consultee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective 2: Explanation requested of working "...be made as compliant as possible..." (Pg 11) Objective 3: Requested an additional task on taxi accessibility and use. Raised concerns regarding pedestrianisation of town/city centres (Pgs 12 & 13) <p>Objective 6: Requested task 6.2 be rewritten to reflect a positive approach (Pg 16)</p>
7	Shopmobility
8	Newtownabbey Borough Council
9	Lisburn City Council
10	Consumer Council

Requested support for Shopmobility schemes in Northern Ireland

Questionnaire returned.

Q1. Concerns raised about the frequency/routes for public transport.

Q2. Not all trains and buses meet the recommended standard yet.

Q3. Constraints by budget recognised.

Q4. Agreed proposed new actions to improve the accessibility of transport.

Proposals:

- Review after three years to be undertaken by DRD
- Remove clutter on footways.
- More crossing points between footways.
- Clarity for Blue Badge holders.
- Request for route between Lisburn, Sprucefield, Maze/Long Kesh.
- Develop cycling infrastructure.

Questionnaire returned.

Q1. Further work required to ensure fully accessible journeys. Improve information to passengers. Greater cross-departmental working.

Q2. Physical accessibility, lack of available services, lack of flexible services and cost of travel remain barriers to making public transport accessible.

Q3. Barriers could be overcome by greater parking enforcement at bus stops, provision of bus shelters and improved pavements and improved publicity. Cross-departmental working and community involvement to shape future public transport services recommended.

Q4. Action Plan not a complete solution to accessibility issues.

Q5. Improved planning and provision of transport services can be achieved through cross-departmental working.

Summary of Comments	
Consultee Reference Number	Consultee
11	Patient and Client Council
12	Strabane District Council
13	Omagh District Council
14	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
15	Equality NI
16	Guide Dogs for the Blind
17	IMTAC

Summary of Comments

Comments on Action Plan

- Objective 1: Further exploration for a unified and simpler transport system.
- Objective 3: Improved cross-departmental and stakeholder working.
- Objective 6: Improve access to transport information.

Improved public transport services in rural areas.
Specialist schemes such as Dial-a-Lift should continue to operate.
Improve pedestrian accessibility of town centres.
Improvements to footways and footpaths requested.
Improved accessibility to bus stations.
Improved policy and planning for future transport provision between stakeholder/government departments.
Concern that investment in accessible buses and trains has not led to significant increase in usage.
Specialist services ie. Door-2-Door should continue to operate.
Given the limitations on funding, resources should be targeted at inter-departmental partnerships.
Clarity requested on actions 7.1 and 7.2.

The NITB welcomed the Action Plan

Comments on Action Plan

Objective 2: Need for legislative reform to protect disabled people using transport and other services.
Objective 3: Need for ongoing engagement with disabled and older people.
Objective 5: Disability Equality training to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.
Objective 6: Improved signage on public transport.
Objective 7

- Review of concessionary fares, Blue Badge and Door-2-Door schemes taking account of Welfare Reform changes.
- Clarification of the future of accessible transport post-2015.
- Monitoring and evaluation of Action Plan.

Welcomed the Department's strategy and offered to work with the department in developing the measures identified to improve access to transport for blind and partially sighted people.
Barriers remain for disabled and older people in accessing transport and in the pedestrian environment.

Summary of Comments	
Consultee Reference Number	Consultee
	<p>Recommend a further task supporting Shop Mobility services be added. Request that no review of the concessionary fares scheme is undertaken. Maximisation of limited resources.</p>
18	<p>Greater Belfast Senior Citizens Forum</p> <p>Questionnaire returned. Q1. Further improvements on customer services and vehicle specifications. Q2. Improved consideration for older and disabled people by transport providers. Q3. Further training for Translink drivers on customer service. Q4. Review of concessionary fares requested. Q5. Will Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) impact on ATS?</p>
19	<p>Parkinson's UK</p> <p>Would welcome involvement in measures to increase awareness and address issues for people with Parkinson's.</p>
20	<p>Ballymena Borough Council</p> <p>Questionnaire returned. Q1. Further improvements to stations required. Q2. Partnership approach with stakeholders to address physical, attitudinal and psychological barriers proposed. Q3. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departments and disabled and older people stakeholder groups to work together to overcome remaining barriers. • Actions should be prioritised Q4. Agreed with the proposed actions. Q5. Further provision of bus shelters.</p>
21	<p>Fermanagh District Council</p> <p>Suggested a "joined-up" approach as an economical way of considering accessibility issues. Objective 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Query the omission of the Shop Mobility scheme in the Action Plan. • Review the concessionary fare scheme. • Analysis of rural communities should include immobile and socially excluded groups. Transport planning should be integrated at local government and departmental level with a focus on addressing accessibility.</p>
22	<p>Antrim Borough Council</p> <p>Ensure the availability of audio and visual aids. Request for rail link to Belfast International Airport.</p>

Consultee Reference Number	Consultee	Summary of Comments
23	British Medical Association Northern Ireland	Priority to be given to adequate funding to implement the Action Plan. Cross-departmental working for policy development of accessibility transport issues. Disability Awareness and Equality training should be considered. Access to healthcare services is a cross-departmental responsibility.

ANNEX C

The Department's response to issues raised in the consultation.

Question 1: Over the recent years do you think the accessibility of the transport system has improved for all?			
TOPIC	DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE	ACTION POINT OR PRINCIPLE	CHANGE
<p>Frequency & routes of public transport</p> <p>Request for improved frequency and more routes for public transport services.</p>	<p>The Department acknowledges the need for continuous improvement.</p> <p>Translink have carried out an extensive upgrade of the facilities on the network. A programme of work is ongoing to extend rail platforms across the network. As part of Translink's ongoing focus to optimise services and resources, changes have been introduced to Ulsterbus and Metro. Metro city centre departure points were changed as part of the 'Belfast on the Move' traffic management scheme. In all these changes, effective communication with customers was a priority.</p>	3.2	
<p>Improved provision of information.</p> <p>Produce all new public information leaflets in a more accessible format.</p> <p>Request for improved signage</p>	<p>Disability Action suggested an amendment to the one of the tasks at Strategic Objective 6.2. The Department has accepted this comment.</p> <p>The Department recognises the importance of clear signage. Translink are working with the Department's Road Service to provide appropriate facilities at stops.</p>	<p>6.2</p> <p>5.4 6.1</p>	Task reworded.

Clarity for Blue Badge holders	Roads Service, along with relevant stakeholders, will examine possible improvements to the way information on the Blue Badge Scheme is presented and communicated to badge holders, with a particular emphasis on the parking concessions and where people can and cannot use the badge.	4.1 6.2 6.6 6.8	
Improved publicity.	The Department, along with relevant stakeholders, will examine possible improvements on the way information is presented and communicated.	1.6 5.1 5.4 6.1 - 6.9	
Amendment to Principles of Strategy	Disability Action suggested a small amendment to one of the Principles contained in the Action Plan under “Working in partnership”. The Department accepts the comment.	Working in Partnership Principle	Principle reworded.
Improved linkages for onward travel Proposal that every leg of a journey needs to be accessible eg from home to bus/train stop as well as boarding the vehicle	The Department’s aim, in partnership with key stakeholders is to develop an integrated, fully accessible public transport system which will enable older people and people with disabilities to travel by bus, train, taxi, private and community transport in safety and comfort, and move easily between these modes.	All	

Question 2:

What are the remaining barriers to making public transport accessible for disabled people and older people?

TOPIC	DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE	ACTION POINT	CHANGE
Accessibility Rural Transport: Accessibility of bus and rail stops, lack of staff at some stations and a lack of seating at stops.	The Department recognises the need for improved public transport in rural areas. The Department has undertaken an evaluation of the Assisted Rural Transport Scheme with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.	7.2 5.4 5.5 3.2	

	<p>Translink, through its Access Guide, outlines the measures the company will take when intending passengers feel they may have access issues. In relation to rail halts, Translink have carried out an extensive upgrade of the facilities on the network although some locations may not be able to be made fully accessible. They have identified those locations in the Guide and implemented policies and procedures to remedy these. The number of railway halts on the network and the extremely low footfall at them makes the provision of staff at each location unviable however assistance will be provided by staff on the train.</p> <p>In relation to bus transport in rural areas, it is widely accepted that hard standing shelters and seating cannot be provided at every stop. However, when an access problem is identified, Translink will work with the Department's Roads Service to provide appropriate facilities at stops.</p>	7.1	
<p>Concessionary Fares & Request for Free Travel</p> <p>Extension to the Concessionary Fares Scheme to include specialist transport services.</p> <p>Taxi accessibility Equality training for taxi drivers should be given greater priority.</p>	<p>Given current and future budgetary constraints, there are no plans to extend the Concessionary Fares Scheme.</p> <p>There are no resources in the current budget period to 2015 to extend the free travel schemes however the Minister has said that should resources become available this matter will be given priority.</p> <p>The Department of Environment (DOE) intends to begin work on new taxi driver training legislation in 2013/14. At this stage it is DOE's intention to seek to introduce new requirements for drivers to be trained in customer care and disability issues. Policy development is at a very early stage but, as this progresses DOE will seek to engage with stakeholders such as Guide Dogs for the Blind Association in finalising the proposals.</p>	1.9	Additional action at 1.11.

Upgrade of stations	Translink have a programme to extend platforms at 19 rail stations and halts across the network. These will accommodate longer trains which will enhance onboard capacity. A £1.3m investment project will benefit rail users, pedestrians and cyclists in Ballymoney. The project will see the construction of a new, fully accessible, traffic-free bridge at Ballymoney Train Station that will provide improved access to station platforms.		
<p>Concessionary Fares</p> <p>Conflicting opinions on a review of the concessionary fares scheme</p> <p>Specialist Transport Services.</p> <p>Request for review of Door-2-Door scheme.</p>	<p>The Department does not intend to extend the Concessionary Fares Scheme. However as part of the Governments Welfare Reform the Department will undertake a review of all schemes that impact upon people with disabilities.</p> <p>As a consequence of Welfare Reform DRD are currently consulting on the Door-2-Door scheme.</p>	3.9	Change to action point 3.9
<p>Attitudinal/ Psychological Barriers</p> <p>What is being done to address the attitudinal or psychological barriers that prevent or discourage older people or people with disabilities from using transport services?</p>	The Department recognises that attitudinal and psychological barriers remain. Therefore, the Department liaises with IMTAC and DHSSPS to address barriers that prevent or discourage people with disabilities through its input into the Bamford inter-departmental working group and also the Autism Strategy Working group, respectively. The Department promotes programmes to assist people with disabilities to travel safely such as the Buddy Scheme and helps to promote awareness across all Ministerial Departments.	1.10 5.9	
<p>Training</p> <p>Further training for Translink drivers on customer service.</p>	Translink have an ongoing training programme. All employees must undertake appropriate competency based training.		

Question 3:

How can these barriers be overcome?

TOPIC	DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE	ACTION POINT	CHANGE
<p>Provision of Information</p> <p>Passengers to be able to access up-to-date clear information.</p>	<p>The Department acknowledges the importance of accessible information on public transport services. The Department and relevant stakeholders will examine ways to improve the communication of information.</p>	<p>6.1-6.9</p>	
<p>Station & vehicular upgrades</p> <p>Clearly structured public areas.</p> <p>All buses and trains to be fully accessible.</p>	<p>Translink are working with the Department's Road Service to provide appropriate facilities at stops. Translink has an ongoing programme of station upgrades to improve accessibility for all passengers.</p> <p>The last 7 years has seen the introduction of over 800 new fully accessible buses and 43 new trains all of which are now in service. A further 92 buses are expected to be introduced in the coming year. On completion of the planned bus deliveries, Metro will be made up by 100% wheelchair accessible buses, Ulsterbus will be 81% accessible and NI Railways are 100% accessible.</p>	<p>3.2-3.6</p> <p>3.3-3.5</p>	
<p>Cross-departmental liaison</p> <p>Cross departmental programmes to assist people to travel.</p>	<p>In line with good practice for Government policy making, the Department liaises with other government departments and agencies and all relevant stakeholders to examine and resolve issues concerning the accessibility of transport for all.</p> <p>The Department is represented on the Autism Strategy Project Board meetings.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>1.5</p>	
<p>Environmental</p> <p>Improvements to and removal of clutter from footways/foot paths. Provision of dropped kerbs.</p>	<p>Work is ongoing to improve the pedestrian accessibility of town and city centres that will ensure that barriers to meeting the needs of people are removed where possible.</p>	<p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>3.10 – 3.16</p>	

Audio/visual aids	<p>The Translink website has been upgraded as part of a continuous improvement process to enhance accessibility, including a mobile devices version.</p> <p>An Evaluation Report for the Pilot Project has now been completed and agreed by the Minister. Moving forward, the renewal of the current Bus Trak contract, which is the system that provides real time information to bus stops, will provide the Department and Translink with an opportunity to establish up-to-date costs for the provision of audio visual systems on the Metro network. This, together with advances in technology, particularly around the use of smart phones, may present opportunities for a more cost effective solution for this type of system in the future. This will be kept under review by the Department.</p>	5.4	
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Question 4:

The new ATS draft Action Plan includes new actions to improve the accessibility of transport, do you agree with them? Please provide reasons.

TOPIC	DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE	ACTION POINT	CHANGE
Respondents universally welcomed the new actions.	There were no comments to influence the Action Plan regarding accessibility.		

Question 5:

Are there any actions which have not been included within the draft Action Plan that you would like to see included?

TOPIC	DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE	ACTION POINT	CHANGE
<p>Legislation:</p> <p>The Equality Commission amongst its comments recommends that the Department, in partnership with the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMdFM), amend the DDA to provide for a single reasonable adjustment threshold ('substantial disadvantage') across all the different areas of this legislation. It believes that this would mean that transport and other service providers should provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people to enable full and inclusive access to services, including transport provision.</p>	<p>The Department does not have the authority to make changes to the legislation governing DDA. However, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister is consulting on a new Disability Strategy which will form an over arching framework for all disability policy across Executive departments up to 2015. The outcome of that consideration will be represented in the strategy and actions arising from it when it is finalised. Any requirements to amend legislation will be considered as part of this consultation process.</p>		
<p>Shopmobility</p> <p>No reference to Shopmobility services in the draft Action Plan.</p>	<p>The Department recognises the contribution that Shopmobility (NI) makes to the accessibility of disabled and older people. Therefore an additional action has been created within the plan.</p>	4.4	Additional action at 4.4



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