

Accessibility Action Plan

Recommendations

That the Board:

- i. **approves** the Accessibility Action Plan for public release
- ii. **endorses** AT's (AT's) commitment to the accessibility principles as outlined in the Plan
- iii. **notes** the commencement of an organisation-wide accessibility champion system to investigate the broader future accessibility issues for AT (which will report back)
- iv. **notes** that the Plan will be updated annually to remain a central repository of AT's actions in accessibility.

Executive summary

1. The Accessibility Action Plan will signal to the community our commitment to creating a transport network which caters to all Aucklanders.
2. Releasing this plan will:
 - a. outline AT's guiding principles and objectives for accessibility in the transport network;
 - b. align the work we are doing to broader policy and strategy;
 - c. highlight the actions AT is taking to make the network more accessible (and recap what has already been done); and
 - d. signal further issues which need to be resolved and result in a group being formed to investigate these issues.
3. The Plan will not by itself result in Auckland's transport network becoming accessible. Instead it is a useful tool to increase the prominence of this important part of transport and to coordinate the steps which are needed across AT.
4. There are risks associated with not releasing the Plan, which will disappoint stakeholders who have worked hard with AT to develop the actions. The risk of expectations being raised by the Plan are low as the need for funding to progress any actions is clearly noted.
5. The next steps after approval will be the release of the Plan to the public and the formation of the internal group to advise on options for addressing the significant remaining accessibility issues.

Previous deliberations

6. The draft Accessibility Action Plan was considered at the Customer and Innovation Committee on 19 November 2019. The feedback from this committee meeting was that accessibility is an important priority for AT and that the organisation should be aiming to do more to make the transport system accessible. It also endorsed that infrastructure should be made accessible as part of our business as usual approach to design.

Background and strategic context

What is the Accessibility Action Plan?

7. The Plan outlines AT's approach to improving the accessibility of the transport network, including specific projects we intend to progress over the next three years and outlines what progress has already been made.

What does Accessibility mean?

8. 'Accessibility' is the more inclusive, broad and evolved term to describe members of the community (including people with disabilities) with mobility needs. Members of this community are referred to as 'people with /accessibility needs'.
9. 'Accessibility' is distinct from 'Access', which is about connection to jobs, services and opportunities. While different, there is a clear link, as an accessible transport system contributes to people's level of access.

Why AT needs an Accessibility Action Plan

10. People with accessible needs are our customers. They form part of AT's customer base and need to be able to use the transport system to live, work and play. At the moment, the transport system does not necessarily provide for people with accessibility needs.
11. AT was challenged by the Human Rights Commission on behalf of customers alleging discrimination. The Commission has recommended that AT do more to cater for people with accessible needs.
12. In addition, New Zealand's growing and ageing population means more people will have accessibility needs in the coming years, Auckland Council's Disability Operational Action Plan includes an action for AT to prepare a Disability Action Plan and Central Government has been considering creating mandatory disability access legislation.
13. Universal accessibility is a basic human right as asserted in international and national documents including the *New Zealand Human Rights Act 1993* and *United Nations convention on the rights of people with disabilities 2006* (ratified by NZ Government in 2008).
14. The *Auckland Plan 2050*, Auckland Council's overarching strategic document provides the following guidance: "*For Auckland to be a truly accessible city we also need to make sure that people of all ages and abilities, including people with reduced mobility levels, can go about their*

daily lives and get from one place to another easily, affordably and safely. This means tailoring the way infrastructure and services are provided so they meet the wide range of Aucklanders' needs."

We are behind Australian standards

15. In Australia, legislation mandates accessibility standards. All Councils have had to comply with them, including retrofitting all infrastructure to meet the standard. As New Zealand does not have similar legislation, accessibility is left up to individual road controlling authorities. This leads to accessibility provision being inconsistent.

The principles, objectives, outcomes and actions of the Plan

16. Central principle:

- as far as can reasonably be accommodated, AT will ensure that transport facilities, vehicles, information and services are easy to find out about, to understand, to reach and to use, for people with accessibility needs and therefore for everyone as part of their every-day lives.

17. Objectives:

- AT products and services are accessible, safe and convenient for everyone to use and understand
- AT ensures that consultation reaches interested groups and communities and ensures people with accessibility needs, and in particular those with disabilities, are heard and that their access needs are noted and provided for in planning and projects
- AT provides a diverse, supportive and inclusive workplace.

18. The desired outcomes:

- enable everyone to use transport services and facilities to travel safely, with ease and dignity.
- reduce transport disadvantage and discrimination in all aspects of the operation of the transport system.
- provide customer support and ensure that accessible information is available.
- promote increased awareness across AT of the need to engage and consult people with disabilities and take their views into account.
- show leadership to suppliers and partners on accessibility and universal design principles.

19. Key Achievements so far:

- the new Transport Design Manual promotes accessible standards.
- AT's website meets international accessible standards.
- the bus and train fleet is accessible/low floor.

- we have established and engaged with representative groups.
- the Total Mobility scheme is operating, providing a public transport service to those who are unable use the main public transport system.
- we have completed a Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- we have implemented a significant number of improved and additional mobility parking spaces.
- all our consultation and communication material is now provided in accessible formats.

20. Key elements of the Plan:

- audio announcements on-board buses to alert people with vision impairment when their stop is coming up.
- an infrastructure audit framework will be developed to assess existing infrastructure and determine the scope of the accessibility issues we have.
- development of a 'Catch the right bus' programme, to identify ways to improve the ease of catching a bus for people with vision impairments.
- an expansion of the 'Walk in the customer's shoes' programme for staff and providers to understand the needs of customers with accessible needs.
- an investigation into expanding what mobility aids can be taken on-board buses and trains.

21. The action items within the Plan will be monitored closely by Integrated Network Planning to ensure progress is made, and reporting on progress will be part of future versions of the Plan.

External Consultation/Engagement

22. This Plan has been co-designed and written with members of the Public Transport Accessibility Group. It has been endorsed by this group. It has also received input from across AT. There is a strong desire within AT for this Plan to be publicly released.

23. Members of the Public Transport Accessibility Group will attend the Board meeting and speak to this Plan. The Public Transport Accessibility Group members are:

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| a. Chris Orr | Blind Foundation |
| b. Vivian Naylor | CCS Disability Action |
| c. Carolyn Peat | Blind Foundation |
| d. Alison McLellan | Brain Injury Association Auckland Inc. |
| e. Elise Copeland | Universal Design Specialist, Auckland Council Design Office |

Issues and options

24. Despite the actions outlined in the Plan, there are still many issues and questions around accessibility which need to be investigated and resolved. AT needs to work to identify the remaining issues, determine possible solutions and establish the implications of these for the organisation
25. To address these issues, a network from across AT is being formed to investigate the issues and provide options for consideration by the Executive Leadership Team and the Board.



Next steps

26. Following approval the Plan will be publicly released. This will be followed by the formation of the internal group and monitoring of Plan progress.

Attachment

Attachment Number	Description
1	Accessibility Action Plan

Document ownership

Submitted by	Andrew McGill Head of Integrated Network Planning	
Recommended by	Jenny Chetwynd Executive General Manager, Planning and Investment	
Approved for submission	Shane Ellison Chief Executive	