



Memorandum

To: Auckland Transport (AT) Board

CC Dean Kimpton, Chief Executive; Stacey Van Der Putten, Director Public Transport & Active Modes; Teresa Burnett, GM Transport Safety; Andrew McGill, GM Transport, Network, Planning & Policy, Amir Kayal, Principal Specialist, Urban Design; Nadia Kozlova, Safety Business Partner - PT&AM

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Date: 17 April 2025

Background:

On 25 February 2025, representatives from the I.Lead Youth Group presented to the AT Board regarding the barriers disabled youth face in using public transport. Their key concerns were:

- **Lack of staff training:** Inconsistent etiquette and accessibility awareness among public transport staff.
- **Insufficient accessibility standards:** Gaps in nationwide accessibility requirements for transport services.
- **Need for an advisory youth group:** Youth representation in AT decision-making processes.

The AT Board acknowledged the importance of these concerns and requested this memorandum to outline AT's response and required actions.

***Minute action:** Management to prepare a memorandum detailing the current initiatives aimed at making public transport universally accessible and safe for the disabled community, as well as potential changes that can be implemented to improve the experience of people with disabilities.*

Current Auckland Transport Commitments

The current [Regional Public Transport Plan 2023 – 2031](#) commits Auckland Transport to facilitating the following provisions to assist the transport disadvantaged:

- Using Universal Design Principles to ensure our new infrastructure is accessible and that any retrofits are up to standard.
- Designing accurate and accessible wayfinding.
- Aligning with the actions in the Accessibility Action Plan that relate to PT and associated infrastructure to ensure a thoughtful delivery of a fully accessible network.

In turn the current [Accessibility Action Plan 2022-24](#) (#3) highlights the activities that AT had committed to. Most are still to be completed or needing further financial input and planning:

- **Accessibility Action Plan 2025-27 (#4)** reporting to the AT Board is on hold while other projects were prioritised. Also, staff changes meant a new lead is still to be nominated in Integrated Network Planning. Currently to be underway on version #4 and completed by 2026.
- **Audio on Buses** project was focused on blind and low vision customers knowing when they are arriving at their destination and was a specific request from the Blind Citizens organisation. The first implementation step is now completed. This is now part of business-as-usual work, with continuous improvements in areas such as route changes in both English and te reo Māori announcements.
- **Catch the right bus** is a request from Blind Citizens to help blind and low vision customers find their bus, especially when they cannot see that a bus is coming or at stops with multiple services. It needs a technical solution that has been enabled by the On Bus Connectivity project delivering potential to communicate to bus drivers. The full solution needs additional technology.
- **Walk in the Customer's Shoes** programme was to help AT staff understand the lived experience of those with impairments that make it harder to use public transport. This project was paused with Covid19 and was then part of the Customer Experience team programme (now Human Centred Design- HCD), and staff having left AT. Participants were also unpaid so not easily sustainable. Programme on hold.
- **Information using NZ Sign Language (NZSL) onboard buses** is still pending for buses and further business planning needed.

In response for the pressing need for AT to have better emergency information management systems, it was decided to pilot NZSL on other parts of the network. The deaf and hard of hearing community have responded enthusiastically to the NZSL pilots. The scope of technical developments required, and implementation has been useful as the NZSL foundation pilots.

There are now four facilities with NZSL pre-recorded safety messages playing PID screens (Waitemata, Downtown Ferry Terminal, Matitia, Manukau Bus Station, with more being planned) and twenty passenger ferry boats with onboard recorded NZSL safety messages.

- **Supporting Employment Concession** was completed with the Community Connect concession implementation.
- **Accessibility audits at public transport facilities** has begun in some train stations. Further work and processes are needed to be created for other parts of the network.
- **Integrated Networks Accessible Training Programmes.** All modes (Bus, Rail, Ferry, and Taxi) over the last decade, have had training packages created, and now those packages are due for review. This also includes operator contracting mechanisms to also be evaluated.
- **Providing accessibility solutions in case of disruptions, in all- temporary (unplanned), planned and in emergencies-** this work is ongoing. And there are efforts to link to the Auckland Council teams Emergency Accessibility planning.
- **Incorporating Total Mobility (TM) or accessible travel into on demand projects** This action is part of the Regional Public Transport Plan suggestion, that On Demand be considered as a replacement for TM. This may work in



smaller New Zealand townships, but not feasible for most of Auckland. The TM scheme is under review with the Ministry of Transport and is ongoing.

- **Broadening mobility aid acceptance project** was to allow access to new mobility aids, like larger electric wheelchairs and personal mobility devices, while balancing this with the comfort and safety of other passengers onboard. This is now completed but will require ongoing monitoring in operations as technology keeps evolving.
- **PlusOne Concession Bus was implemented in 2022.** This concession allows customers travelling on an accessibility concession, to bring with them their carer support for free. Rail and Ferry was delayed by Community Connect project, but now in progress to be completed.
- **Collaboration with the new Ministry for Disabled People- Whaikaha.** This was delayed as the new Ministry has had ongoing internal changes. New connections are now made and discussions ongoing.

Most of the issues outlined by I.Lead are already in progress. However, there is further work required to improve accessibility and customer experience across all PT modes.

In Response Current Key Actions and Future Commitments

1. Lack of Staff Training:

The Public Transport and Active Modes Directorate (PTAM) propose to review the training packages for all modes and will investigate monitoring and reporting processes for accessibility. Also, to discuss with NZTA and other cities the possible reinstatement of accessibility training as a requirement for the Passenger Licence. There is also the development of the CRM Analytics tool to enable continuous improvement.

2. There are Insufficient Accessibility Standards for Infrastructure:

Although Accessibility in design and build is part of AT's guiding policies and strategies, some gaps remain as there is no overarching accessibility legislation. There are some inaccessible infrastructures in Auckland that may be found particularly in ATs older transport facilities.

AT has made progress with important network improvements and significant investment that have been undertaken in Auckland over the last twenty years. Particularly with the step-free train network on platforms which has been a wonderful achievement, and the kneeling bus fleet systems that have been procured. This work is ongoing.

Auckland Transport Design Manual provides the guidelines, standards and specifications to achieve universal design outcomes in transport infrastructure. In doing so, it relies on underpinning national guidelines and standards. Some of these reference documents may not have been updated in many years so a gap between current standards and best practices may have emerged (refer Appendix 2).

3. A new Youth Advisory Group:

Recommendation: Accepting the I.Lead offer of more disabled youth participation by including their nominated members and expanding the total number of youths, added to both the current CPAG and PTAG advisory membership groups total number. And to leave the consideration of a dedicated AT transport youth group until we know what and how we will be interacting with Council's disability and youth panels going forward.

4. Summary of Future Actions:

The memorandum outlines specific actions to be taken in response to the youth group's recommendations, including –



1. Update the Accessibility Action Plan 2025-27 (version #4), and
2. Further work on reviewing current accessibility training packages, monitoring and reporting with operators, and
3. Collaboration with NZTA and Ministry of Disabled Persons – Whaikaha to influence national policies, and
4. Using the CRM analytics reporting tool for continuous improvement, and
5. Developments in NZSL pilots that can help inform the future programme of work to be undertaken across AT services.
6. The expansion of total youth member numbers added to PTAG and CPAG advisories.

Recommendations

1. Note the above.
2. Continue with what is being done and confirm any recommendations and actions to consider.
3. Address the gaps to what we have committed to and need to complete with financial support where possible.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Youth Presentation Summary.



Auckland Transport Open Board Meeting – 25 February 2025

Agenda Item 12.0:
Public presentation: The Importance of Public Transport for Disabled Youth
By Aaron Smith

Appendix 2: Legislative Frameworks

The lack of legislative framework to penalise any discrimination based on disability leaves gaps in practice where constraints of projects may not be sufficiently defined or addressed. In some instances, it may mean that departure from standards may occur in projects due to geometrical, project scope or funding availability. It is important to note that without such legal framework that exist in countries such as Australia, retrofitting existing transport infrastructure to bring up to compliance with existing standards will not get the priority or funding. One example can be the Local Government Act 2002 that enables roads and streets to be legally as steep as 12.5%. In practice, this means that certain sections of footpath, even in new developments, can exceed this threshold. AT is



proactively trying to minimise occurrence of such instances, but it heavily requires on design reassurance mechanisms that are time consuming and will have a financial burden on the private sector (usually through Resource Consenting & Engineering Approval processes).

New Zealand does not have the accessibility design and build standards such as in countries like the European Union (EU), Canada, and Australia which have legally binding standards. They have the EU's European Accessibility Act, Canada has the Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations, and Australia's Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport, which all provide clear, enforceable guidelines.

