Accessible Public Transport in Victoria

ACTION PLAN 2006-2012

Victoria
The Place To Be

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Minister's foreword

Access to public transport is essential to ensure that all Victorians can contribute to our community and reach their potential. This is one of the cornerstones of the Bracks Government's policies and programs supporting people with disabilities and limited mobility, including *A Fairer Victoria* (2005) and *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* (2006).

Accessible Public Transport in Victoria builds on these commitments as well as the extensive work undertaken on the State's public transport network to comply with the federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and accompanying disability standards.

This new Action Plan highlights progress made over recent years including the:

- Introduction of tram platform stops and low floor trams;
- Introduction of new fully compliant trains on the metropolitan and regional rail networks;
- Major DDA compliant upgrades at Jolimont, Southern Cross, Flinders Street and North Melbourne Stations along with upgrades at other stations;
- Upgraded bus stops and services on new SmartBus routes along Blackburn Road and Springvale Road, with Warrigal Road and Wellington Road services to follow;
- Introduction of low floor buses on metropolitan and regional services at a rate of 90 per year through the Bus Replacement Program; and the
- Introduction of interchangeable hoists on regional coaches.

Accessible Public Transport in Victoria outlines the program of works required to meet milestones and goals for the next six years. This document puts in place the principles that will guide future initiatives and works needed to meet all the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the accompanying Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 by 2022.

The highest priorities for continued progress towards the 2012 milestones are:

- For Melbourne trains: access paths, ramps and tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs). Other important areas include waiting areas and stairs.
- For Melbourne trams: boarding and TGSIs at tram stops.
- For Melbourne and regional buses: TGSIs and paving at bus stops.
- For V/Line: access paths, ramps, TGSIs, lighting, furniture and hearing augmentation.
- For Taxis: improve response times for wheelchair accessible taxis.

I commend *Accessible Public Transport in Victoria – Action Plan 2006-2012* to everyone interested in reaching the goal of fully accessible public transport for all Victorians.

Peter Batchelor MP
Minister for Transport


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Abbreviations

APTNAC	Accessible Public Transport National Advisory Committee
APTNJC	Accessible Public Transport National Jurisdictional Committee
ATC	Australian Transport Council
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act 1992
DHS	Department of Human Services (State)
DOI	Department of Infrastructure (State)
DOTARS	Department of Transport and Regional Services (Commonwealth)
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet (State)
DSAPT	Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002
DVC	Department of Victorian Communities (State)
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (Commonwealth)
IDC	Inter Departmental Committee
PID	Passenger Information Display
PTAC	Public Transport Accessibility Committee (State)
PTD	Public Transport Division (State)
SCOT	Standing Committee on Transport
TGSI	Tactile Ground Surface Indicators
TTA	Transport Ticketing Authority
VGSO	Victorian Government Solicitor's Office
VTD	Victorian Taxi Directorate
WAT	Wheelchair Accessible Taxis
WCSTF	Wheelchair Safety Taskforce

Executive summary

Background

The Victorian Government believes that people with a disability should be able to live and participate in community life, with the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as all other citizens. The *State Disability Plan* provides a framework under the guiding principles of Equality, Dignity and Self-Determination (Choice), Diversity and Non-Discrimination. Providing people with disabilities access to opportunity equivalent to that available to the community, is an important step towards meeting these principles. Improving access to public transport services provides opportunity to travel to jobs, services or recreational activities that might otherwise not be available.

The Victorian Government's Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2006-2012 provides a framework for achieving accessible public transport in Victoria for people with disabilities. It covers mainstream public transport for which the Victorian Government has direct responsibility, including:

- Metropolitan rail, tram and bus services;
- Regional rail, coach and bus services; and
- Taxi services.

It does not cover school bus services, which are exempt from the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and the accompanying *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* (DSAPT); nor does it cover passenger or vehicular ferries or aviation.

This Action Plan is designed to ensure that at minimum, access is provided in line with the requirements of the Federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and the accompanying *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* (DSAPT).

The DSAPT sets out standards by which public transport infrastructure and vehicles can comply with the DDA. It also prescribes timing of progress towards full compliance over twenty years through a series of milestones at five-year intervals (from 2002 to 2022). This Action Plan concentrates on achieving the 2007 and 2012 milestones, but also lays out principles for ongoing progress beyond 2012. It has been developed in consultation with people with disabilities and public transport operators through the Minister for Transport's advisory Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC).

"The proposed actions will provide significant improvements to access to public transport for all Victorians."

The need for accessible transport is pressing; about 20% of Victorians have a disability of some form and this proportion is growing as the population ages. (About a third of these people up to 300,000 people state-wide find using public transport difficult.) The range of disabilities includes vision and hearing impairment, intellectual disability, mobility disability some requiring the use of mobility aids, wheelchairs or scooters, and those acquired by older people. Improving public transport in line with DSAPT requirements will make public transport accessible for the first time for some people with a disability and will improve accessibility and provide new opportunities for many others.

It is also important to note that actions to improve services to people with disabilities usually provide significant improvements in amenity, safety, travel time or convenience to many other people with mobility issues (e.g. people with prams or young children, the elderly, people with minor injuries).

Victoria has made considerable achievements towards compliance and there are a range of projects and programs currently underway which will further improve this position. However, there are some accessibility issues that require more concerted effort; this Action Plan addresses these issues to ensure progress towards fully accessible public transport meets or exceeds the requirements of the DSAPT.

The highest priorities for continued progress towards the 2012 milestones are:

- For Melbourne trains: access paths, ramps, tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs), and hearing augmentation. Other important areas include waiting areas and stairs.
- For Melbourne trams: boarding and TGSIs at tram stops.
- For Melbourne and regional buses: TGSIs and paving at bus stops.
- For V/Line: access paths, ramps, TGSIs, lighting, furniture and hearing augmentation.
- For Taxis: improve response times for wheelchair accessible taxis.

Boarding trams presents the biggest single issue; providing wheelchair access between a low-floor tram and its surroundings requires significant changes to tram infrastructure and operations. Given that manually deployed wheelchair ramps (as used on trains) cannot be used safely on trams, the proposed solution is a combination of raised-access tram stops (eg platforms, kerb extensions or raised traffic lanes) wherever practicable.

In addition, a detailed study will be undertaken prior to the purchase of further low floor trams into the feasibility of incorporating wheelchair lifts into the trams and how to deploy them safely in Melbourne's mixed traffic environment.

Construction of platforms and the purchase of low floor trams will take considerable resources to implement across the entire tram network. While continued investment and progress will be made to meet the DSAPT standards, the progress milestones will be met a few years later than required. However it is intended that full compliance will be met by 2032 in accordance with DSAPT.

Actions to meet DSAPT for other transport modes present far less difficulty, and this Action Plan is intended to ensure Victoria meets or exceeds all of the progress milestones. Significant resources are needed in some areas, primarily because of the vast extent of the infrastructure that has to be upgraded. For example, there are over 28,000 bus stops in Victoria; the work to be undertaken at each stop is relatively simple, but the program is large because of the number of locations involved.

The Action Plan

The Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport 2006-2012 lists the actions required to maintain progress on the relevant issues, under the following headings:

- Policy and planning
- Information
- Ticketing
- Melbourne trains
- Melbourne trams
- Melbourne and regional buses
- Regional trains and coaches (V/Line)
- Taxis

In summary, the following Actions are proposed (more detail is given in the body of the report and in Chapter 10):

Policy and planning:

- Continue to resource accessible public transport.
- Consult with people with disabilities through PTAC.
- Contribute to the Five Year Review of the DSAPT.

Information:

- Complete the Metlink signage roll out for train stations, tram and bus stops.
- Consolidate the Metlink whole of state information about accessible public transport and continue consultation on improvements.
- Coordinate access improvements in other programs and projects.
- Complete the Wheelchair Safety at Pedestrian Rail Level Crossings Action Plan.

Ticketing:

- Deliver a fully accessible new ticketing system.

Monitoring and reporting:

- Develop effective monitoring and reporting processes.

Metropolitan trains:

- Finalise new standards for pedestrian rail level crossings.
- Implement a program of pedestrian rail level crossing upgrades.
- Continue current works programs for access paths, ramp works and all other parts of the DSAPT to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones.

Melbourne trams:

- Adopt level access stops with low floor trams as the preferred solution for tram boarding.
- Develop platform stop standards and implement a program of priority platform tram stops.
- Develop options for bridging plates between platforms and low floor trams.
- Implement all other requirements of the DSAPT as required to the fullest extent possible.
- Continue to replace trams with new low floor trams.
- Investigate options for lifts on trams.
- Continue to operate only a limited number of W Class trams.

Melbourne and regional buses:

- Develop an operational guide to clarify responsibilities for infrastructure.
- Implement a program to upgrade bus stops with TGSIs and paving to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones, in partnership with local councils.
- Continue the Bus Replacement Program beyond 2007.

Regional trains and coaches:

- Implement a program of station upgrades to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones.
- Implement a program of pedestrian rail level crossings upgrades.
- Upgrade locomotive-hauled N Set carriages to provide access for people using wheelchairs and mobility aids.

Taxis:

- Monitor and improve response times for wheelchair accessible taxis.
- Continue the Multi Purpose Taxi Program.

Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting on progress is important, for a number of reasons:

- Ensuring that progress is continuing and sufficient funding is available to meet or exceed the DSAPT progress milestones;
- Refining delivery mechanisms and design solutions from experiences gained along the way;
- Reporting to HREOC on progress at a State level; and
- Providing information to publicise the facilities and promote their use by people with disabilities.

Annual audits or report-backs will be sought from those implementing the programs (eg franchisees, local government authorities or other agencies). Regular reports will be provided through PTAC (the Public Transport Accessibility Committee – an advisory committee appointed by the Minister for Transport) to the community to inform on progress and highlight any issues.

1 Introduction

In this document, the words "accessible" and "accessibility" refer to accessibility for people with disabilities (in line with the DSAPT).

1.1 Background

The first Action Plan for accessible public transport in Victoria (DOI, 1998) was released in 1998. Since then:

The national *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport* (DSAPT) were passed in 2002. They are mandatory under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1992).

- New partnership agreements were entered into for Connex and Yarra Trams to operate the metropolitan train and tram services following the withdrawal of National Express from Melbourne in late 2003.
- V/Line Passenger (also a former National Express Subsidiary) was established as a wholly owned State Corporation.
- The Government released *Melbourne 2030* in 2001, the *Metropolitan Transport Plan in 2004* and *Meeting our Transport Challenges* in 2006.
- Metlink was established as the umbrella body for metropolitan public transport in 2004. It provides network-wide services across the metropolitan public transport system. Metlink is responsible for achieving DDA compliance of public transport signs, symbols and information in Victoria.
- Significant achievements have been made with general improvements to public transport, including access for people with disabilities (eg low floor trams and buses, new or refurbished suburban trains, new country trains, information systems and facilities, tram 'superstops', tactile surface indicators and general signage).

1.2 Development of this Action Plan

This Action Plan is intended to describe the process whereby public transport in Victoria will be made accessible for people with disabilities, in line with the DDA and the DSAPT. It covers public transport for which the Victorian Government has direct responsibility, including:

- Metropolitan rail, tram and bus services;
- Regional rail, coach and bus services; and
- Taxi services.

It does not cover school bus services, which are exempt from the DSAPT, or passenger or vehicular ferries or aviation.

2 Context

The Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (the DDA) prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability and makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability in a wide range of areas including: sport, access to premises, accommodation, education, employment and the provision of goods, services and facilities. The DDA also protects the associates of people with a disability (their partners, relatives, friends, carers and co-workers) against discrimination because of that association.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission website

2.1 DDA and DSAPT

The Commonwealth Government has legislated to remove discrimination against people with disabilities as far as possible through the DDA.

Public transport services are addressed directly in the DDA, which refers to the formulation of disability standards for provision of public transport services and facilities. This set of standards, the DSAPT, outlines a detailed set of requirements for the provision of accessible public transport. The DSAPT stipulates the mandatory minimum technical requirements for the provision of accessible transport services and facilities, while providing a timeframe in which progress towards full compliance must be achieved. They apply to all conveyances, premises and infrastructure. Many of the standards rely on Australian Standards in setting out the requirements.

Compliance is to be achieved over a 20-year period from 2002, with interim progress requirements for most areas of the DSAPT of 25%, 55%, 90% and 100% by the end of 2007, 2012, 2017 and 2022 respectively. There are some significant exceptions to this, such as waiting areas, signs and symbols, lighting, alarms, ticketing and information systems, most of which are required to be fully compliant by the end of 2007 (see Table 2 1 for a full list of DSAPT compliance milestone requirements). Trains and trams have until 2032 to achieve the last 10% of full compliance. All new services coming into operation after 2002 must comply in full. Existing services must be retrofitted or replaced. The DDA and DSAPT apply to all providers and operators of public transport services and supporting infrastructure.

The DSAPT assume users can travel independently and understand the public transport system. They are based on the performance abilities of the 80th percentile of people with disabilities. A number of performance assumptions are set out in the DSAPT, which are based on an Australian Standard wheelchair or mobility aid dimension of 800mm wide X 1300mm long. They include the ability of people using mobility aids to manoeuvre through specific nominated dimensions, to negotiate ramps of 1 in 14 unassisted or 1 in 4 with assistance, and that the total weight of a person their mobility aid and their assistant should be less than 300kg. People using mobility aids which are larger than this standard may experience access difficulties on public transport.

For the majority of the DSAPT, progress towards compliance in Victoria is well advanced (see Chapter 3 for details).

Table 2.1: Compliance requirements for accessible public transport

DSAPT ref number	Area covered	Percent compliance required by:			
		2007	2012	2017	2022
2.1-2.9	Access paths (within vehicles and infrastructure)	25	55	90	100
3.1-3.3	Manoeuvring areas	25	55	90	100
4.1-4.3	Passing areas (within infrastructure and trains)	25	55	90	100
5.1	Resting points (infrastructure only)	25	55	90	100
6.1-6.4	Ramps (within infrastructure and vehicle boarding ramps)	25	55	90	100
7.1-7.2	Waiting areas (general infrastructure)	100			
7.1-7.2	Waiting areas (at bus stops)[1]	25	55	90	100
8.1-8.8	Boarding (mainly vehicles, but also infrastructure at boarding points)	25	55	90	100
9.1-9.11	Allocated space (mainly vehicles)	25	55	90	100
10.1	Surfaces	NA	100		
11.1-11.7	Handrails and grab rails	NA	100		
12.1-12.6	Doorways and doors	25	55	90	100
13.1	Lifts (infrastructure only)	25	55	90	100
14.1-14.4	Stairs (infrastructure and steps onto vehicles)	25	55	90	100
15.1-15.6	Toilets	25	55	90	100
16.1-16.5	Symbols (generally within infrastructure and vehicles)	100			
16.1-16.5	Symbols (at bus stops)[1]	25	55	90	100
17.1-17.7	Signs (generally within infrastructure and vehicles)	100			
17.1-17.7	Signs (at bus stops)[1]	25	55	90	100
18.1-18.5	Tactile ground surface indicators	25	55	90	100
19.1	Alarms	100			
20.1-20.2	Lighting (generally within infrastructure and buildings)	100			
20.1-20.2	Lighting[1] (at bus and tram stops)	25	55	90	100
21.1-21.4	Controls (stop requests and door controls etc.)	25	55	90	100
22.1	Furniture and fitments (tables, benches etc. within infrastructure)[2]	100			
23.1	Street furniture	25	55	90	100
24.1	Gateways (ticket barriers etc)	NA	100		
25.1-25.4	Payment of fares (including vending machines)	NA	100		
26.1	Hearing augmentation – listening systems	100			
27.1-27.4	Information (generally within infrastructure and vehicles)	100			
27.1-27.4	Information (at bus stops)[1]	25	55	90	100
28.1-28.4	Booked services (trains and coaches only)	100			
29.1-29.3	Food and drink services (infrastructure and country trains)	100			
30.1	Belongings (carriage of disability aids in vehicles)	100			
31.1-31.2	Priority seating (within vehicles)	100			

Notes:
1. The DSAPT only refer to bus stops as being distinct from general infrastructure; it does not mention tram stops.
2. Under the furniture and fitments standards there are other requirements relating to sleeping berths within trains, but these do not affect any Victorian operations.
3. Tram and train vehicles are given until 2032 to achieve 100% compliance with relevant parts of the DSAPT, although they must still meet the same interim milestones as other components of the public transport system.

2.1.1 Direct assistance and equivalent access

The DSAPT allows for the provision of alternative access including providing direct assistance where it provides equivalent access so long as an equivalent standard of amenity, availability, comfort, convenience, dignity, price and safety is maintained. People with disabilities or people representing people with disabilities must be consulted about equivalent access proposals. Equivalent access does not include a segregated or parallel service.

All regular Department of Infrastructure Public Transport Division consultation on accessible public transport is conducted through the Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC), Victoria's Ministerial advisory committee.

2.1.2 Unjustifiable hardship

Failure to comply with either the DDA or the DSAPT to the maximum extent possible, not involving unjustifiable hardship, is unlawful. The legislation does not define the nature of unjustifiable hardship but rather leaves it to be determined having regard to all relevant circumstances of a particular case (once brought). For state instrumentalities and large corporations, safety and/or timeliness difficulties would be more likely to constitute hardship than the mere need to spend money. In any event, unjustifiable hardship can only be used as part of a defence against a complaint of non-compliance. It cannot be signed off or approved through any HREOC or other process.

2.1.3 Exemption

An operator can seek an exemption of up to five years (effectively a time delay) from compliance with all or some of the DSAPT from HREOC through a public consultative process.

Any aggrieved party may appeal the granting of an exemption in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

> The Commission has not been prepared to grant exemptions simply to certify that discrimination may continue on the basis of unjustifiable hardship or other defences. However, the Commission has been prepared to grant exemptions on condition that the applicant makes and meets commitments to improve access or opportunity within a reasonable period. To grant an exemption in such circumstances (rather than leaving an applicant to raise possible hardship defences in response to complaints if access is not provided) can be appropriate as a means of promoting achievement of the objects of the DDA.
>
> *Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission website*

2.1.4 Five year review

The DSAPT are to be reviewed by the Federal Minister of Transport and Regional Services and the Attorney General within five years of their passing (i.e. by October 2007) for their effectiveness in removing discrimination as far as possible and any amendments required, and reviewed again every five years thereafter.

Commencement of the process is under discussion between the Department of Transport and Regional Services, the Attorney General and the Standing Committee on Transport and Australian Transport Council (SCOT/ATC). Completion of the Review is implied by October 2007; however this is ahead of the passing of the first milestone, and effecting any amendments to the DSAPT through Federal Parliament may take considerably longer.

2.2 Other States' experience

The DSAPT was developed by the Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Attorney General, with the Accessible Public Transport National Jurisdictional and Advisory Committees (APTNJC and APTNAC). These Committees have representation from all state and territory transport jurisdictions, public transport industry groups and peak groups representing people with disabilities, and report to SCOT/ATC. They continue to meet twice a year to monitor implementation and review.

APTNJC and APTNAC provide forums to collaborate on issues where there are significant challenges and common ground exists. Examples include pedestrian rail level crossing standards and the flange gap issues, hearing augmentation, narrow and difficult railway station platforms, and communication for people with vision impairment.

Victoria plays a leading role in all of these discussions.

All states have developed a consistent auditing and reporting methodology, and all are committing significant funds to achieve compliance. Bus vehicles have the highest levels of compliance, yet bus stop levels of compliance are generally low. Trains generally have high levels of compliance and railway stations are all likely to meet the 25% milestone with many well advanced towards the 55% milestone. NSW has difficulties with stair access to train stations. Tram networks in NSW and SA are small but Sydney's is already fully compliant with platform stops, whilst new low floor vehicles and platform stops are being installed on Adelaide's Glenelg tram.

The Australasian Railways Association has recently (July 2005) submitted an exemption application to HREOC, which addresses 90 clauses in the DSAPT and raises issues for the Five Year Review. The public process is now in progress and APTNJC is advising HREOC on the technical issues.

2.3 Demand for transport from people with disabilities

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate that 20 per cent of the Australian population, or more than three million people, have one or more disabilities; and that this proportion is increasing, in particular with the ageing of the population.

The DDA protects an even broader section of society than this because it also protects people who are associates of people with a disability (including families, friends and carers);

- the DDA definition of disability is wider at important points than the definition used by the ABS (for example, the ABS excludes short-term disabilities lasting less than six months and is thus likely to understate mental disorders in particular, while the DDA covers these);
- people who do not have a disability now may face disability discrimination in the future; and
- the DDA prohibits discrimination on the basis of imputed disability.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission website

2.3.1 Types and incidence of disability

There are many different types of disability. A disability can be caused by a genetic condition, an illness or an accident and can include:

- Intellectual disability;
- Physical disability;
- Sensory disability;
- Acquired brain injury;
- Neurological impairment;
- Dual disability (one of the above and a psychiatric disability);
- Disabilities that are unrelated to ageing; or
- Any combination of these.

According to the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS), about 17% of Victorians report they have a disability. In metropolitan Melbourne, the figure is 15.5%, while in rural/regional Victoria, it is as high as 21%. ABS reports similar figures, finding that 19.9% of Victorians report they have a disability, with 6.5% reporting that they suffer a profound or severe core activity limitation. The ABS data also confirms the higher incidence in rural and regional areas. About one-third of people with disabilities report that using public transport poses difficulties for them.

These figures suggest that there are about 850,000 people with disabilities in Victoria (of which 560,000 are in metropolitan Melbourne). Whilst two-thirds of these people could probably use public transport without major difficulty, there could be about 280,000 people in Victoria (180,000 in Melbourne) for whom public transport use would be difficult. Improving public transport to DSAPT requirements will make it more accessible to a significant proportion of these people (and their carers), as well as improving accessibility for many others.

The biggest single consideration is for people using wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility aids, who arguably need the greatest provision in terms of infrastructure and vehicle modification.

People with vision impairment are also significant public transport users. They are unable to drive, and are eligible for free public transport travel passes. Provision for their needs (such as through more extensive audible information systems, and improved colour luminance contrast and tactile indicators) will benefit many other users of public transport as well.

The tram system in Melbourne currently has a modal share of about 2.4% of motorised travel, but is not accessible to people using wheelchairs and scooters. Assuming that, provided with fully accessible public transport these customers would travel as often as the general community, there could be as many as 1,440 wheelchair user trips per weekday (about 450,000 a year) on the tram system. This is less than 0.5% of total tram patronage, but implies that as many as one in three individual tram services could carry a wheelchair passenger for part of their journey. UK research suggests that people with disabilities travel about a third less than the rest of the population. A review of four accessible tram operations overseas suggests that people using wheelchairs make considerably fewer trips per capita and the maximum utilisation whilst difficult to forecast is unlikely to exceed 100 passengers per day although this will increase with an aging population.

The Multi Purpose Taxi Program provides half-price taxi fares for Victorians with severe and permanent disabilities; most of its users cannot use public transport by themselves, so will not be affected by accessibility improvements thereto. In 2003/4 the MPTP cost about $40 million to subsidise and provided about 4.9 million trips in Victoria, of which about 490,000 were for people in wheelchairs.

In 2004 Victoria introduced a Companion Card Scheme managed by DHS to further assist people with disabilities. The scheme provides for registered users with severe and permanent disabilities that require the attendance of a carer at all times to be able to take their carer with them at no cost when they purchase the appropriate ticket themselves. The Scheme was introduced for entertainment and recreation activities and has been extended for use on all public transport in Victoria.

Demand for accessible public transport will grow as the population ages and the incidence and degree of disability within the population increases. The Government is committed to increasing public transport's share of all travel (to help manage the environmental and congestion effects of travel by private car). Success in this area will bring with it an increase in use by people with disabilities if services are accessible. It is reasonable to expect that the combined effects of the ageing population, increased accessibility of public transport and initiatives to increase public transport's mode share could result in at least a three-fold increase in the demand for public transport travel by people with disabilities over the next 15-20 years.

2.4 Responsibility for accessible public transport in Victoria

Legislation and contractual relationships determine who is responsible for funding and/or implementing accessible public transport, as summarised in the following paragraphs. Because of the legal and contractual complexities, this summary should be seen as a guide only.

2.4.1 Trains and trams

Day-to-day operation of rail public transport in Victoria is governed by partnership agreements between the Victorian Government and the private companies (Connex and Yarra Trams), for train and tram services. Regional rail and coach operator V/Line Passenger operates under a similar franchise agreement with the Victorian Government, however, it is a state-owned corporation.

Under the franchise agreements, (which expire in 2008 with the possibility of extension to 2010), the Victorian Government has transferred responsibility for some aspects of accessibility to the franchisees, whilst retaining responsibility for others. This arrangement enables a steady stream of relatively low-cost works to be progressed by Connex and Yarra Trams (TGSIs, handrails, path improvements and so on).

The Victorian Government, however, recognises that some accessibility improvements are beyond the ability of the franchisees to fund in a short-term franchise. The Victorian Government has therefore retained responsibility for funding railway station access ramp reconstructions or replacements (including lifts or alternative paths) and tram boarding arrangements to provide accessibility.

Under the V/Line franchise agreement, V/Line has similar responsibilities to Connex. However, unlike Connex it has no rail infrastructure to maintain, although it does have responsibility for 81 station buildings and platform areas. The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) and Pacific National (PN) maintain rail infrastructure. This is significant for accessibility, because pedestrian rail level crossings are managed separately from stations and, platform edges are treated as part of the rail infrastructure rather than the stations (they can only be maintained from track level).

There are two interstate rail services that use Victorian railway stations. These are the Overland (Adelaide-Melbourne, owned and operated by Great Southern Railways) and the XPT (Sydney-Melbourne, owned and operated by the State of New South Wales trading as CountryLink). These companies are operators only in Victoria; they have no infrastructure to maintain. VicTrack is responsible for six regional stations used more for interstate services.

2.4.2 Buses

Buses provide an important role throughout Victoria especially in providing local transport services and links to trains, shopping centres and schools. Bus operators are required to meet performance targets and minimum standards of service as part of their contracts with the Victorian Government. The Bus Replacement Program has progressively replaced almost 50% of the fleet with the new low floor DDA compliant buses.

Responsibility for DDA compliance at bus stops is complex and VGSO advice has been sought.

Roadside bus stop infrastructure has in the past been provided and maintained mainly by local councils (with the road authority providing in-road facilities like bus lanes and bus bays). The Victorian Government has taken a more active role more recently through initiatives to upgrade bus services (eg SmartBus). Legally, responsibility for provision of accessible bus infrastructure rests with the Victorian Government, although where this involves changes to the footpath, the responsibility for the on-going maintenance of the footpath remains with the relevant Road Authority.

2.4.3 Taxis

DOI is primarily responsible for DDA compliance of taxis and accessible taxis as the Regulator, and as provider of services through the subsidy of fares for the Multi Purpose Taxi Program. Some items remain the responsibility of the taxi owners. Responsibility for the provision of taxi ranks remains with local government.

3 Progress towards improving access

3.1 Results of progress audits

Table 3.1 summarises progress against the DSAPT, expressed as a percentage of the infrastructure or vehicles that meet each of the thirty requirements. These results are calculated from audits carried out in 2004 and 2005.

As depicted in the summary table, significant achievements have been made towards accessible public transport, in many areas exceeding the time requirements of the DSAPT.

System-wide initiatives are already under way that will meet the milestones in the areas of symbols, signs and information (Metlink) and payment of fares (the new Ticketing Task Force (TTA) ticketing system). Continuing Bus Replacement Programs will ensure that compliance remains ahead of progress milestones for all standards areas relating to bus vehicles.

The priorities for continued progress towards 2012 are signified by the red and orange boxes in Table 3.1, as summarised in Table 3.2.

3.2 Recent achievements

Victoria has been improving conditions for people with disabilities throughout the state for many years. Notable recent achievements for public transport are:

- Introduction of low floor trams and tram platform stops (2001), including four new platform stop designs providing full accessibility.
- Introduction of new fully compliant trains on the metropolitan rail system (X'Trapolis and Siemens trains) and on the regional rail network (V/Locity railcars). With exception to the remaining 6 Hitachi 6 car-set trains, the metropolitan rail fleet is fully compliant.
- All new works and services coming into operation since 2002 comply in full with the DSAPT.
- Major upgrades completed or under development at Jolimont, Southern Cross, Flinders Street and North Melbourne Stations providing DDA compliant infrastructure.
- Upgrading of bus stops and services on SmartBus routes along Blackburn Road, and Springvale Road and Warrigal Road with the Wellington Road services to follow.
- Introduction of numerous low floor buses on metropolitan and regional services at a rate of 90 a year through the Bus Replacement Program.
- Introduction of interchangeable hoists on regional coaches.
- Upgrade of metropolitan and regional bus/train interchanges.
- Rollout of many minor DDA compliance projects through a substantial Connex Works Program e.g. improved handrails and non-slip surfaces on station ramps, installation of TGSIs at railway stations, marking of priority seats and so on.

Include photos of some typical treatments – low floor trams/platform stops, new trains, Spencer St station, SmartBus stops/buses, TGSIs etc.

3.3 Required actions

The following chapters set out the required actions for continued development of accessible public transport to 2012. In the final chapter, the full Action Plan is presented in a summary table with indicative responsibilities and timing.

Table 3.1: Progress towards accessible public transport in 2004/05

	Percentage of items compliant with DSAPT											
Standard area	Melbourne Trains		Melbourne Trams		Melbourne Buses		V/Lines Trains		Regional Buses		Taxis*	
	Infrastructure	Vehicles	Infrastructure	Vehicles	Infrastructure	Vehicles	Infrastructure	Vehicles	Infrastructure	Vehicles	Infrastructure	Vehicles
2. Access paths	10		74		46		35		32			
3. Manoeuvring areas	66	100	79	23	50	40	99	100	80	20	80	100
4. Passing areas	73		78		50		89		60		80	
5. Resting points	86						69					
6. Ramps	22	100	100	23	50	40	35	100	50	20		
7. Waiting areas	39		11		50		84		100			
8. Boarding	95	100	3	0	50		94	100	100		80	
9. Allocated space		100	89	23	50	40		100	100	20	80	100
10. Surfaces	60	100	93	100	38	40	64	100	26	20	80	
11. Handrails and grabrails	86	100	100	59		40	25	53		20		
12. Doorways and doors	87	100		100		40	81	66		20		100
13. Lifts	100						100					
14. Stairs	29			23			64					
15. Toilets	81						63	53				
16. Symbols	50	50	100	23		100	98	100		100		
17. Signs	100	50	100	100	100	100	100	100	25	100		0
18. Tactile ground surface indicators	13		3		4		12		3		0	
19. Alarms	0						100					
20. Lighting	28	100		33		40	3	100		20		
21. Controls	57	100		100			38	68				
22. Furniture and fitments	100						14					
23. Street furniture (seats)	55		82		75		93		80		?	
24. Gateways	100						100					
25. Payment of fares	100		100	100		100	100	100		100		100
26. Hearing augmentation - listening systems	2	100	19	23		100	14	100		100		
27. Information	100	100	100	100	100	100	37	100	50	100	100	100
28. Booked services								100				
29. Food and drink services	?							100				
30. Belongings		100						100				
31. Priority seating		100		100		100		100		100		

KEY

- Not applicable
- Fully accessible
- Does not meet 2007 milestone
- Does not meet 2012 milestone
- Meets 2012 milestone

Cross-hatching denotes where funding is already committed, to provide progress at least to the next milestone.

*Taxis also require action in relation to response times (Schedule 1 of the DSAPT)

Table 3.2: DSAPT Standards areas requiring continued progress towards 2012

	Infrastructure		Vehicles
Melbourne trains	Access paths Pedestrian rail level crossings Ramps Waiting areas Surfaces Handrails & grabrails	Stairs TGSIs Alarms Lighting Hearing augmentation Food & drink services	No action required
Melbourne trams	Waiting areas Boarding Surfaces TGSIs		Manoeuvring areas Ramps Boarding Allocated space Handrails & grabrails Stairs Symbols Lighting Hearing augmentation
Melbourne buses	Access paths Manoeuvring areas Passing areas Ramps Waiting areas	Boarding Allocated space Surfaces TGSIs	Manoeuvring areas Ramps Allocated space Surfaces Handrails & grabrails Doorways and doors Lighting
V/Line trains	Access paths Pedestrian rail level crossings Ramps Waiting areas Surfaces Handrails & grabrails	TGSIs Lighting Controls Furniture & fitments Hearing augmentation	Handrails & grabrails Toilets
Regional buses	Access paths Ramps Surfaces Signs TGSIs Information		Manoeuvring areas Ramps Allocated space Surfaces Handrails & grabrails Doorways and doors Lighting
Taxis	Surfaces Signs TGSIs Street furniture		Raised identity signs Response times

4 System-wide initiatives

4.1 Policy and planning

4.1.1 Public Transport Division

The Department of Infrastructure's Public Transport Division (PTD), the lead planning agency for public transport in Victoria, ensures that DDA requirements are incorporated into every public transport project as it is developed.

PTD has its own Accessibility Unit with expertise in DDA compliance and the DSAPT. The unit provides advice and feedback on the design and accessibility requirements of new and upgraded infrastructure, rolling stock and public transport premises. It contributes to all public transport policy and planning initiatives, and establishes processes, benchmarks and key performance indicators to be met by operators and service providers. It employs people with disabilities and consults with operators, agencies and the wider disability community seeking input and feedback to improve access in programs and projects.
All new works, services and substantially upgraded services coming into operation after October 2002, must comply with the DSAPT in full. Therefore all operators and project managers need to understand the requirements and implement them in all programs and projects. The Accessibility Unit has a key role in expanding the knowledge and understanding of the requirements for all parties involved.

Major projects are also scrutinised by the Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC), a Ministerially appointed consultative committee representing people with disabilities.

✓ ACTION 1
Continue to resource accessible public transport in Victoria.

✓ ACTION 2
Continue to develop knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the DSAPT to achieve compliance on all new and upgraded works and services.

4.1.2 Public Transport Access Committee

PTAC advises the Minister for Transport and the Department of Infrastructure, through the Public Transport Division, about issues concerning access to public transport for people with disabilities. It also provides a forum for the Minister and Director of Public Transport to consult with people with disabilities and to inform them about access issues and new public transport initiatives.

Representatives of the train, tram, bus and taxi companies, as well as staff from DOI's Public Transport Division attend committee meetings. PTAC members represent peak disability organisations in Victoria and include people with disabilities.

Members are appointed for a three-year term, and the Committee meets quarterly.

PTAC's role includes:

- Providing the Minister with strategic advice on access to public transport, including aspects of the built environment;
- Monitoring compliance with the DDA and DSAPT;

- Disseminating advice and information back to the broader disability community through their member organisation networks; and
- Liaison with the Victorian Taxi Directorate on access to taxi services.

The Victorian Government highly values the contribution made by representatives of disability organisations in Victoria through PTAC and undertakes to continually improve the process and effectiveness of these committees in consultation with committee members.

4.1.3 APTNJC and APTNAC

PTD is represented on the national committees Accessible Public Transport National Jurisdictional Committee (APTNJC) and Accessible Public Transport National Advisory Committee (APTNAC) managed by DOTARS and reporting to SCOT and ATC. They include representatives of all state and territory public transport jurisdictions, operators, industry, and peak disability organisations, Attorney General and HREOC. They developed the DSAPT and are responsible for monitoring implementation.

✓ ACTION 3

Continue to consult with people with disabilities primarily through regular meetings of the Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC) in ensuring that the interests of people with disabilities are fully accounted for in public transport planning and operations.

4.1.4 DSAPT review

The Victorian Government recognises DSAPT is, however, believes a big step forward, it may requires some amendment to make them more appropriate for the dynamic environment of transport, rather than being based as they are, on standards for the more static building environment.

The Commonwealth Minister for Transport and Regional Services, in consultation with the Attorney General, is to review the efficiency and effectiveness of the Standards within five years after they take effect (i.e. October 2007). The review is to include whether discrimination has been removed as far as possible, according to the requirements in Schedule 1 (the milestones) and any necessary amendments. The review has not yet commenced. DOI will set up a consultative process to review the DSAPT and make a submission to DOTARS.

✓ ACTION 4

Undertake consultations with stakeholders on the DSAPT, make international comparisons and prepare a submission to DOTARS as part of the Five Year Review on areas where the standards can be improved.

4.2 Information

4.2.1 Information and signage

Information provision for public transport in Victoria is primarily the responsibility of Metlink. It coordinates the provision of maps, timetables, web-based services, information, phone lines, advertising, marketing, signage, shops and ticket sellers. Metlink has developed a web based Journey Planner, which will provides linked travel options across Victoria.

Metlink plans to deliver 100% compliance for symbols and signs at metropolitan train stations by the end of 2007 via their Wayfinding Signage Project. A fully DDA compliant Style Guide has been developed for consistent application to all public transport signs, symbols, graphics and information throughout the state. The project will also provide improved (and compliant) signage and information at stations, tram and bus stops throughout Melbourne.

Information and signage provision in regional Victoria is being considered by Metlink and will be addressed with V/Line Passenger and relevant bus operators/councils as appropriate.

✓ ACTION 5
Complete the Metlink roll out of metropolitan signage and address regional signage changes.

✓ ACTION 6
Continue to provide compliant Metlink whole-of-state information about accessible public transport services in Victoria.

4.2.2 Other programs

The Victorian Government wishes to encourage people with disabilities to use public transport, by providing information, improving the quality of service, assistance and other aspects of accessibility not covered by the foregoing actions. There are many supporting DOI activities, including behaviour change programs such as TravelSmart, the Local Area Access Demonstration Project, and customer and satisfaction surveys. Other agencies such as VicRoads, DHS and DVC manage programs in community awareness, education and actions to improve road infrastructure in general and access for people with disabilities, which could be very effectively coordinated with the actions for public transport.

A number of key actions are listed below.

✓ ACTION 7
Continuously improve services for people with disabilities through consultation (PTAC or other means), education and communication of the latest improvements, encourage use of new facilities and seek feedback on experiences gained.

✓ ACTION 8
Coordinate public transport improvements with other programs and improvements in facilities for people with disabilities with VicRoads, local government and other stakeholders.

4.2.3 Inter Departmental Committee (IDC) on Disability

The Department of Premier and Cabinet established the IDC chaired by DHS to progress disability issues as a whole-of-government initiative involving all agencies. One initiative concerns the design and standards for wheelchairs and mobility aids in relation to using public transport. DHS together with DOI, is implementing a whole of government approach to disseminating information. A brochure has been developed on the scope of assumptions and functional requirements for passengers using mobility aids embodied in the DDA and DSAPT. It will be distributed to passengers, prescribers and manufactures of wheelchairs and mobility aids, all operators of public transport services and relevant agencies providing disability services. Supplementary information for suppliers and manufacturers of mobility aids and safety advice for passengers are also being developed.

✓ ACTION 9
Implement the whole-of-government strategy in relation to design and standards for wheelchairs and mobility aids on public transport in Victoria.

4.2.4 Wheelchair Safety at Pedestrian Rail Level Crossings Task Force (WCSTF)

The Victorian Government established a Wheelchair Safety Task Force in 2001 to advise the Minister for Transport on measures to improve safety for people using mobility aids using pedestrian rail level crossings. It identified 25 recommendations, which were accepted by the Minister for Transport and have been implemented by DOI. Safety guidelines for wheelchair and scooter users are being developed.

✓ ACTION 10
Complete the Wheelchair Safety at Pedestrian Rail Level Crossings Task Force Action Plan.

4.3 Ticketing

From 2007, a new Smartcard-based ticketing system known will be progressively introduced across all forms of public transport in Melbourne and regional Victoria. Provision for compliance with DSAPT was included in the ticketing contract specification and was a fundamental requirement. The Transport Ticketing Authority (TTA) is responsible for delivering the new system and has been addressing access and DDA compliance issues in consultation with people with disabilities. This will continue well beyond the initial roll out.

It will provide a system of access to ticketing and payment of fares based on international best practice. This includes:

- Purchasing proven hardware from globally recognised suppliers with experience in supporting people with disabilities;
- Introducing Smartcard vending machines with a guidance system of tactile and large print cues for people with vision impairment; and
- Continued research and development of a second generation vending machine as new technology becomes available to provide improved access for people using wheelchairs.

Access to the coin slot on vending machines onboard trams for people using wheelchairs is at times difficult. Therefore as an alternative, TTA will install vending machines at superstops and there will be other options to purchase and reload Smartcards including;

- TTA's website;
- TTA's TTY equipped call centre;
- Auto reload via bank account or credit card;
- Retail outlets (with accessibility forming part of the selection criteria); and
- Other vending machines such as at stations and at bus interchanges.

✓ ACTION 11
Ensure that the new ticketing system is implemented to the relevant DSAPT standards.

4.4 Customer service

Metlink provides the central focus for customer service statewide and operates customer feedback and complaints mechanisms through a customer feedback number (131 638).

All operators are required to continue to improve their customer service to people with disabilities, as part of general business, and to provide their customers with more information and support when using the network. All customer service officers are required to receive specialised training to assist people with disabilities in tasks like navigating around a station and boarding a train, tram, bus or taxi.

Two initiatives from Connex are the provision of staff in the morning peak at 31 new 'host' stations and Authorized Officers travelling on trains after 9pm, with target coverage of 80% of all train kilometres during this time period. Connex provides a customer feedback number (1800 800 705).

Yarra Trams provides customer service staff on central city tram stops and there are Authorized Officers travelling on trams throughout the network. Yarra Trams customer feedback number is 1800 800 166.

V/Line Passenger provides conductors to assist passengers and operates customer feedback and complaints mechanisms through a customer feedback number (136 196).

All pedestrian rail level crossings have a feedback number (1800 001 050) for reporting faults or unsatisfactory pedestrian rail level crossings.

4.5 Monitoring and reporting progress

Monitoring and reporting on progress is an important component of ensuring progress continues. DOI is developing a reporting framework with the following objectives:

- Ensuring that progress is continuing and sufficient funding is available to meet or exceed the DSAPT progress milestones;
- Refining delivery mechanisms and design solutions from the experiences gained along the way;
- Reporting on progress at a state level; and
- Providing information to publicise accessible facilities and services and promote their use by people with disabilities.

PTD requires annual audit updates from all operators and is developing systems for information sharing particularly with Metlink. Report-backs will be required from those implementing new programs (eg franchisees, road authorities or other agencies) so that the audit matrix can be kept up to date.

Maps, graphs or other graphical illustrations of progress will be used to provide supplementary information for reporting purposes, including information to help users of the system as it becomes increasingly accessible with time.

✓ ACTION 12

Develop and implement an effective monitoring and reporting process for each component of the DDA Action Plan to ensure that progress, learning and statutory reporting needs are fulfilled.

5 Melbourne trains

5.1 Current situation

The overall level of train fleet compliance is well ahead of the DSAPT progress milestones.

Melbourne's suburban train network has 15 routes and 209 stations, on railway lines extending radially from the city centre through the suburbs. Approximately 12,000 passenger train services provide for more than 2.8 million passenger journeys each week. Connex provides suburban rail services under a partnership agreement with the Victorian Government.

As at 1 May 2006, the suburban electric train fleet comprises 329 three-car EMUs (Electric Multiple Units). This fleet includes 58 X'Trapolis, 72 Siemens, 187 recently refurnished Comeng and 12 Hitachi three-car set units (or 6 six-car sets). All except the Hitachi units are compliant with DDA requirements.

There are 209 train stations in the suburban network with high levels of DSAPT compliance on many items at the 209 suburban tram stations. Many stations are above or below ground level, generally accessed by ramps rather than stairs, with lifts in a few cases, to provide access for people with disabilities. Pedestrian crossings of rail tracks present particular difficulties for wheelchair users, especially negotiating the gap next to the rail where the train wheel flange has to go (the 'flange gap'), and protection of pedestrians in general from trains at these points is a significant general safety issue.

Under the partnership arrangement, Connex has prepared an Action Plan to comply with the DSAPT, including a whole of system compliance audit and preparation of annual accessibility works programs. In doing so they consulted with PTAC, gained PTD approval and lodged it with HREOC in June 2005. Each year, Connex will report on the implementation of the previous year's work program and provide a detailed scope for the next two years' works plans.

Connex has started a $20.7m works program to achieve the 2007 DDA milestones. The works program (Connex, 2004) includes prioritisation based on the following criteria:

- Areas of high patronage levels to benefit the broadest range of people;
- Locations of hospitals and other facilities used by people with disabilities;
- Stations preferred by people with vision impairment (as surveyed in 2003); and
- Stations where numerous complaints have been received.

Significant progress has been made through the current works program on:

- Installation of TGSIs;
- Handrails;
- Priority signage;
- Waiting areas; and
- Surfaces.

A forward work program for ramp upgrades has been prepared and funded to meet the 2007 milestone. The 2005/06 works program focuses on TGSIs, handrails and ramp works, seats and signage improvements and car park works. The majority of metropolitan railway stations will receive some form of accessibility improvement in 2005/06. The Franchise Agreement also includes provision for upgrading pedestrian rail level crossings at stations particularly where they provide the only access between platforms.

5.2 Actions required

5.2.1 Infrastructure

Connex expects to meet or exceed all of the 2007 milestones. Accessibility works on the metropolitan train network are proceeding well and there are no significant issues evident in the short term. Numerous major projects, like the redevelopment of Southern Cross Station and the major upgrades of Flinders Street Station, Jolimont, North Melbourne and Noble Park Stations will significantly improve the accessibility of each station by installation of lifts and/or the re-design or addition of access paths such as ramps, overpasses and/or subways.

The key outstanding issues for infrastructure are listed below, with their related actions.

Access paths

At many railway stations the access path to both inbound and outbound platforms is across a pedestrian rail level crossing. The gaps in the crossing next to the rail (required to accommodate the flanges on train wheels) presents a hazard to passengers using a wheelchair or mobility aid, where the front wheels are small enough to drop into them and become trapped. DOI, VicTrack and rail operators have undertaken considerable work to reduce the risk of entrapment through the Wheelchair Safety Task Force the Safety at Pedestrian Rail Level Crossings Protection Upgrade Program, the publicly announced Sinclair Knight Merz-led Research Project and the Coronial Findings Action Plan. Working closely with the Victorian Rail Industry Operators' Group, a new draft Standard for Pedestrian Rail Level Crossings has been released and is under consideration for national adoption. The Standard addresses the minimum width and depth of the flange gap required for freight and passenger rolling stock and includes features for better access for people with disabilities in compliance with the DSAPT. Four prototype crossings have been built in accordance with the draft Standard, for further assessment. Assuming the successful current review of these prototypes, DOI and Connex will subsequently upgrade further pedestrian level crossings to this enhanced standard.

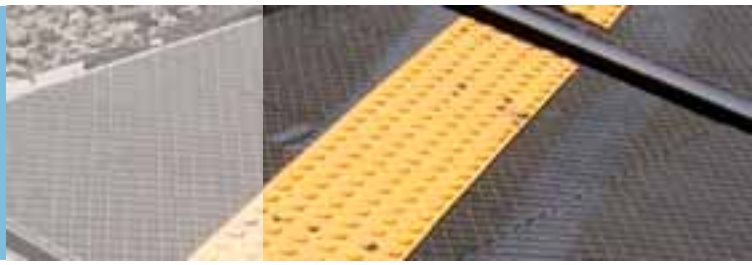
In addition, it is proposed that no new at-grade pedestrian crossings will be built; access will be provided as required by grade separated facilities instead.

Manoeuvring

Many metropolitan stations were extended in length for the 1956 Olympic Games when the new Harris trains were acquired. Some extensions were narrower than the general platform width and now create difficulties for passengers using wheelchairs and scooters manoeuvring on to the manual ramps deployed by the driver at the front carriage of the train. Connex has audited all stations and identified the problem ones and is currently implementing a works program to widen such platforms in advance of the milestone requirements.

✓ ACTION 13

Finalise the draft Standard for Pedestrian Rail Level Crossings for state and national adoption, and implement a program to upgrade existing rail level crossings to the new standard.



✓ ACTION 14
Continue the program of platform widening at the narrow ends of stations ahead of the milestones to alleviate manoeuvring limitations for people using wheelchairs and scooters boarding trains.

Ramps

Many existing access ramps to stations are at a gradient of 1 in 8 or 1 in 9, which are too steep for people with disabilities. Some stations would require substantial works to achieve the required grade of 1 in 14 although at others relatively minor works are required. Appropriate treatments need to be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the physical constraints at particular locations.

During 2004, the Victorian Government provided Connex with additional funding of $820,000 for ramp modifications at selected stations, which will ensure that 25% of paths are accessible by the end of 2007. Further funding will be needed beyond this. DOI and Connex have identified, prioritised and costed the station ramp works to be completed between 2007 and 2012, and will establish a strategy for achieving full accessibility thereafter. Lifts would provide the most cost effective access solution in some situations where space may be limited and ramps would become very long, but maintenance and operation at unstaffed stations are also factors to be considered beyond 2012.

In addition it will be necessary to ensure that all new works or major station upgrades are done in accordance with the DSAPT.

✓ ACTION 15
Complete the program of access path and ramp works required to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones.

✓ ACTION 16
Establish the strategy for full accessibility to be provided to stations beyond 2012.

Stairs

Some stairs at stations do not have the required treads or dimensions or colour contrasted nosings, and works programs are in place to upgrade them where possible to meet the 2007 milestone and will be extended to meet the 2012 milestone.

✓ ACTION 17
Continue the works program to achieve compliance for stairs.

TGSIs

Connex has started a major works program to install TGSIs at various stations in order to meet the 2007 milestone. The locations were chosen in consultation with people with vision impairment following a survey executed by the DOI. This work will continue beyond 2007 at other locations to be determined, following a similar consultative procedure.

✓ ACTION 18
Continue the current program of TGSI installation at train stations to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones.

Lighting

The DSAPT requires lighting at minimum levels of illumination in certain situations. Lighting at Melbourne train stations mostly exceeds the relevant standard in many locations.

✓ ACTION 19
Implement lighting upgrades as required (eg at City Loop stations) to meet the 2007 milestone.

Hearing augmentation

The DSAPT require hearing augmentation where a public address system is installed, in both infrastructure and vehicles. The current solution is to provide supplementary visual information for people with hearing impairment.[1] Hearing Loops are provided at the Underground Loop stations of Parliament, Flagstaff and Melbourne Central, and at Box Hill station. However, Hearing Loops have technical limitations and do not work for many types of hearing impairment or hearing aids, or in noisy external environments with high levels of electrical interference. Proposals to develop Australian Standards for options for hearing augmentation have been supported but not yet developed.

Connex will execute a trial at Flinders Street Station to determine the most suitable hearing augmentation product, in consultation with people with hearing impairment. If successful the system may be rolled out to further stations across the network.

The current preferred method of hearing augmentation which suites all types of hearing impairment and aid is to provide visual information instead.

✓ ACTION 20
Complete investigations into hearing augmentation solutions for stations, and develop an implementation plan to meet the standards as far as possible.

Large print timetables are being installed on all metropolitan stations and further initiatives are outlined in the next section.

Information

Metlink is developing a central information system for all public transport modes and services across the state including a suite of brochures, a comprehensive web site, telephone information services, customer feedback protocols, information networks, SMS timetable options, and a journey planner.

Premium stations are fully staffed and Customer Service Officers provide assistance on various stations at peak times and special events.

With staff and real-time information displays at most stations and public address systems and timetables at all stations, the Melbourne train network provides information in various formats. To achieve full compliance, DOI, Connex and Metlink are considering various projects to further improve the accessibility of information at stations. This initiative will be supported by the installation of Hearing Loops, where appropriate given their limitations, and new signage, as mentioned previously.

1 For electrified trains and large outdoor stations there is currently no feasible alternative. A hearing loop will not work because of interference with the high voltage overhead system and background noise. Connex is working closely with other train operators and train manufacturers to further investigate suitable solutions.

Audible 'next train' information is provided at self-service panels on most suburban stations; passengers press a green button to receive a recorded message. This technology has limitations at major and junction stations and a technological solution is still being developed.

Connex plans to improve visual information at stations via wider provision of Passenger Information Displays (PIDs) to assist hearing-impaired passengers and will also investigate the feasibility of a visual display to complement the existing audible 'next train' service.

✓ ACTION 21
Improve passenger information displays (PIDs) at major and junction stations and investigate a visual display to complement the audible 'next train' service at suburban stations.

Food and drink services

Connex is undertaking a review of vending machines at metropolitan stations to identify where if at all, existing leased equipment may create access difficulties for people with disabilities. This is in anticipation of either modifying the equipment or amending the existing lease.

Appropriate changes will be made to leases and, if necessary, alternative or modified equipment will be utilised.

✓ ACTION 22
Complete the review of Food and Drink Services.

5.2.2 Vehicles

Having fully refurbished the existing Comeng trains and commissioned two new types of trains (Siemens and X'Trapolis), existing rolling stock (excluding the 12 Hitachis units which are planned to be phased out of service in future) is fully compliant with DSAPT.

Signs and symbols

Existing rolling stock currently provide information via visual passenger information displays.

Metlink is upgrading all signs on the metropolitan train network to the benefit of all train users, and to provide full DDA compliance. To supplement Metlink's program, Connex has developed a program for symbols and signs on rolling stock for completion by 2007.

✓ ACTION 23
Develop and implement a program to upgrade symbols and signs on Melbourne trains to accessibility standards

6 Melbourne trams

6.1 Current situation

Melbourne has the third largest tram and light rail network in the world. It comprises about 250km of track, on which 28 main routes carry about 2.5 million passenger trips a week. It serves mainly the inner and middle suburbs; most of the network is within 15km of the city centre and two thirds of it operates in mixed road traffic. Tram services are provided under a partnership agreement with the operator, Yarra Trams.

6.1.1 Tram fleet

There are 95 C and D-class (Citadis and Combino) low-floor trams introduced between 2001 and 2003. Aside from issues that prevent the use of deployable ramps at this time, in other respects the low-floor trams are in accordance with the DSAPT.

The older trams in the fleet are not wheelchair accessible due their high floors and steps, but they comply with many other parts of the DSAPT (eg handrails, signs, priority seating). Refurbishment programs have been implemented to improve accessibility and compliance W – class trams are treated separately as heritage vehicles. Deployment of W-class trams has been reduced so that only 35 are required for service at any one time (including spares).

The total fleet (excluding the heritage W-class trams) is 411 trams , of which the 95 C and D-class trams (23% of the total) comply with the DSAPT.

The 95 C and D-class trams have been deployed to provide a low-floor service on the following main routes, chosen not only for accessibility but also for passenger capacity and operating efficiency:

- Route 6 (Glen Iris to Melbourne University);
- Route 72 (Camberwell to Melbourne University);
- Route 96 (East Brunswick to St Kilda Beach); and
- Route 109 (Box Hill to Port Melbourne).

In addition to this, partial coverage may be provided on other routes to be determined, as permitted by tram availability.

6.1.2 Tram infrastructure

There are 1,785 individual tram stops in the Melbourne network. Almost a third of them are narrow safety zones, and almost two thirds rely on passenger access from the kerb through traffic. A few stops (11%) are located in tram reservations and medians. Currently only 88 (5%) are fully accessible and DDA compliant with wheelchair-accessible platforms. Older passengers and those with prams, luggage and shopping also benefit from the platforms which are providing faster safer loading for all passengers.

More platform stops are being constructed at some of the most important locations in the network, particularly in inner Melbourne under the Tram Priority Program, and at some high priority sites as part of the franchise agreement with Yarra Trams.

6.1.3 Accessibility progress

Yarra Trams is required to prepare a plan of action to comply with the DSAPT. Yarra Trams is also required to undertake audits and prepare two-year DDA Works Programs, updated on an annual basis. The Action Plan will be developed to reflect this updated Victorian Government Action Plan recognising the complexity of providing compliant access to the tram network.

In its current works program, Yarra Trams is planning and implementing further stop upgrades to full DDA compliance including:

- Stops along the former St Kilda and Port Melbourne railway lines on Routes 96 and 109;
- The Alfred Hospital tram stop on Route 72;
- Selected stops in Dandenong Road on Route 5;
- Options near the Cabrini Hospital tram stop;
- Termini on Route 48, Route 6 and Route 1;
- Options for stops in the City of Yarra;
- A stop at the intersection of Bridge and Burwood Rds and Church St;
- Two tram stops in Fitzroy Street St Kilda; and
- Other pilot stops.

Also improving tram accessibility is the Tram Priority Program (known as Think Tram). This $30 million project aims to reduce tram travel times and increase reliability on the busiest sections of the tram network. Because platform stops offer faster boarding and alighting for all tram customers, particularly at very busy tram stops, they offer travel time benefits for the tram system as well as accessibility for people with disabilities.

A third major project exploring additional platform stops is VicRoads' Tram 109 project. Consultation on possible stop locations and options for layouts has been undertaken.

6.2 Actions required

6.2.1 Infrastructure

Tram stops differ from other infrastructure upgrades in that in many cases, the whole stop must be upgraded to achieve compliance.

Level access stops

Melbourne's tram system presents the most complex issues in addressing the accessibility requirements for people with disabilities (particularly those in wheelchairs). There are only a few sections of the system where the original design of the infrastructure incorporates level entry onto trams (such as the sections that originally operated as train lines, and the recent Box Hill and Vermont South extensions). At all other locations passengers must climb steps to enter the tram. A network with nearly 1,800 tram stops – the third largest tram network in the world – adds a further dimension to the size and complexity of this issue.

Modern fully low floor trams have floor heights between 260mm and 310mm above the ground (compared to 850mm for standard trams) so passengers still have to negotiate the step from the road pavement. This can be compared to low floor buses where the variable suspension that allows them to 'kneel' at bus stops and the fact that passengers board from the footpath rather than the road reduces the step height to approximately 100mm.

There are only two ways to bridge the gap between the tram floor and the road. Either the roadside infrastructure needs to be brought to the level of the tram floor or the tram needs to be fitted with a device to allow passengers using wheelchairs to negotiate the height safely. Many passengers with physical disabilities and older passengers also have difficulties with steps. There is no doubt that people in wheelchairs greatly prefer level access wherever possible. This ensures the safest, most efficient and most dignified means to provide access for people with disabilities. Level access boarding also provides greatly improved amenity and safety to all passengers, reduces loading time and operating costs and promotes patronage increase. However, the construction required to achieve level access may have a significant impact on traffic congestion, parking availability, business and resident access and, in extreme situations, local business viability.

As described in Chapter 4, considerable work has been undertaken in Melbourne to develop a 'toolbox' of options for modifying the road surface to provide level access in different tram/street environments and some 88 stops (as at early 2006) have been constructed which provide for level access. Findings from the consultation and implementation of level access at these sites have been:

- It takes substantial time and consultation to address local concerns and get relevant planning permits to construct a level access stop;
- The issues vary on a location-by-location basis so a one size fits all approach is not appropriate;
- It may not be possible to construct level access at all tram stops;
- Where the tram is in a narrow road reserve achieving level access stops along the length of the road could involve completely rebuilding the tram system and changing the road and footpath arrangements adjacent to the tram lines;
- In most cases the best solution for the provision of level access is the construction of a platform separating the tram from other traffic where the platform itself is accessible to people with disabilities and provides level access to a low floor tram; and
- There can be considerable benefits to other tram passengers in providing a well-designed platform stop.

In response, this Action Plan proposes a substantial commitment to the construction of level access tram stops according to the following guidelines:

- Where warranted in general for faster loading, safety and patronage reasons (eg CBD stops, St Kilda Road); and/or
- Where physical space permits (eg within separate tram ROW or in median strips); and/or
- With an acceptable level of road traffic disruption (eg on low-traffic roads, or where alternative routes can generally accommodate any displaced traffic);
- At major tram route termini (where there is adequate space available); and/or
- At major public destinations (ie hospitals, universities, sporting venues etc).

This strategy allows a program to be developed focussing on more straightforward locations first and moving to more difficult stops as the program progresses. It also allows flexibility to tap into other programs, such as the Tram Priority Program to construct platforms at other sites where consultation is already well advanced or where other road works provides an opportunity.

Figure 6.1, illustrates where the program will be targeted. Initial work suggests that over 560 stops (approximately 32% of the total number of stops, but servicing over 60% of actual tram boardings) could be level-access stops under the above guidelines. The remaining 1,200 stops (mainly the relatively low-use kerb access stops, or those in activity centres such as shopping strips) would require continued further study to establish the longer-term solution. In some cases further opportunities to provide an infrastructure-based solution will present, depending on the impact on other road traffic. An alternative solution involving a tram-boarding device will need to be investigated where the provision of level access is not feasible (see following section).

The cost of implementing the program as illustrated in Figure 6-1is estimated at $150m. Stage one of this program (to achieve level access at 25% of stops) will cost $118m.

While there is now considerable experience in implementing and investigating alternative level access stop solutions, further work is required to finalise the standards that should apply for a program of this magnitude. Extensive consultation along Route 109 (including construction of several kerb access stops) has determined that while kerb access stops are not the preferred solution of local communities there are locations where their use may be appropriate. Further work is required to provide guidelines for the use of kerb access stops.

✓ ACTION 24
Adopt level access stops as the preferred solution for tram boarding wherever practicable.

✓ ACTION 25
Develop standards for the installation of level access stops including desirable and minimum dimensions for platforms and further develop the tram 'toolkit' to provide road planners guidance as to where various solutions can be applied.

✓ ACTION 26
Continue to increase the number of level access stops achieved through opportunities through other programs, road upgrades, development projects and tram system upgrades.

✓ ACTION 27
Implement a new tram platform program specifically designed to maximise the number level access stops constructed at relatively low-impact and/or high-use locations with particular emphasis on routes with low floor trams already operating (eg Collins Street, St Kilda Road).

Waiting areas

Waiting areas at shelters require priority stickers to identify allocated spaces and priority seating.

✓ ACTION 28
Implement a program to prioritise seating and allocated spaces at waiting shelters.

Figure 6.1: Preferred Tram Stop Upgrade Strategy

KEY

Remaining stops (68% of total)

- Existing 103 stops (6%)
- Committed 81 stops (5%)
- Future proposed 420 stops (24%)

Accessible stops (32% of total)

- Access provided mainly by lifts in future trams, or accessible stops through other programs

Ramps

A further issue for wheelchair access is the provision of kerb ramps at kerb-side tram stops.

✓ ACTION 29

Develop a program of kerb ramp installations at kerb-side tram stops where on-vehicle boarding devices become available.

TGSIs

Whilst TGSI treatments are now provided as standard as part of the construction of level-access tram stops additional TGSIs will be required at standard kerb-side stops to meet the milestones required under the DSAPT.

It is expected the standards developed for local bus stops will provide the basis for TGSIs at kerb-side tram stops. Work being undertaken by VicRoads to better differentiate tram stops by colouring the road pavement may provide added advantage to people with a visual impairment at tram stops. It is important that suitable TGSI layouts are developed for existing kerb side stops in particular in association with new provisions under development for treatments at tram stops generally.

✓ ACTION 30

Establish suitable TGSI treatments for typical stop types (especially kerb side stops) and a program of implementation.

Hearing augmentation

Passenger Information Displays and real time information have been installed on approximately 150 tram stops to provide timetable information in visual and audible formats. This audible information is not deemed a public address system, and alternative visual information is provided.

✓ ACTION 31
Continue the program of PIDs and timetable information on tram stops.

Information

Timetable information is being rolled out on tram stops by Metlink and raised numbers provide the Metlink phone number for people with vision impairment to text or phone Metlink's timetable service. Customer service staff on some tram stops and at special events are available to assist passengers further with information.

6.2.2 Vehicles

To make use of infrastructure provided as part of a level access construction program, all new trams will be specified to be low-floor compatible with emerging level access stop standards. Work is currently underway to specify the procurement arrangements that should apply for the replacement of the fleet of Z3 and A-class trams that will be the next trams retired from service.

The exact replacement profile is yet to be determined, but Victoria continues to adhere to its current policy position that replacement of high floor trams should be based around the design life of the trams (30 to 35 years) which would see the new trams commence to enter service well before 2012 therefore meeting this milestone.

✓ ACTION 32
Continue to replace trams as they reach their design life (30 to 35 years) and require all new trams to be low floor and compatible with emerging level access stop standards.

The major issue that will need to be addressed as part of new tram procurement, will be whether or not a boarding device can be fitted to the trams to provide access for people in wheelchairs at locations where level access stops cannot be constructed.

If accessibility is to be provided where there is no level-access stop, automatic lifts for wheelchair users may be an alternative to manually deployed ramps. Such lifts (see Figure 6.2 for an example in Berlin) are used in European tram systems, but mainly where trams are segregated from other road traffic to a far greater degree than in Melbourne.

Technical developments continue around the world and recent innovations include automatic ramps on trains and trams and retrofitted lifts on trains. To date lifts have not been retrofitted into existing trams but some international legislation for access has shorter timeframes than Australia's and a number of prototypes are being tested.

Some of the existing trams may have sufficient manoeuvring areas to accommodate wheelchair users if technological solutions emerge. Manoeuvring, boarding, allocated space and handrails and grab rails are all part of the design or retrofit of trams.

The lift shown in the figure is a moveable section of the tram floor, which can be remotely lowered to road level for wheelchair access. It may also need to be deployed for use by other people with disabilities. More recently lifts that may not require structural changes to the tram are emerging as possible technologies (although none appear to be in use on trams at present).

Figure 6.2: Automatic wheelchair lift in a Berlin tram

There will be safety issues associated with the deployment of wheelchair lifts into a mixed traffic environment such as Melbourne and a safety case that meets the approval of the Safety Regulator will need to be prepared. DOI will undertake a range of investigations to determine if automatic lifts are a suitable alternative means of disabled access in low-floor trams.

There is also considerable work being undertaken under the leadership of VicRoads designed to improve the safety and speed of tram travel in Melbourne under the program title 'Driving With Trams'. This program has instigated changes to the Victorian road rules to clarify the requirement for drivers to give way to passengers boarding and alighting of trams. In addition, minor works to make stops more visible to drivers are being trialled and education campaigns to reinforce the need for drivers to give way to passengers alighting from trams are some of the initiatives being developed or implemented. The investigation of the actions required facilitating the deployment of lifts fits with this work.

✓ ACTION 33

Undertake further investigation of fitting lifts into new trams including any modifications required to the road infrastructure or road rules.

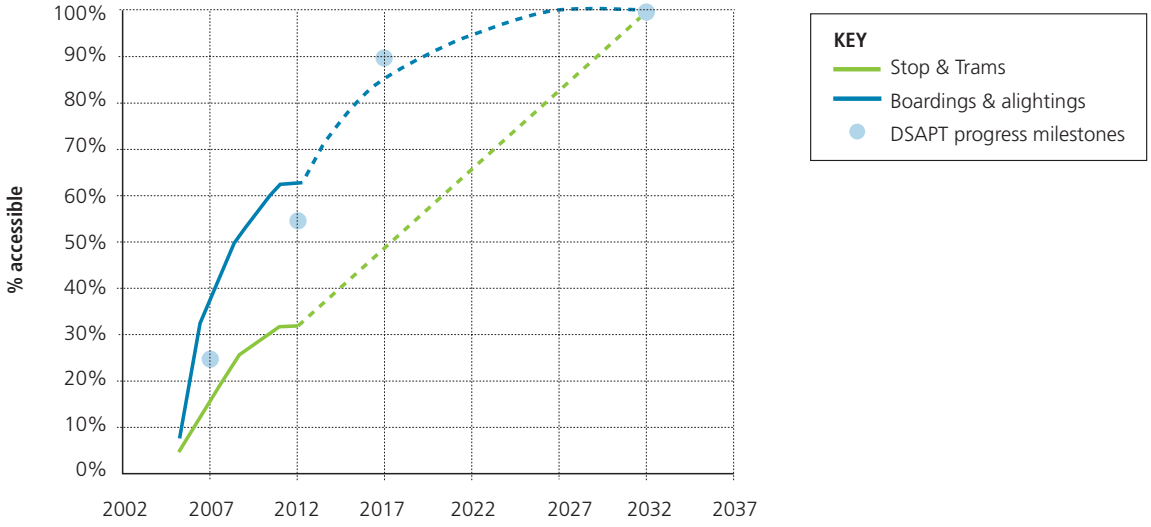
Figure 6.3 shows the progressive achievement of the accessibility of trams with the implementation of the major construction program of level access stops and the replacement of older trams with lift equipped low floor trams proposed under the actions above. The figure shows the number of stops that will become accessible to low floor trams over time as well as the estimated percentage of passenger movements (i.e. boarding or alighting a tram) that would be accessible. The figure shows that the programs proposed should enable all the milestones to be achieved over time.

Gap between tram floor and platform

The variability of the height of the tram as passenger loading varies and the requirement to provide for movement of the tram as it passes a platform means that the prescribed DSAPT standards cannot always be met.

Of existing low-floor trams, the new Citadis trams have an automatic threshold that bridges the horizontal gap, deployed by the driver automatically when requested by a passenger pressing the call button near the door. The Combino trams have a manually deployed cover plate. Current thinking is that a new tram would have either an automatic bridge like the Citadis tram or small flip out bridging plate that could be deployed as necessary by a driver.

Figure 6.3: Indicative progress towards a fully accessible tram system



Wheelchair users vary in their capacity to bridge this gap with their chairs. Some athletic wheelchair users manage access without a cover plate, even accessing trains unassisted. Others require a continuous surface to board safely.

An alternative solution is to provide a 'gap filler' on the trams made of a softer material that could withstand bumps should it touch the platform. The 'gap filler' solution has a potential attraction of not requiring driver intervention, which is better for passengers, and desirable from an operational point of view so if an engineering solution were feasible this would be the best option.

✓ ACTION 34

Develop further solutions for reducing the horizontal and vertical gaps between platforms and low floor trams. Consider options including a fixed engineering device not requiring driver intervention. Adopt standards for all low floor trams.

W-Class trams

The W-Class tram fleet consists of 51 heritage trams. Recent decisions associated with the operation of this fleet has limited its operation to the free City Circle tram route and Routes 78/79 which operates from St Kilda to Richmond along Chapel Street and Route 30 in La Trobe St. The reduced number of routes means that now at any one time the number of W-Class trams in active operation is 26. With 51 trams available in total the workload of the each tram is kept low.

✓ ACTION 35

Continue to operate only a limited number of W-Class heritage trams.

Stairs

Stairs on existing trams are currently non compliant but a program of colour contrasted nosings is being implemented to achieve compliancy.

✓ ACTION 36
Continue upgrading stairs on existing trams.

Symbols

Symbols on trams are limited to the new low floor trams so further action is limited until new trams are acquired.

Lighting

Yarra Trams is undertaking a review of lighting levels on existing trams to identify the scope of any necessary upgrades.

✓ ACTION 37
Complete the lighting review of existing trams and develop any necessary upgrade program.

Hearing augmentation

Visual Passenger Information Displays are installed on the new trams to provide visual augmentation of any route information announced by the driver. Route maps on trams are progressively being installed by Yarra Trams, route map pamphlets are available on trams, and drivers on older trams can assist passengers with information on their whereabouts on a journey.

✓ ACTION 38
Continue providing visual information to augment audible announcements by tram drivers.

7 Melbourne and regional route buses

7.1 Current situation

Existing bus services operated in Victoria comprise:

- Metropolitan buses - 39 operators run over 285 routes using 1,477 buses. Over 13,000 services operate each weekday, with a smaller number at weekends. Some 93.6 million passenger-trips are made each year.
- NightRider buses - 9 routes operate to and from the city serving suburban destinations, after midnight through the early hours of Saturday and Sunday mornings.
- Country buses - 80 operators cover more than 600 routes using 470 buses. Over 3,250 services run each weekday. Over 11 million passenger boardings are made annually.
- Airport buses – Low floor Skybus Airport buses run between the city and Melbourne Airport 24 hours a day, with connections to city hotels at peak times. Three other routes run daily to and from the east and south east suburbs. Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo also have daily connections with Melbourne Airport.
- School bus services - 574 operators use 1,583 buses to run 3,300 services throughout country and metropolitan Victoria. Students make around 29 million trips each year. School bus services are exempt from the requirements in the DSAPT but special provisions are made in local situations.

Larger bus operators account for a substantial proportion of services. Over half the metropolitan peak fleet is run by Ventura, Grenda's and Kefford together.

7.1.1 Bus infrastructure

Infrastructure for bus services in Melbourne is extensive. There are approximately 23,800 bus stops in metropolitan Melbourne, and a further 6,600 in regional areas. Responsibility for bus stop infrastructure is complex and is discussed further in the next section.

Other bus-related infrastructure includes bus interchanges and terminal stations on rail land, in local streets and on private land (eg at shopping centres), bus priority measures on the road system (bus-only lanes, bus-only signals and stand-up lanes at intersections etc) and bus layover and maintenance facilities (mainly private).

7.1.2 Current progress

Replacement of buses with low-floor, wheelchair-accessible vehicles is progressing well ahead of the DASPT milestones. The Bus Replacement Program has achieved almost 50% compliance across the state's bus fleet, with 90 buses replaced each year with new low floor buses fitted with manual ramps in the doorway deployed by the driver for wheelchair access.

Bus initiatives currently under way include the SmartBus program, which is progressively establishing a series of orbital bus routes linking key activity centres around metropolitan Melbourne, with high levels of bus priority, real time information at bus stops and significantly increased service frequencies. All new work is being constructed to DDA-compliant designs and is above the minimum requirements.

7.2 Actions required

7.2.1 Infrastructure

The key needs for continued development of an accessible bus system are to progress the installation of DDA-compliant TGSIs, and upgrade access paths and surfaces (hard standing areas) at bus stops. Whilst there are no technical difficulties in doing this (see Figure 7.1 for typical details) it is required over a large number of sites; for example, in the case of TGSIs, audits show that about 4% of the state's 30,000 bus stops are compliant at present, meaning that thousands of stops must be improved to keep pace with the DSAPT milestone requirements.

There are no DSAPT requirements for full compliance by 2007 at bus stops, as the milestones for bus stops only require 25% by 2007, 55% by 2012, 90% by 2017 and full compliance by 2022 for designated items. Some longer-term requirements include circulation, grading, some street furniture and information. Metlink is currently rolling out new signage and timetable information at all metropolitan bus stops, and developing comprehensive information systems for all public transport in the state. This includes telephone information, written material and the Internet.

There are many parfies operationally associated with bus stops including the bus operator, DOI who contracts for the bus operation, Road Authorities that are responsible for the footpaths and kerbs at and around the stops and parties who install and own shelters. As a result there is some confusion relating to the responsibility of various parties to upgrade bus stops to meet the requirements of Disability Discrimination Act.

Accordingly, considerable work has been undertaken to clarify the role of the various parties to provide an "operational" interpretation of the responsibilities. The following three principles have emerged will provide a guide to action for those responsible for bus stops:

- Principle 1 relating to provision of minimum requirements: DOI, as the provider of the bus service, should take primary responsibility for ensuring the compliance of those aspects of the bus stop which constitute the minimum requirement for designation of a bus stop, including a newly designated bus stop.
- Principle 2 relating to provision of additional infrastructure, especially shelters: Where a party substantially upgrades infrastructure at a bus stop (eg installing a shelter), that party will be responsible to ensure that that infrastructure is compliant with the DSAPT and also that any other obligations including ongoing maintenance triggered by the installation of the additional infrastructure are met.
- Principle 3 relating to the provision of supporting road infrastructure: Responsible Road Authorities may make major upgrades to the road infrastructure affecting a bus stop such as: footpath construction or renewal, road widening, kerb construction, shoulder sealing, construction or removal of an indented bus bay, or construction of a kerb outstand at the bus stop. Such works would generally be significant enough to trigger the requirement for full DDA compliance of the bus stop.

Figure 7 1: Typical Bus Stop DDA Treatment Details

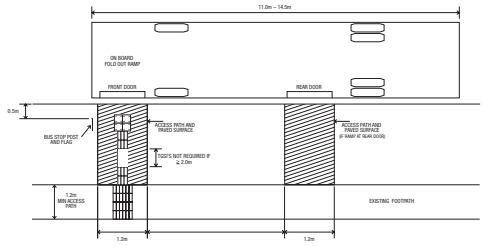


Fig. 1 DDA Transport Standards
Minimum Bus Stop Compliance Requirements

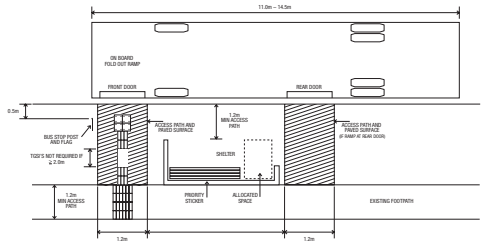


Fig. 2 DDA Transport Standards
Minimum Bus Stop Compliance Requirements – with optional shelter

The actions that stem from these principles are being incorporated into project development arrangements and guidelines for use by parties associated with bus stops so that uncertainty relating to jurisdiction is removed.

✓ ACTION 39

Develop projects and guidelines for distribution to parties associated with the operation of buses or the infrastructure in and around bus stops which are consistent with and assist to clarify responsibility and obligations associated with the DSAPT.

One outcome of the review of responsibilities is that where the DOI procures the operation of the bus service it is responsible to ensure that the bus stops associated with those services meet the milestones and standards established under the DSAPT. In respect of the first milestone in December 2007, this requires a significant investment in TGSIs and for subsequent milestones further installation of TGSIs and paving to provide adequate hard stand areas is also required.

✓ ACTION 40

Initiate a program of TGSI installation, access paths and surfaces upgrades at Melbourne and regional bus stops to deliver infrastructure in line with the DSAPT requirements to 2012.

7.2.2 Vehicles

The program of replacement and expansion of Victoria's bus fleets is well under way through the Bus Replacement Program currently replacing 90 buses each year with low floor buses fitted with ramps. The state route bus fleet is currently over 44% compliant with over 49% of the metropolitan scheduled bus fleet, and over 21% of the regional bus fleet compliant. Progress is currently ahead of the milestones, and continued commitment to a replacement program beyond 2007 at a rate to be confirmed, will be undertaken to ensure that the fleet is fully replaced in line with DSAPT requirements.

✓ ACTION 41

Continue the Bus Replacement Program of replacing Victoria's scheduled service buses with low floor buses beyond 2007.

8 Regional trains and coaches (V/Line Passenger)

8.1 Current situation

8.1.1 Trains

Victoria's country passenger rail network is made up of eight lines and 81 railway stations. Country rail services throughout Victoria are provided by V/Line Passenger Corporation, which is now managed by the Victorian Government. Several interstate rail services are also in operation. The main Melbourne–Sydney rail service is provided by the CountryLink XPT train. A Melbourne–Adelaide rail link is provided by The Overland train while The Ghan also serves Melbourne as part of its journey taking in Sydney, Adelaide, Alice Springs and Darwin.

Victoria's regional passenger rail network is being expanded with new services already re-introduced between Melbourne and Ararat, (and Beaufort) Bairnsdale (and Stratford), and Echuca.

Current services to Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley have been improved as part of the Regional Fast Rail project. Significantly increased levels of service and time savings are being delivered with substantial upgrading of the track.

A key consideration for V/Line Passenger services is that many of the DDA requirements are met by the presence of train attendants to provide direct assistance to passengers with disabilities. This provides personal assistance and changes the nature of compliance required at unstaffed locations. Any changes to the arrangements include full consideration of the implications for DDA compliance.

8.1.2 Coaches

V/Line Passenger operates some road coach services directly and manages other contracted services that use the same infrastructure and livery, ticketing, stops and booking systems. Metlink provides the central information service for all public transport services in Victoria.

8.2 Actions required

8.2.1 Infrastructure

V/Line is performing well against most milestones for infrastructure.

Areas for continued action before 2007 are:

- Waiting areas;
- TGSIs;
- Lighting;
- Furniture and fitments; and
- Hearing augmentation.

Areas for continued action before 2012 are:

- Access paths;
- Ramps;
- Surfaces;
- Handrails and grab rails;
- TGSIs;
- Lighting;
- Controls; and
- Furniture and fitments.

Most of these items require only minor works to achieve compliance and improved accessibility. Works would include upgrading paving, grading, installing TGSIs, improving lighting in interior passenger areas, seating and priority stickers, door and toilet door controls, and furniture and fitments.

For some compliance requirements involving specialist trade packages of work (e.g. tactile indicators on platforms) and particularly in remote locations, additional stations will be made compliant to achieve economies of scale.

If general refurbishment is undertaken at relevant stations, work will be done at the same time on DDA compliance issues to bring these stations up to full compliance across all requirements, thus achieving progress ahead of the milestones for many items.

✓ ACTION 42
Develop a detailed implementation program to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones at V/Line Passenger stations, and including upgrading some stations to full DDA compliance at the same time as significant station refurbishment works.

Access paths may include pedestrian rail level crossings, which would require upgrading under the Pedestrian Rail level Crossing Program managed by VicTrack. New standards are being developed which comply with the requirements of the DSAPT and as for metropolitan rail an upgrade program is operating. Priority for upgrade would be given to regional crossings where access to both station platforms relies on use of the crossing. This Program involves a number of jurisdictions including VicTrack as the state's asset owner, Pacific National who has the regional rail infrastructure lease and Australian Rail Track Corporation who has the interstate rail infrastructure lease.

✓ ACTION 43
Develop a prioritised implementation program to upgrade pedestrian rail level crossings at regional stations to the new Standards.

8.2.2 Vehicles

Trains

V/Line trains already meet the 25% and 55% milestones with about 89% compliance overall since the introduction of 38 new V'Locity trains to boost Fast Rail services.

No further action is required before 2012, although more work is needed to ensure that beyond 2012, new and refurbished vehicles continue to offer improved levels of accessibility. Currently passengers using wheelchairs and mobility aids travel in the conductor's compartment of some locomotive hauled N-set train configurations on regional services.

A discretionary program (i.e. ahead of the milestones) of upgrades has been identified to convert the 8 BTN carriages to provide wheelchair spaces and accessible toilets. The program would upgrade three train carriages per year during regular maintenance. It would remove the need for passengers using wheelchairs to travel in the conductor's compartment.

In addition there are 7 N-set carriages that will be upgraded to widen doors and would then allow wheelchair access to meet DDA requirements.

✓ ACTION 44
Continue the program of replacement and/or upgrading of V/Line Passenger trains to include upgrading locomotive-hauled N Set carriages to provide full access for people using wheelchairs and mobility aids.

Coaches

Regional coaches have already reached approximately 35% compliance through the Coach Replacement Program so have already met the first milestone. DOI Marketed services have achieved 27% compliance and V/Line Passenger services (train replacement services) have achieved 43% compliance.

Fitting modular hoists into the luggage compartment provides wheelchair access to the high floor, long haul coach vehicles and they are interchanged for services as required. Bookings for allocated spaces on coach services are therefore important to allow time for the installation of hoists. Operators advise passengers to contact them well in advance of travelling to identify the most suitable services and make any special arrangements necessary whilst they are in the early phases of compliance. Operators often timetable their accessible services where they can reliably be scheduled.

✓ ACTION 45

Continue the Coach Replacement Program and installation of wheelchair hoists to maintain progress in line with the DSAPT milestone requirements of 55% compliance for 2012.

9 Taxis

9.1 Current situation

Taxis carry over 32 million passenger-trips a year in Melbourne. They are particularly important for business and tourism and for providing transport for people with mobility difficulties or special needs. This latter role is growing and will become increasingly significant as the population ages.

Taxis also play a significant transport role in regional Victoria. Recently, nine taxi companies won tenders to provide community transport outside Melbourne; this is a market that is likely to become more important over time.

There are currently 4,425 licensed taxis in the Victoria, 367 of which are Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WATs). All comply with the DSAPT except for installation of raised identity numbers and response times. The Victorian Government regulates the release of licences on the basis of assessed consumer need.

A hoist equipped WAT, the 'Demand Response Bus', operates anywhere within a designated area in St Kilda and Port Melbourne for the normal Metcard fare. It must be booked by phone and accommodates up to three people using wheelchairs and four other people.

The Victorian Taxi Directorate operates the Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP) and the state subsidises 50% of the fares to all registered users up to a maximum of $50 per trip. It is a supplementary service operating beyond the requirements of the DSAPT. The annual program amounts to $40m pa in subsidy and is now means-tested. Registered users include people with various disabilities including vision impairment and mobility impairment and people unable to use regular public transport. Some users have unlimited use, others may have an annual limit which can be increased subject to approval. Both regular and WAT taxis provide the service.

People using wheelchairs make 500,000 taxi trips per annum. WATs are equipped to carry one wheelchair and up to four other passengers or two wheelchairs and up to six other passengers. Owner-drivers operate the majority. They are required to operate through depots that provide a dedicated WAT booking service. Their licence conditions allow them to carry other passengers when not engaged with wheelchair bookings; in many cases their financial viability depends on this. Depots allocate the wheelchair bookings first and only allow other bookings to be taken when they have all been done. A lifting fee of $10 is paid to the driver who assists the passenger to load and fix the restraints and seat belts, and the meter is not switched on until the driver is ready to depart. This complicates measurement of response times for WATs in comparison with regular taxis in Victoria, as required under the DSAPT.

The fleet is meeting present demands. It is therefore not proposed that peak licence taxis, beingintroduced as part of the Government's taxi and hire car reform, will be wheelchair accessible. This situation will be closely monitored.

9.2 Actions required

9.2.1 Infrastructure

Taxi ranks

The application of the DSAPT to taxi ranks is a local government responsibility and is not addressed in this Action Plan.

9.2.2 Vehicles

Most taxi operations are regulated where there is no direct state funding of vehicles, infrastructure or routes. Responsibility for DDA compliance would therefore be with the private sector and local government. The state assumes a partial DDA responsibility as a service provider through direct funding of the Multi Purpose Taxi Program fare subsidies.

The DSAPT contain several requirements for taxis and accessible taxis but there is no inter-relationship between the numbers of wheelchair accessible taxis and other taxis. Victoria has already achieved full compliance for its taxi fleet in the required areas of manoeuvring, allocated space, headroom, doorways and doors, payment of fares, and information.

Signs

The DSAPT requires raised taxi numbers to be placed on the exterior of the passenger doors forward of the handle. This has been deemed unsafe and impractical at the national level and DOTARS has referred the issue to the taxi industry for an alternative solution and to the Five Year Review of the Standards for possible amendment.

Schedule 1 (milestones) - Response times

Radio networks and co-operatives need to achieve the same response times for accessible taxis as other taxis, by the end of 2007.

The taxi industry advises that this is unachievable due to the nature of the two businesses, the type of data kept and the relative numbers of accessible and other taxis. VTD is monitoring the situation and applying operational requirements to achieve an optimum balance.

Victoria's position varies from other states due to the payment of the lifting fee to the driver and the requirement not to turn the meter on until the passenger is fully loaded and the taxi is ready to depart. This makes comparison of the time of arrival with the time of booking to be invalid.

The issue has been referred by DOTARS to the Five Year Review.

The State has introduced a number of measures to minimise waiting times for accessible taxis in the MPTP. All WAT jobs must be dispatched before any other jobs can be allocated. WAT drivers are monitored to ensure they maximise their WAT jobs and that their equipment and service is of the highest standard. It is likely that following the introduction of accreditation in Victoria, depots will be required to supply average arrival times of different types of taxis.

✓ ACTION 46
Continue the Multi Purpose Taxi Program.

✓ ACTION 47
Continue to monitor and improve response times for wheelchair accessible taxis.

✓ ACTION 48
Liaise with the taxi industry and refer taxi issues to the Five Year Review of the DSAPT.

10 Conclusions

Victoria is making significant progress in implementing the requirements of the DDA DSAPT in accordance with the milestones for train, bus and taxi modes. Many existing programs will contribute progress towards the milestones as well as achieving other key objectives to make significant improvements to access to public transport services. Further programs are being developed as required for infrastructure upgrades at railway stations, bus and tram stops.

This Action Plan provides the framework for progress in all areas in accordance with the milestones for 2007 and 2012.

Tram boarding in Melbourne's unique environment, presents the only delay in the State's DDA progress. The complex nature of developing more platform tram stops while ensuring all other parties are affected as little as possible poses a delay to the 2007 milestone. Achieving the 2012 milestone will depend on the ability to deploy automatic lifts on trams safely and their inclusion in the next order of low floor trams. In the interim, a $174m program of platform tram stops construction will be implemented providing faster safer loading for all passengers with improved service standards and travel timesavings.

The Action Plan is fully funded from the government's policy (*Meeting out Transport Challenges*) so there is no financial impediment to its implementation.

Operators will be required to develop their own Action Plans to reflect this plan with more specific modal details for public release in due course.

10.1 Summary of actions

Table 10.1 summarises the required Action Plan for achieving accessible public transport, with primary responsibilities and proposed timing included.

"The proposed actions will provide significant improvements to access to public transport for all Victorians."

Table 10.1: Actions required for accessible public transport

Area	Action		Responsibility	Timing
Policy and planning	1	Continue to resource accessible public transport in Victoria.	DOI	ongoing
	2	Continue to develop knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the DSAPT to achieve compliance on all new and upgraded works and services.	DOI	ongoing
	3	Continue to consult with people with disabilities primarily through regular meetings of the Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC) in ensuring that the interests of people with disabilities are fully accounted for in public transport planning and operations.	DOI, PTAC	
	4	Undertake consultations with stakeholders on the DSAPT, make international comparisons and prepare a submission to DOTARS as part of the Five Year Review on areas where the standards can be improved.	DOI	2006/07
Information	5	Complete the Metlink roll out of metropolitan signage and address regional signage changes.		
	6	Continue to provide compliant Metlink whole of state information about accessible public transport services in Victoria.	DOI, Metlink	end 2007 ongoing
	7	Continuously improve services for people with disabilities through consultation (PTAC or other means), education and communication of the latest improvements, encourage use of new facilities and seek feedback on experiences gained.	DOI	ongoing
	8	Coordinate public transport improvements with other programs and improvements in facilities for people with disabilities with VicRoads, local government and other stakeholders.	DOI, VicRoads, Councils	ongoing
	9	Implement the whole of government strategy in relation to design and standards for wheelchairs and mobility aids on public transport in Victoria.	DPC, DHS, DOI	2006/07 ongoing
	10	Complete the Wheelchair Safety at Pedestrian Rail Level Crossings Task Force Action Plan.	DOI	2006
Ticketing	11	Ensure that the new ticketing system is implemented to the relevant DSAPT standards as far as possible.	DOI	end 2007
Monitoring and reporting progress	12	Develop and implement an effective monitoring and reporting process for each component of the DDA Action Plan to ensure that progress, learning and statutory reporting needs are fulfilled.	DOI	ongoing

Area	Action		Responsibility	Timing
Melbourne trains	13	Finalise the draft Standard for Pedestrian Rail Level Crossings for state and national adoption, and implement a program to upgrade existing rail level crossings to the new standard.	DOI, Victrack, Connex	ongoing
	14	Continue the program of platform widening at the narrow ends of stations ahead of the milestones to alleviate manoeuvring limitations for people using wheelchairs and scooters boarding trains.	DOI, Connex	ongoing
	15	Complete the program of access path and ramp works required to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones.	DOI , Connex	2007-2012
	16	Establish the strategy for full accessibility to be provided to stations beyond 2012.	DOI, Connex	2012
	17	Continue the works program to achieve compliance for stairs.	DOI, Connex	2007-2012
	18	Continue the current program of TGSI installation at train stations to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones.	DOI, Connex	2007-2012
	19	Implement lighting upgrades as required (eg at City Loop stations) to meet the 2007 milestone.	DOI, Connex	2007
	20	Complete investigations into hearing augmentation solutions for stations , and develop an implementation plan to meet the standards as far as possible.	DOI, Connex	2007
	21	Improve passenger information displays (PIDs) at major and junction stations and investigate a visual display to complement the audible 'next train' service at suburban stations.	DOI, Connex	2007
	22	Complete the review of Food and Drink Services.	DOI, Connex,	2007
	23	Develop and implement a program to upgrade symbols and signs on Melbourne trains to accessibility standards.	DOI, Connex	2007
Melbourne trams	24	Adopt level access stops as the preferred solution for tram boarding wherever practicable.	DOI, VicRoads, Councils	ongoing
	25	Develop standards for the installation of level access stops including desirable and minimum dimensions for platforms and further develop the tram 'toolkit' to provide road planners guidance as to where various solutions can be applied.	DOI, VicRoads, Councils	mid 2006 ongoing
	26	Continue to increase the number of level access stops achieved through opportunities through other programs, road upgrades, development projects and tram system upgrades.	DOI, Yarra Trams, others	ongoing
	27	Implement a new tram platform program specifically designed to maximise the number level access stops constructed at relatively low-impact and/or high-use locations with particular emphasis on routes with low floor trams already operating (eg Collins Street, St Kilda Road).	DOI, Yarra Trams, VicRoads, Councils	mid 2006 onwards
	28	Implement a program to prioritise seating and allocated spaces at waiting shelters.	Yarra Trams	2007

Area	Action		Responsibility	Timing
Melbourne trams	29	Develop standards for the installation of level access stops including desirable and minimum dimensions for platforms and further develop the tram 'toolkit' to provide road planners guidance as to where various solutions can be applied	DOI, Yarra Trams, VicRoads, Councils	ongoing
	30	Establish suitable TGSI treatments for typical stop types (especially kerb side stops) and a program of implementation.	DOI, Yarra Trams, VicRoads, Councils	ongoing
	31	Continue the program of PIDs and timetable information on tram stops.	DOI, Yarra Trams	ongoing
	32	Continue to replace trams as they reach their design life (30 to 35 years) and require all new trams to be low floor and compatible with emerging level access stop standards.	DOI	ongoing
	33	Undertake further investigation of fitting lifts into new trams ncluding any modifications required to the road infrastructure or road rules.	DOI, VicRoads	mid 2006 ongoing
	34	Develop further solutions for reducing the horizontal and vertical gaps between platforms and low floor trams. Consider options including a fixed engineering device not requiring driver intervention. Adopt standards for all low floor trams.	DOI, Yarra Trams	ongoing
	35	Continue to operate only a limited number of W-Class heritage trams.	DOI	ongoing
	36	Continue upgrading stairs on existing trams.	DOI, Yarra Trams	mid 2006
	37	Complete the lighting review of existing trams and develop any necessary upgrade program.	Yarra Trams	2007
	38	Continue providing visual information to augment audible announcement by tram drivers.	Yarra Trams	2007
Melbourne and regional buses	39	Develop projects and guidelines for distribution to parties associated with the operation of buses or the infrastructure in and around bus stops which are consistent with and assist to clarify responsibility and obligations associated with the DSAPT.	DOI, VicRoads, Councils	mid 2006
	40	Initiate a program of TGSI installation, access paths and surfaces upgrades at Melbourne and regional bus stops to deliver infrastructure in line with the DSAPT requirements to 2012.	DOI, with VicRoads, Councils	mid 2006 to 2012
	41	Continue the Bus Replacement Program of replacing Victoria's scheduled service buses with low floor buses beyond 2007.	DOI, Bus operators	ongoing

Area	Action	Responsibility	Timing
Regional trains and coaches	42 Develop a detailed implementation program to meet the 2007 and 2012 milestones at V/Line Passenger stations, and including upgrading some stations to full DDA compliance at the same time as significant station refurbishment works.	DOI, V/Line Passenger	ongoing
	43 Develop a prioritised implementation program to upgrade pedestrian rail level crossings at regional stations to the new Standards.	DOI, VicTrack, PN, ARTC	ongoing
	44 Continue the program of replacement and/or upgrading of V/Line Passenger trains to include upgrading locomotive-hauled N Set carriages to provide full access for people using wheelchairs and mobility aids.	DOI, V/Line	2006 ongoing
	45 Continue the Coach Replacement Program and installation of wheelchair hoists to maintain progress in line with the DSAPT milestone requirements of 55% compliance for 2012.	DOI	ongoing
Taxis	46 Continue the Multi Purpose Taxi Program.	DOI, VTTD, operators	ongoing
	47 Continue to monitor and improve response times for wheelchair accessible taxis.	DOI, VTTD, operators	ongoing
	48 Liaise with the taxi industry and refer taxi issues to the Five Year Review of the DSAPT.	DOI, VTTD, operators	2007

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Consultation

This Action Plan has been developed in consultation with the following key stakeholders through a Steering Committee, Working Groups and other avenues:

Department of Infrastructure

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Department of Treasury and Finance

Department of Health and Safety

VicRoads

Public Transport Access Committee (PTAC) – representation from Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, (RVIB), Blind Citizens Australia (BCA), Arthritis Victoria, Paraquad, Council of the Aging (COTA) National Seniors, Returned Soldiers league (RSL), Department of Human Services (DHS), Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Disability Advisory Council (DAC), Frank Hall-Bentick.

Wider consultation with representatives of the disability community including SCOPE, Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS), Deaf Blind Association of Victoria, Deafness Foundation, Women with Disabilities, Disability Justice Advocacy, Safe Transport Action Group (STAG) Disability Resources Centre.

Metlink

Transport Ticketing Authority

Connex/Mainco

Yarra Trams

V/Line Passenger

VicTrack

Pacific National

Australian Rail Track Corporation

Bus operators

VTTD

Bus Association of Victoria

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