

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. For a number of years Transport Direct has made reasonable incremental adjustments to the Portal Service and programme to ensure disabled people's information requirements are addressed. As time has gone on, the level of accessibility information published has increased in breadth and depth and it is now appropriate to consider a more radical approach, which would take advantage of the improved information and encourage more transport providers to clearly and concisely identify the accessibility of a journey planning location.
- 1.2. Preparations for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games have highlighted the potential value of making a step change in the quality of accessible transport information in Transport Direct. The Games aim to be the most accessible games ever and to be a public transport games. Through working with the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), the potential to further develop our offering on accessible travel has been identified, with particular emphasis on providing improved travel information for Persons of Reduced Mobility. Developments in the use of accessibility data within TD would contribute to the overall DfT Olympics Programme, and provide an opportunity to leave a legacy of better provision of travel information for Persons of Reduced Mobility.
- 1.3. Transport Direct regularly reviews the provision of accessibility information<sup>1,2,3</sup>. Current accessibility information on the portal is predominantly provided through a strategy of linking to external information sites, with links provided to DPTAC, PTEs and third party information sources, all of which publish data relevant to disabled travellers on their own web sites. Each of these sites has their own approach to providing this information, and it is therefore difficult for users to get consistent information. Although this is a practical solution to providing accessibility information, there is a limit to the number of links that can cost-effectively be maintained. Also, this approach is not as helpful to the user as having the relevant accessibility information available within journey plans and information pages, as some regional and mode specific journey planning websites are currently doing.
- 1.4. Annual reviews have found increasing amounts of data on transport accessibility being collected and published in a structured format. Several Traveline regions provide information on the availability of low floor or wheelchair accessible buses on a particular route within journey plan results. Similarly, National Express has a wheelchair accessible flag in their data. National Rail Enquiries (NRE) shows station accessibility information through its 'Stations Made Easy'

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<sup>1</sup> 5054694/Additional Links for Accessibility.doc (2008)

<sup>2</sup> 5054694/Import of Accessibility Data v1 0.doc (2008)

<sup>3</sup> 071025 Accessibility in journey planning review v1.B.doc (2007)

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facility, and Transport for London (TfL) also includes some accessibility information within its journey plans.

- 1.5. The Equality Act 2010 requires that ‘reasonable adjustments’ are made to a service to allow the needs of disabled people to be met. Taken as a whole, disabled travellers need more detailed information than other travellers to be able to make informed choices about travel, and information prior to travel is more important to disabled travellers than it is for other groups of travellers. The standard of reasonableness means that Transport Direct is allowed to take into account the cost of providing such adjustments when determining whether to go ahead. Not investigating the costs and benefits of amending data standards and systems to allow the provision on the portal of information currently available elsewhere could be subject to legal challenge under the DDA.
- 1.6. Expanding the amount and consistency of information available within one place to enable travellers, especially those with disabilities, to take an informed view about their journey would be a positive development. By undertaking work now to improve the availability of accessibility information in readiness for the Olympics, we have the opportunity of leaving a lasting legacy by providing as much information as possible within the Transport Direct journey results.
- 1.7. Although aimed particularly at those with disabilities, additional detail on mobility of services and interchanges helps many more users, such as those with young children, luggage or older people. Any enhancement to the granularity of information about the journey provides re-assurance to anybody making the journey for the first time.
- 1.8. It should be noted that some elements of the Olympics, such as many of the specially created venues, the additional transport fleet that means that the ODA becomes a substantial ‘operator’ of services, and the Olympic Route Network (ORN) are being developed especially for the Games, and may therefore offer a limited legacy. The work on providing information about accessible transport is reusable, including the holding of information by multiple parties, catering for disabled travellers with a range of different needs, and addressing the challenge of describing an unfamiliar station to someone remote, etc.

## 2. Legacy

- 2.1. There are a number of areas where work being done for the Olympics will leave a legacy with regard to information about accessible transport.
- 2.2. One of these relates to the upgrading of technical data standards to include accessibility information. National Public Transport Access Nodes (NaPTAN) is the UK standard for stations, stops and

interchanges. This will be extended to incorporate significant elements of IFOPT and NeTEx, the new European standards<sup>4</sup>, which have been created to include detailed accessibility information at transport nodes and on vehicles. Making UK stop data available in a NaPTAN 3.0a format is an enabling step for supporting EU-compatible public transport data formats, as identified by the EU ITS Directive.

- 2.3. JourneyWeb is the UK standard for determining how separate journey planning systems interact to provide a combined answer to the user. JourneyWeb will be upgraded to incorporate the enquirer's mobility limitations/ preferences. These updated standards will allow for detailed accessibility information to be gathered and stored within a set format that can then be used across distributed journey planning systems. Although the key work for the Olympics will focus on Transport Direct, the changes made would complete the groundwork to allow other organisations, including traveline and NRE, to provide accessible journey plans through using the standardised data and interfaces. This is particularly important for those organisations (such as PTEs) that are gradually gathering accessibility data already, but are currently doing so without any guidance as to common format.
- 2.4. Developments to journey planning systems to support the Spectator Journey Planner (SJP) will allow accessible transport data to be used and included within journey results. The benefit of this is that information about accessibility will be available within the journey results, rather than require the user to follow a series of links from a number of different websites to build up the information they require. The details provided would include in-trip information, such as where it is possible to interchange, and paths to take within stations.
- 2.5. The developments to journey planning systems will also provide the capability to route users based on factors other than the 'fastest' (e.g. through the use of 'avoids', etc). Users requiring information about accessible journeys will need to know whether they can complete a whole journey, even if this is not the quickest available, and the changes being made for the SJP would allow this to happen.
- 2.6. A Games Network of Accessible Transport (GNAT) is being developed by the ODA for the Olympics, which will be a network of stops and services across different modes, where people will be 'guaranteed' an accessible journey. Data will need to be collected by Transport Direct for the GNAT for use within journey planning; some of this may already exist (although it is likely to need converting into the standard formats), and some may need to be collected where it does not already exist. Again, a legacy will be left from the collection and use of this accessible transport data, as it will enable more information to be provided to the public.

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<sup>4</sup> The UK has participated largely in the creation of these, which are therefore well suited to providing an upgrade path for NaPTAN and TXC.

- 2.7. It is worth stressing that the investment of the Olympics, especially with its focus on accessibility, is an excellent opportunity to get systems changed and data collected. Without this initiative, we would be reliant on local authorities and other organisations either making local implementations with no national coordination, or not gathering any accessibility data.
- 2.8. Another area of change which will leave a legacy relates to planning journeys to venues for events. At present, journeys planned to a place of interest are planned to a single co-ordinate for that destination, which is often only appropriate when that venue is quiet and not being used for a major event, and even then, does not take into account the multiple entrances. Larger places of interest, such as the Olympic Park, have a number of entrances/exits, and it is more realistic to journey plan using these, rather than a single point. Although this change would mean a new requirement to gather this information for key venues, the resulting journey planning will be more useful (Newcastle United FC already has a planner that plans to the specific stand for the spectator). Having proved the concept, it may be possible to extend this capability for other large venues and other places of interest, such as schools and hospitals, in the future.
- 2.9. By standardising formats for accessibility and venue data, and upgrading systems to use this data, systems will then be ready to use any additional data about accessibility and venues that is collected and supplied in the agreed format in the future. A legacy will therefore be left, in that the changes will have been made to allow the use of additional data, as and when this becomes available, and will enable journey planners to provide more information about accessible journeys in the future.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1. In conclusion, the legacy will be that accessible transport information will continue to be available after the Games, and systems and standards have been set to allow additional data to be used as and when it becomes available.