



Provincial Government of the Western Cape



Department of Transport and Public Works

Development of a Provincial Public Transport Policy with respect to Special Needs Passengers



Proposed Draft Public Transport Policy Statement for Special Needs Passengers in the Western Cape

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DEVELOPMENT OF A PROVINCIAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY WITH RESPECT TO SPECIAL NEEDS PASSENGERS

PROPOSED DRAFT PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS PASSENGERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

CONTENTS

Chapter	Description	Page
1	INTRODUCTION	2
	1.1 Background to the Policy	2
	1.2 Key Findings from In-depth Surveys with Special Needs Passengers	4
	1.3 Scope of this Document	4
2	PROPOSED DRAFT PROVINCIAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS PASSENGERS	5
3	ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS PASSENGERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE	6
	3.1 Commuter Rail	6
	3.2 Road Based Public Transport Services	6
4	REFERENCES	9

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Policy

The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy¹ (November 1997) recognises that “there is a need for rapid progress in developing a public transport system that is flexible and accessible. Without this, people with disabilities will continue to remain largely “invisible” and unable to contribute to, or benefit from, the services and commercial activities available to most of their fellow citizens. Given the fact that the ability to use services, or attend school or work, is largely dependent on the ability of people to get there, lack of accessible transport is a serious barrier to the full integration into society of people with disabilities”. Hence the policy objective of the national strategy is:

“to develop an accessible, affordable multi-modal public transport system that will meet the needs of the largest numbers of people at the lowest cost, while at the same time planning for those higher cost features which are essential to disabled people with greater mobility needs”

The Western Cape Provincial Transport Policy, as set out in the White Paper² of June 1997, complements the objectives of the Integrated National Disability Strategy. One of its key principles is that “Discriminatory practices against specific groups, such as women and disabled persons, must cease, and their special needs must be identified and addressed in all transport plans and programmes”.

Some of the items to be addressed in provincial transport plans and programmes are identified within the Integrated Provincial Disability Strategy³, published by the Office of the Premier, Western Cape in November 2002. These items include:

- Seek to appoint a representative of the Western Cape Disability Network to one of the existing standing committees on transport
- Identification of different transport systems that respond to the specific user requirements of special needs passengers and evaluate their operation in the Western Cape
- Establish Provincial minimum acceptable operational standards and requirements for transport suitable for use by disabled persons
- Ensure that all public transport plans formulated in the Western Cape make provision for transport that is suitable for use by disabled persons and conforms to Provincial minimum standards
- Lobby SARCC and Metrorail to further their programmes for providing access to and carriage of disabled persons

The objectives and items to be addressed, as given above, apply not only to passengers with disabilities but to all passengers with special needs.

These passengers are identified by the Department of Transport's "Moving South Africa – The Action Agenda"⁴ published by the Department of Transport in 1999, as being Special Needs Passengers (SNP's) comprising:

- **Life Cycle Passengers:** These are customers who have special transport needs by virtue of the fact that they happen to be in the normal stages of the human life cycle. Examples include children between 5 –14 years old for whom transport is particularly unsafe, or who need special assistance when using the transport system; women during the last 3 months of their pregnancy who may need special assistance; as well as the aged who, as a result of aged-related impairments, require special assistance, security and access.
- **Impairment Passengers:** These are customers with physical or cognitive impairments and disabilities for whom special assistance, adapted technologies and special safety requirements are necessary.
- **Signage Passengers:** These are customers who for reasons of illiteracy, age or lack of familiarity with the language of the signage are unable to access enough information to use the transport system effectively.

The Department of Transport has also made available its Public Transport Strategy⁵ in March 2007. It has two key thrusts: Accelerated Modal Upgrading and Provision of Integrated Rapid Public Transport Networks. The strategy requires that:

“the core network (both road and rail corridors as well as their precincts and stations) is 100% accessible to wheelchair users and others with special needs such as the blind and the deaf. In addition, the designs of the space at the stations, terminals and on the vehicles should be user friendly and child friendly. Special needs user organisations will form part of the Network advisory planning and monitoring team.”

The core network is due to be provided in phases commencing in 2007 with completion by 2014.

A large amount of documentation, both general and transport specific, govern the provision of accessible public transport in South Africa. The principal themes that emerge from the documentation are:

- No unfair discrimination
- Provision of “reasonable” accommodation
- Self-representation
- Multi-disciplinary response to issues
- Integrated transport system that supports economic and social development
- Special Needs Passengers have specific user requirements
- Mainstream transport is to be suitable for Special Needs Passengers plus dedicated systems where appropriate
- Need for defined standards
- Formulation of viable action plans

1.2 Key Findings from In-depth Surveys with Special Needs Passengers

During 1998 in-depth interviews were undertaken with SNP's within the City of Cape Town to determine the transport needs of persons with special needs who live within the urban areas of the City.

A total of 156 individuals were interviewed at workshops organised by ten different service organisations. These individuals included those with mobility, intellectual, visual and hearing impairments as well as the elderly.

Since it was considered that the experiences of SNP's in urban areas may differ from those in more rural areas, additional surveys were undertaken within the four district municipalities as part of preparing this provincial policy document. Forty individuals were interviewed, at sessions organised by the different service organisations. These individuals were identified to obtain as large a range of experiences based upon different special needs, transport available to them and age.

It was found that SNP's within the urban areas have more choice in the mode of transport and the times that it is operational than SNP's who live in the rural areas. Indeed, some rural areas have almost no public transport available. In contrast, passengers in Cape Town with visual and mobility impairments that are unable to make use of current mainstream public transport systems have the option of the fully accessible demand-responsive Dial-a-Ride service.

Both the surveys with urban and rural SNP's found that, generally, public transport is currently inaccessible to a large proportion of SNP's and difficult to use for the remainder. As a result, transport services are provided by non-governmental organisations in order to improve access of SNP's to key facilities such as job opportunities / sheltered workshops / primary healthcare facilities and by the PGWC: Department of Health for access to secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities. These services do not always allow for dignified and safe transport of SNP's as a result of the budget restrictions these organisations face in the provision of services that are not part of their core function.

1.3 Scope of this Document

This document sets out the Provincial Government Western Cape: Department of Transport and Public Works' proposed draft policy statement for the provision of public transport with respect to SNP's in the Western Cape.

The document also presents a series of actions to implement the proposed policy statement.

2 PROPOSED DRAFT PROVINCIAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS PASSENGERS

The Provincial Government Western Cape: Department of Transport and Public Works acknowledges the public transport requirements of passengers with special needs. It undertakes to promote these requirements into the planning, provision and management of a public transport system in the Western Cape so that the system, over time, becomes universally accessible to all its passengers. Where mainstream public transport does not provide reasonable accessibility the Department will promote the provision of an alternative demand responsive service that can be used by passengers with special needs, if not already provided as part of the available range of transport services / “family” of services.

In the context of the provision of public transport services, “universal accessibility” requires that the public transport component of the travel chain supports independent travel, through access to appropriate and relevant passenger information, access to public transport facilities and vehicles that are accessible to passengers with special needs.

The Department recognises that its jurisdiction to implement the requirements of universal accessibility is restricted to the provision, monitoring and funding of subsidised scheduled road based public transport services. The Department will, through its association with other stakeholders such as the South African Rail Commuter Corporation, district and local authorities and the Departments of Health, Education and Social Services and Poverty Alleviation, strive to make other component parts of the special needs passenger’s journey fully accessible over the longer term.

The Department acknowledges and promotes organisations of and for Special Needs Passengers to represent themselves on all matters affecting them. In this respect, the Department encourages the interface between passengers with special needs, the Provincial Disability Desk and the Western Cape Network on Disability.

The Department will develop and refine this policy statement, as it considers necessary, to take into consideration the comments of individuals and organisations that add value to the policy.

3 ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS PASSENGERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

In order to implement the policy statement for the provision of public transport for SNP's the Provincial Government Western Cape: Department Transport and Public Works propose to implement the following actions to promote the provision of public transport for SNP's in the Western Cape.

3.1 Commuter Rail

The Department will:

- Continue its joint initiative with the South African Rail Commuter Corporation (SARCC) to progressively retrofit existing key commuter rail stations in order to make them more accessible to SNP's.
 - Encourage the SARCC to plan and build all new commuter rail stations to be accessible to SNP's.
 - Encourage the SARCC to improve the accessibility of its rail carriages to SNP's.
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3.2 Road Based Public Transport Services

3.2.1 Passenger Information Services

The Department will:

- Support the continuation of the City of Cape Town's public transport information services provided by the Metro Transport Information Centre (MTIC) for the City of Cape Town area and, in particular, the availability of its services to Special Needs Passengers through appropriate technology.
- Support the provision of similar public transport information services for the remainder of the Province by either expanding the services of the MTIC or the provision of similar services by the respective district municipalities.
- Encourage the re-design and presentation of existing information on services, ie improving the layout of the timetables in order to enhance understanding as well as to increase the font sizes and background contrast in which timetables are printed.

3.2.2 Public Transport Vehicles

The Department will:

- Prepare and publish, in association with the Department of Transport, guideline requirements for accessible public transport vehicles. These requirements will include the provision of reasonable accommodation of SNP's who use wheelchairs, the use of audio and visual address systems and other appropriate features. Guidelines will be produced for buses, midi-buses, minibuses and metered taxis.

3.2.3 Public Transport Facilities

The Department will:

- Ensure that all new public transport facilities are planned to be accessible to SNP's and, if identified as a key facility within the public transport network, the facility is to be constructed so in the short to medium term.
- Prepare a programme to make key existing facilities in the public transport network accessible.
- Ensure that all other public transport facilities and stops allow for the deployment of ramps and lifts away from the main travel way.
- Encourage that all major public transport facilities where passengers experience long waiting periods are provided with at least one accessible ablution facility.

and specifically in urban areas:

- Encourage that major public transport facilities are provided with audio and visual announcement systems indicating the arrival / departure of vehicles.
- Encourage that all stops are provided with kerbed stopping areas and shelters.

3.2.4 Public Transport Operations

The Department will:

- Ensure that all future contracted public transport services within the Province progressively include the operation of accessible services until all contracted services are either accessible and / or an alternative demand responsive service is available.
- Require that an appropriate number of accessible vehicles operate on non-contracted service routes and / or an alternative demand responsive service is available.
- Investigate the implementation of concessionary fares, for carers, companions and assistive animals (guide/hearing dogs), etc that accompany SNP's who are registered as requiring their presence so they are able to accompany the SNP at a reduced / no fare.

- Investigate, in association with the respective local authorities and operators, the provision, training and payment for operating demand responsive services that acknowledge the different characteristics of urban, peri-urban and rural areas, eg Dial-a-Ride, brokerage or volunteer services.

3.2.5 Training of public transport service personnel

The Department will:

- Encourage all drivers providing public transport services to undertake sensitivity training with respect to SNP's in order to learn how to properly assist and treat passengers with appropriate attention to the differences among individuals with disabilities.
- Encourage all drivers providing public transport services to receive training in the proper use of ramps, lifts and wheelchair and passenger restraint systems, if fitted to the vehicles they operate.

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4 REFERENCES

1. Office of the Deputy President: White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy. November, 1997
2. Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works: Western Cape Provincial Transport Policy. June, 1997
3. Office of the Premier, Western Cape: Integrated Provincial Disability Strategy. November, 2002
4. National Department of Transport: Moving South Africa – The Action Agenda. May, 1999
5. National Department of Transport: Public Transport Strategy. March, 2007

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