



PARENTS OF VISION IMPAIRED (NZ) INC

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Providing a community to support parents of children with vision impairments

Position statement on public transport

The (built) environment of public spaces can present barriers to everyone in society, however these barriers are magnified for a disabled person. The barriers to mobility and accessibility when moving through public spaces fall into two main categories:

- (1) the physical environment, such as steps, slopes, lack of ramps; and
- (2) communicative barriers, including absence of signs, poor lighting, inadequate signalling.

Mobility is an essential condition for active participation in urban, social and economic life. Accessible transport systems are essential for equality of opportunity for all people in society. Equitable mobility through public spaces requires recognition that the much-used term 'pedestrian' needs to be expanded beyond the assumption of the able-bodied.

PVI supports the position of Blind Low Vision NZ with regards to public transport. Their position statement is included in full below.

Blind Low Vision NZ position statement on public transport

<https://blindlowvision.org.nz/about-us/position-statements/>

Public Transport: The Issue

Blind and low vision public transport users do not have the same access as sighted people do to bus, taxi, train, plane and ferry services.

Statement:

The RNZFB Board believes that all public transport users, including those who are blind or have low vision, have the right to travel independently and safely.

Background

Without safe, accessible public transport, individuals who are blind or have low vision have reduced independence, higher rates of unemployment, limited recreational opportunities, and increased social isolation. The majority of Blind Low Vision NZ clients are not using public transport to get around.

There are many facets to public transport, and each may present accessibility barriers. People with vision loss are disproportionately more reliant on public transport than other New Zealanders. It is essential that they are able to plan journeys, access timetables, locate boarding positions, identify destinations and travel to and from these locations safely and independently.

People who are blind or who have low vision use taxis more than their sighted peers do in order to travel independently. Taxi systems and passenger information are designed for sighted people. This places blind and low vision people at a significant disadvantage in being able to direct the driver, monitor their journey or make complaints. The New Zealand Transport Agency had directed that all taxis must display the name of the company, a number for passengers to call to make complaints and the cab number in braille and large print on the front left-hand passenger door. However, this requirement was rescinded when taxi regulations changed.

Another example and a frequent problem experienced by guide dog handlers is the lack of awareness among taxi operators and drivers of their obligation to carry guide dogs. Some taxi drivers still refuse to take a blind passenger with a guide dog. This is now illegal but is not being monitored by the authorities.

In other cases, audible stopping and destination signals and other passenger information systems are either not installed or not consistently used on buses, trains and at stations when they should be.

What Blind Low Vision NZ Will Do:

- Encourage blind people and those with low vision to provide feedback to transport operators on service issues.
- Develop solutions with the public transport sector to improve the accessibility of the transport journey for blind and low vision users.
- Work with the pan-disability community to develop a standard for disability awareness training for public transport operators.
- Advise transport providers and the Human Rights Commission on how to improve complaint resolution and outcomes for blind people and those with low vision relating to public transport.
- Work with consumer organisations to advocate for accessible public transport.
- Advise the New Zealand Transport Agency, the Ministry of Transport, the Local Government Association and local territorial authorities on improvements to public transport accessibility.
- Provide the New Zealand Transport Agency and the taxi industry with information on audio-equipped EFTPOS terminals and taxi meters.
- Work with the taxi industry to improve awareness that refusal to carry a passenger with a guide dog constitutes an offence under the Transport Act.

What Blind Low Vision NZ Wants Central and Local Government to Do:

- Commit to accessible public transport around the country.
- Make appropriate disability awareness training mandatory for public transport operators.
- Improve complaints handling processes so that issues people who are blind or have low vision might have may be resolved.
- Make the Total Mobility Scheme nationally consistent.
- Ensure that all websites and digital applications providing public transport information are accessible.
- Work with the taxi industry to install meters that have audio output and accessible fare payment information and options.
- Ensure each bus or train stop is announced in a way that is clearly audible throughout the vehicle and on the platform.

- Where a transport provider uses a smart fare card system, ensure that commuters who are blind or have low vision are able to independently load, use and monitor the validity of their smart fare card.
- Require a nationally integrated fare card system for public transport.
- Require public transport planners to consult Blind Low Vision NZ about the design of the network, infrastructure and information systems to ensure facilities and services are integrated and accessible to people who are blind or have low vision.