



## PRAGUE

## Information for Persons with Impaired Mobility (Website)

### Background/context

Customers using the services of Prague Public Transit Co. Inc. include many passengers with impaired mobility, including those with chronic disabilities such as blindness, dim-sightedness or deafness or temporary challenges such as being pregnant or having children in prams.

Making public transport accessible and available for these passengers and making their travel easier – not only with respect to safety of transport as such – but also with respect to provision of other necessary information, has been one of the major objectives of the company in recent years.

### Case description

The provision of services for those with mobility impairments does not only include the provision of barrier-free services (which are described below), it also involves communications about these services to public transport customers and other potential users.

Dopravní podnik hl. m. Prahy, the major Prague public transport operator, not only uses leaflets and other hard-copy materials, it has created a high-quality website to communicate its barrier-free services. The website is comprehensively structured allowing easy navigation of its contents. Barrier-free travel is prominently placed on the main-level of information provision.

The website thoroughly describes the various kinds of services, some of which were only implemented in the 1990s.

#### METRO

New Metro extensions developed in the 1990s have their stations equipped with personal lifts. Additional lifts have been developed at other stations based on local conditions and at eight stations wheelchair users can use modified freight lifts with the assistance of Metro staff. As a result, easy access to Metro platforms is currently available at roughly half of a total of 50 stations. This service is planned to be gradually extended.

Public transport for the blind requires a specific approach. Orientation in selected stations is made easier by special acoustic beacons informing the blind by means of an acoustic signal (tone tune) in underpasses and vestibules about the entrance to the passenger processing area of the station. This equipment has been installed in 40 stations to date. At some stations acoustic beacons also provide voice information. Blind passengers can activate acoustic beacons by means of a transmitter as required. Stations built in later periods – particularly B line stations – have been equipped with special leading grooves installed on the floor to enable easier orientation and movement within stations. Handrails at stations can also be equipped with information in Braille. At the beginning of 2000 such information systems were first installed at two stations.

## TRAMS

In their tram service, Prague Public Transit has made especially good progress with respect to carriage of the blind. From 1996 to 1998 all tramcars were equipped with special receivers for the blind. This equipment enables any blind passenger to activate – by means of a remote control – an external announcement informing him/her about the route number and destination of the approaching tram. The same equipment enables provision of an acoustic confirmation to the driver of the possible intention of the blind passenger to get on board. This increases safety for such passengers. The automatic announcement of stops inside trams helps the blind (as well as all other passengers, naturally) to be informed about stops along the route.

## BUSES

In the last decade bus transport has made the greatest progress in the field of services provided to passengers with impaired mobility. In 2000 the Bus Unit extended its fleet of low-floor buses by 80 vehicles to a total of 175. At the end of the year 123 low-floor buses were guaranteed to be dispatched on working days, 72 on Saturdays and 75 on Sundays.

In cooperation with the Environmental Union of the Disabled of the Czech Republic and the Regional Organiser of Prague Public Transport (ROPID), Prague Public Transit drew up a plan for the operation of low-floor buses on 21 selected lines, nine of which are fully covered by low-floor buses and five of which are covered by low-floor buses on Saturdays and Sundays.

At the beginning of 2000 over 90 percent of buses used in public transport operations were equipped with a new passenger processing and information system for the blind, including automatic announcement of stops.

Low-floor buses combined with selected Metro stations significantly contribute to making public transport more accessible and available for people with impaired mobility and support their better integration into the life of the city.

## Legislation and policy issues

From January 1, 1954 the provision of the Transportation Code of Public Passenger Transport came into force, obliging conductors "to ensure vacant seats available for old, disabled or apparently sick people or pregnant women." In 1957 the so-called ZTP (disabled person) and ZTP-P (fully disabled person) cards were introduced, entitling their holders and their guides (accompanying persons or seeing-eye dogs) free-of-charge rides. The Transportation Code effective from 1964 explicitly provided that every car was to have at least one seat reserved and visibly designated for the disabled. Passengers were obliged to vacate additional seats if necessary.

## Results

The introduction of low-floor buses and information services for the blind in a significant part of the service has significantly increased the accessibility and usability of the network for these groups. The active promotion of these services, especially on the website, has ensured that Dopravní podnik hl. m. Prahy has a positive image as a highly social and inclusive transport service.



## Problems

The costs of implementation mean that it will take some further years to extend these services to all lines and the entire network.

## Transferability and success factors

Many public transport operators have implemented isolated measures to improve the accessibility and usability of their networks for mobility impaired people and most of them promote these initiatives in hardcopy publications and/or on the Internet.

Adopting the more comprehensive and strategic approach of the Prague Public Transit Co. Inc. for their needs and intentions would be easily manageable as all necessary tools are highly transferable.

## Lessons learnt

A comprehensive strategy combining infrastructure measures and information services are prerequisites for success.

## Conclusions

A comprehensive approach for the mobility impaired can significantly improve the image of a public transport operator and at the same time justify the necessity for subsidising these services as a measure contributing to an equitable society.

## References and contacts

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