

Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023

Guidance on the provision of audible and visible information on board local bus and coach services

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR



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March 2023

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Executive summary

Introduction

Summary

1. Around 14 million people in Great Britain are disabled, and on average they rely on using local bus and coach services more than most to make the journeys many take for granted. For some, a lack of on-board travel information can be a major barrier to traveling confidently and independently. More broadly, on-board information has the potential to improve the journey experience for all passengers. Many transport operators and authorities have taken steps to provide this information, but over half of vehicles remain unequipped to provide it. This is why the government has introduced the Accessible Information Regulations. These new rules will make the provision of audible and visible information a requirement on board local services across Great Britain, which will help everyone to travel with confidence.
2. This guidance document is aimed at providers of local bus and coach services, and the organisations which supply and support them. It provides a guide to the new Regulations and the steps that operators must, should and may take to ensure that they comply with the new rules. By following this guidance, operators will play their part in providing passengers with consistently high-quality on-board information, breaking down access barriers and improving the journey experience.

Background

3. For some passengers, most notably those who are visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, people with cognitive or learning impairments, and some autistic people, a lack of information about a vehicle's location and direction of travel can make travelling by bus or coach an anxiety inducing experience. In their 2014 "Destination Unknown" survey, the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association found that 70% of visually impaired respondents had missed their stop because the driver forgot to tell them when to get off, and 68% would use buses more frequently if audio-visual

announcements were provided on board.¹ We know however, that accessible on-board information benefits a range of people, not just those who are disabled, making services simple to use for regular passengers and first timers alike.

4. Providing audible and visible information on board transport services is not a new concept. The provision of announcements and visual displays has been a requirement for new railway rolling stock since 1998, and since the early 2000s several operators and authorities have begun providing it on buses. For over fifteen years, most bus services in London have incorporated audible and visible information on the route and upcoming stops. As of 2021/22, 46% of vehicles operating local services in England have the necessary equipment installed. This figure drops to 25% for England outside London, 34% in Wales, and 22% in Scotland.² There remain many areas where disabled passengers cannot board a bus with confidence that on-board information will enable them to alight in the right place. Mandating its provision is therefore about consistency of experience, ensuring that wherever disabled people and other passengers travel in Great Britain they can be sure of accessing the information they need.

Using this guidance

5. This guidance is aimed at organisations which will either be directly responsible for complying with the Regulations, such as local service operators and the transport authorities influencing the services they provide, or the developers, manufacturers and retailers of equipment used to provide audible and visible information.
6. The guidance is intended to provide a guide to the implementation of the Regulations, highlighting decisions for those responsible for compliance and signposting other sources of assistance.
7. Given that the Regulations seek to specify a minimum information provision requirement, this guidance also indicates how operators can use accessible information to enhance the experience of all passengers.
8. Additionally, the guidance outlines the process through which we propose complaints about non-compliance should be made and investigated. This process aims to ensure that the Traffic Commissioners are referred only sustained, negligent and intentional cases of non-compliance.
9. The guidance is intended to supplement rather than replace the Regulations and Explanatory Memorandum and should be read in conjunction with them. Should the guidance appear to contradict any element of the Regulations, the Regulations take precedence. Whilst we recommend that this guidance is followed when implementing

¹ Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (2014) *Destination Unknown*. Available online at: https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/-/media/Project/GuideDogs/GuideDogsDotOrg/Files/How-you-can-help/talking-buses-campaign/1252_7603-a4-destination-unknown_v8-1.pdf

² DfT (2023) Vehicles operated by local bus operators, *Table BUS06d: Percentage of buses used as public service vehicles with accessibility/technology features by metropolitan area status and country, local bus operators only: annual from 2004/05*. Available online at:

the Accessible Information Regulations, it does not have statutory effect and there is no legal obligation to follow or pay regard to it.

10. The guidance is intended to support its users through the consistent use of language throughout. The following terms indicate how an organisation responsible for complying with the Regulations should respond to them:
 - 10.1 “Must” indicates that they have a legal duty to comply with the Regulatory provision referenced;
 - 10.2 “Should” indicates steps which the government considers to be best practice and which should be followed wherever possible; and
 - 10.3 “May” indicates a choice between different options, with no recommendation on which should be taken.
11. Irrespective of the language used we must be clear that no part of this document constitutes legal advice and that where an operator, authority or other relevant body is unsure about their legal duties they should seek legal advice for themselves.
12. Please also note that examples of acceptable service provision and any photographs included in the document are for illustrative purposes only, and do not confirm compliance with the Regulations. Examples are also inexhaustive, and there may be other approaches to ensure compliance.

Part A: Implementing the Regulations

Overriding principles

13. In introducing the Accessible Information Regulations and supporting their implementation, we consider that there are several overriding principles which operators, authorities and other users of this guidance should bear in mind.

Focus on passenger need

14. We encourage all operators to think not only of the steps they must take to comply with their legal obligations, but also how they can use accessible information to enhance the experience of all passengers. In doing so, we recommend that operators should engage with organisations representing passengers, and particularly disabled passengers, to ensure that their solution is fit for purpose.

Consistency of information provision

15. When providing the names of bus stations and stops through audible and visible information, operators should ensure that the stop names they use are consistent with those that passengers would encounter through other media channels. These may be found when planning journeys online, using bus stop destination displays and paper timetables, and when travelling on board competitors' services. To do this, they should use data provided in the National Public Transport Access Nodes database (NaPTAN), which is available to anybody free of charge. We recommend that an appropriate combination of data from the following fields should be used:
 - Stop Common Name.
 - Town.
 - Suburb.
 - Locality Centre.
16. Different combinations will be appropriate depending upon the nature of the service. A service which stops only once or twice in each conurbation might announce stop names based on the "Town" and "Locality" fields, whilst a service entirely within a given town or city, might use the stop "Common Name" or a combination of "Suburb" and "Locality" fields.

17. Operators and local transport authorities may wish to consider collaborating on a common approach to names within a given area to provide further assurances of consistency.

Balancing passenger needs

18. Whilst the provision of accessible information is vital for some passengers, too much noise or information can present a barrier for others. Information overload can be particularly problematic for some autistic people, preventing them from identifying relevant information or from being able to make necessary decisions. Operators should engage with organisations representing disabled passengers to ensure that on-board information provision strikes the right balance between supporting access and avoiding sensory overload.

Prioritising relevant information

19. The Regulations set the minimum expectation for the information that must be provided on board local services. Some operators may wish to go further however, using any installed displays or speaker systems to provide contextual information, or to support information provision with advertising. When doing so however, operators should ensure that information required by law is always prioritised so that it is clearly discernible by passengers who rely upon it.
20. We suggest that audible advertisements should not be provided via audio frequency induction loops, to avoid overwhelming passengers who use hearing aids, and that any visual advertisements should be removed from view when relevant information is provided.

Managing compliance

21. It is insufficient for operators to install relevant equipment on board their vehicles to comply. They must ensure it is used appropriately by staff responsible for managing or operating it, with appropriate management procedures to support this. Operators should consider what staff training might be necessary to support compliance.
22. Operators must ensure that relevant information is being provided consistent with the Regulations before any vehicle begins a relevant scheduled route, and that the volume of audible information is not reduced below the minimum required threshold.
23. Where equipment essential for providing relevant information becomes inoperable, operators must take steps to rectify the issue as quickly as possible. Where alternative vehicles are available, these must be used to ensure relevant information continues to be provided. Where it is not, operators should ensure that drivers are supported to assist passengers who would otherwise be disadvantaged, such as by telling them when their destination is reached. Operators should also ensure they have a clear audit trail to demonstrate to enforcement officers the steps they are taking to address the underlying issue.

What is accessible information?

24. In this context, “Accessible Information” is information provided about a local bus or coach service to passengers travelling on board it, provided in both audible and visible formats. The Regulations and guidance use the term “relevant information” to refer to Accessible Information which must be provided. Operators may also choose to provide additional Accessible Information which is not required by law but which may benefit passengers.
25. Operators must provide relevant information consistently in both audible and visible formats. In practice it may sometimes be necessary to use slightly different timings for audible and visible information. For example, operators may need to retain information about an upcoming stop on-screen after an audible announcement has been played. Regardless, both must comply with the timing requirements in the Regulations.
26. It may also sometimes be necessary to use slightly different language for audio and visual information. For example, to ensure that audible information can be understood easily by passengers, or that visible information fits on a display screen whilst meeting the minimum character height requirements. To help increase passenger understanding, operators should consider using concise, simple language when providing accessible information.
27. Where operators provide additional information, the same information should be provided consistently across audible and visible formats. Operators should refrain from only providing additional information in one format, as not all passengers may be able to see or hear the information.
28. Operators must provide audible alerts before certain relevant information. Operators may choose an alert sound appropriate to their service and should consider the recommendations in paragraph 18 when doing so.
29. Operators are increasingly providing a range of journey information to passengers through websites and apps. This can be of significant value to passengers who rely on Accessible Information. However, operators must not rely exclusively on passengers possessing smart technology to access relevant information. Relevant information must be provided using on-board facilities available to any passengers, with additional information reliant on smart technology only being provided in addition to on-board facilities.

On what services must relevant information be provided?

30. Relevant information must be provided on board buses and coaches operating local services in England, Scotland and Wales, except where exempted.
31. Where a service includes both local service and non-local service sections specific rules apply. These are addressed in the “long distance service” section below.

32. In a small number of cases, we consider that it would be disproportionate and potentially damaging to operators and the routes they operate to require relevant information to be provided. Such cases are explained below.

Community Transport

33. Whilst we consider that accessible information provision is likely to be important for many community transport users, we feel that in most cases there is too high a risk that requiring its provision would endanger the sustainability of such services. Therefore, there is no requirement for any service operated under a Section 19 permit or any service using a vehicle first used before 1 October 2023 and operated under a Section 22 permit to comply.
34. We note however that the needs of passengers using Section 22 and standard local services are likely to be similar, and that where a community transport operator can acquire a new vehicle for use under Section 22, the marginal cost of providing accessible information on board is likely to be acceptable. Operators must therefore ensure that Section 22 services using vehicles first used after 1 October 2023 comply with the Regulations unless they are exempt for another reason.

Excursions and Tours

35. “Excursions and Tours” are defined in the Transport Act 1985 as “a service for the carriage of passengers by road at separate fares on which the passengers travel together on a journey with or without breaks from one or more places to one or more other places and back.”
36. In many cases, passengers on such services are provided with information in the form of a live commentary. Where audible information is currently provided without visible information, operators should consider providing visible information to support passengers unable to hear the commentary. They should also consider providing induction loops to support passengers who use hearing aids.
37. Where tour services are exempt, either because they are not Local Services or because they comply with the definition of “Excursions and Tours” above, but where passengers are picked up and set down at several stopping points, such as with some “hopper” tours, operators should consider providing relevant information to support passengers who might otherwise be disadvantaged.

Heritage services

38. We recognise that a small number of vehicles may occasionally be operated on Local Services because of their heritage status, and that providing accessible information on board such services may be unreasonably difficult or detract from their heritage value. Therefore, services using vehicles first used before 1 January 1973 are not required to comply, although their operators should ensure that accessible information is provided to passengers wherever possible.

Minibuses

39. Services operated by vehicles designed to carry sixteen or fewer passengers are exempt from the Regulations. However, we recommend that operators should provide accessible information on board such services wherever possible. In some cases, use of a minibus will involve more interaction with the driver than would be normal for larger vehicles, enabling staff to personally ensure all passengers understand key information about the journey. In other cases, however, such as for new models of Demand Responsive Travel provision, this may not be the case, and operators should consider ways to ensure all passengers have access to the information they need.

Long distance services

40. The Accessible Information Regulations are targeted principally at standard local services. We note however that some long-distance coach services operate as local services for sections of their routes. For example, a service from Glasgow to Birmingham, might include two stops in the West Midlands, within fifteen miles of each other.
41. To ensure consistency of information provision, where the majority of a service is "local" in nature we consider it appropriate for the Regulations to apply. As such, where the total distance of local service sections of a route accounts for at least fifty percent of the overall route distance, operators must ensure the Regulations are complied with on the respective local service sections. In such cases however, we recommend that operators should provide accessible information, including relevant information, across the entire route.

Closed door home-to-school transport

42. The Regulations include a specific exemption for "closed door" home-to-school services. Please refer to the Regulations for this definition. Other types of home-to-school transport that are not exempt and fall within the scope of the Regulations must comply.
43. "Closed door" home-to-school services typically involve the same driver and passengers each day. As a result, passengers can communicate their needs to a driver and reasonably expect a consistent level of service day-to-day. Operators may wish to consider how to provide assurances that they will meet passengers' information needs if the regular driver of a route is not working on a given day. While the provision of audible and visible information might benefit some disabled passengers, it is unlikely that it would have a high impact. Given this value proposition, the Regulations do not require these services to become compliant.

What information to provide: route and destination

Route, destination, and direction information requirements

44. The provision of information identifying the route and either the end destination or direction is required to reassure passengers in the process of boarding the vehicle, and already on board it, that they are travelling in the direction intended. As such, the information must be provided at stopping places where the vehicle stops to allow passengers to board or alight. If the vehicle does not stop there is no requirement to provide this information.
45. Operators should use route and direction descriptors that would be known to passengers through timetables or journey planning platforms as described in paragraph 15. There is no requirement to use a specific name or form of words.
46. Where information indicating the final destination is provided, we recommend that operators should use a name sourced from the NaPTAN database, as well as being consistent with timetables and journey planning platforms.
47. The beginning of the provision of relevant information may coincide with the opening of the passenger doors at a stop where passengers are boarding or alighting. In practice however, operators may choose how route, destination and direction information provision should be triggered. It might, for instance, be linked electronically to the opening of the passenger doors or be triggered by the driver pressing a virtual or physical button. There is no requirement for any announcement to conclude before the doors are closed and the bus pulls away, but drivers should be trained to identify passengers who may be listening for the announcement at the doorway, and to offer appropriate assistance.
48. Examples of acceptable provision include:

Example A: Automatic triggering of information provision

A bus pulls up to a scheduled stopping place to allow passengers to alight and the opening of the passenger doors triggers the provision of information.

An on-board display shows "Route 1: Railway Station".

An audible voice announces "This is a Route 1 service to the Railway Station".

Example B: Manual triggering of information provision

A bus pulls up to a scheduled stopping place to allow passengers to board. The driver presses a button to open the doors, and then presses a button to trigger the provision of information.

An on-board display shows “Cobalt 1 Anti-Clockwise”.

An audible voice announces “Cobalt Route 1, Anti-Clockwise direction”.

Example C: No requirement for information provision to conclude before leaving stop

A bus pulls up to a scheduled stopping place to allow passengers to alight and the opening of the passenger doors triggers the provision of information.

An on-board display shows “Route 1 : Railway Station”.

An audible voice announces “This is a Route 1 service to the...”

A passenger boards before the audible announcement finishes and no other passengers are waiting.

The driver closes the doors and moves away as the announcement concludes.

“...Railway Station.”

Example D: No information provision required when the bus doesn't stop

A bus passes a scheduled stopping place without stopping because no passengers wish to board or alight.

No route announcement is made.

What information to provide: upcoming stops and service termination**Upcoming stop information**

49. Operators must provide information identifying every upcoming scheduled stop, not just key ones, so passengers know what information to expect regardless of the service they board. The information provision must be timed to give passengers sufficient time to alert the driver of their wish to alight.

50. Operators should use stopping place names which will be familiar to passengers from timetables and journey planning platforms. Please refer to paragraph 15 for guidance on this.

Case Study

Transdev Blazefield, an operator in northern England, records the voice of a local newsreader announcing each stop name with a custom phrase before or after the stop name to break up the list of stops. For instance, announcing “The next stop is the Cinema”, then “Railway Station is the next stop”.

51. Operators may choose when to provide upcoming stop information within the parameters required by the Regulations. They might, for instance, set a standard distance from the previous or next stop when information will be provided, informed by the nature of the route, including the proximity of stops to each other.



Figure 1 A screen showing the next stop and destination.

52. Operators may also choose to supplement relevant information on upcoming stops with other information which would be helpful for passengers, such as the proximity of popular locations or opportunities to interchange with other routes or modes. Operators providing this information should do so in both audio and visual formats, rather than only showing the information on a screen or only playing an audio announcement.
53. Examples of acceptable provision include:

Example A: Information provision linked to previous stop location

A bus leaves a bus stop and the provision of information is triggered automatically.
 On-board displays show “Next Stop: Cinema”.
 An audible voice announces “The next stop is Cinema”.

Example B: Information provision linked to next stop location

A bus approaches within 100m of the next scheduled stopping place and the provision of information is triggered automatically.
 On-board displays show “Bus Station”.
 An audible voice announces “Bus Station”.

Example C: Providing additional information

A bus approaches within 50m of the next scheduled stopping place and the provision of information is triggered automatically.
 On-board displays show “Town Centre: Interchange with Route 2. Near: Railway Station”.
 An audible voice announces “Town Centre. Change here for Route 2. Alight here for the railway station”.

Service termination information

54. It is important that passengers know when a service has reached its final destination, both when this is its scheduled final stop and when the service is curtailed before this point. Information indicating that the service has terminated can prompt passengers to seek additional information or assistance from the driver, particularly if they will need to use an alternative service to complete their journey.
55. Operators can choose the precise form of words used to indicate that the service has terminated but must include an alert before respective audible information is provided.
56. We recommend that where operators can provide additional information, such as in relation to ticket validity for passengers on curtailed services, they should do this.
57. Examples of acceptable route termination information include:

Example A: Final scheduled stopping place

A bus approaches within 100m of its final scheduled stopping place and the provision of next stop information is triggered automatically.

On-board displays show “Library”.

An audible voice announces “Library”.

The bus then arrives at its final scheduled stopping place and the following information is triggered automatically:

On-board displays state “Final Stop, All Change Please”.

An audible voice announces “This is the final stop. All change please.”

Example B: Service curtailed before final scheduled stopping place

A bus arrives at a stop and the driver is advised by control that the service will terminate early.

The driver presses a button to trigger the provision of the following information:

On-board displays indicate “Service Terminated. Ask driver for information.”

An audible voice announces “This bus has terminated, please ask the driver for more information.”

Example C: Service curtailed before final scheduled stopping place and use of manual announcement and speech-to-text functionality

A bus arrives at a stop and the driver is advised by control that the service will terminate early.

The driver makes the following announcement using a microphone:

“May I have your attention please. I’m afraid this service is terminating here, but you can use your tickets on the next service, due in twenty minutes. All change please.”

On-board displays show the following text, generated automatically using a speech-to-text function:

“May I have your attention please. I’m afraid this service is terminating here, but you can use your tickets on the next service, due in twenty minutes. All change please.”

What information to provide: hail and ride sections

58. The Regulations define a “hail and ride” section of route as one where the places where the service stops are not defined in advance, but rather in response to passengers indicating their wish to board or alight. Such sections are distinct from

“Demand Responsive Travel” sections, where the route itself is determined by the points where passengers wish to be picked up or set down.

59. Without information indicating the beginning and end of “hail and ride” sections it is possible that passengers will be confused by the lack of on-board information indicating upcoming stops and may not know when to indicate their wish to alight.
60. Operators must ensure that information indicating the beginning of a “hail and ride” section is provided at the stopping point preceding its start, and before the scheduled stopping point following its end. Information indicating the end of a “hail and ride” section must be provided in sufficient time to enable a passenger to indicate to the driver their wish to alight at the next scheduled stopping place, but operators may choose the precise timings used. Operators may choose the precise form of words used but, in both cases, the information must be preceded by an alert. There is no requirement for the service to stop at either the stopping place preceding or following the end of a hail-and-ride section. However, operators may wish to consider this aspect when determining whether the provision of relevant information should be triggered automatically or manually.
61. For a route that begins as “hail and ride”, this information indicating that the service is a “hail and ride” service must be provided at the start of the service.
62. Operators may choose to provide additional information to support passengers who cannot easily identify the location of the service, such as announcing key roads on a “hail and ride” section of route as they are approached.
63. Examples of acceptable “hail and ride” section information include:

Example A: Start of “hail and ride” section

A bus passes the final scheduled stopping point before the start of a “hail and ride” section and the provision of the following information is triggered automatically at the stopping place location:

An alert sound plays.

On-board displays show “Start of Hail and Ride”.

A voice announces “Hail and Ride section starts here”.

Example B: End of “hail and ride” section

A bus has left a “hail and ride” section of route and passes a point 100m from the next scheduled stopping place. The provision of the following information is triggered automatically:

An alert sound plays.

On-board displays show “End of Hail and Ride”.

A voice announces, “The Hail and Ride section has ended.

The bus then passes a point 50m from the next stopping place and the provision of the following information is triggered automatically:

On-board displays show: “High Street”.

A voice announces: “The next stop is High Street”.

And further announcements continue as normal.

Example C: Additional information that operators may provide during Hail and Ride sections of route

A bus is travelling along a “Hail and Ride” section of route and turns onto “London Road”. The provision of the following information is triggered automatically:

On-board displays show “London Road”;

A voice announces “London Road”.

The bus then turns onto “Station Road” and the provision of the following information is triggered automatically:

On-board displays show “Station Road”;

A voice announces “Station Road”.

What information to provide: diversions

64. Diversions from the normal line of route, whether planned or unplanned, have the potential to cause passengers concern. They can be particularly problematic for disabled passengers, including those who rely on structure and familiarity to make journeys confidently.
65. Operators must ensure that information is provided indicating the beginning of a diversion where that diversion will lead to one or more scheduled stopping places being missed out. Where a driver is in any doubt as to whether stops will be missed out, such as in the case of unplanned diversions, we suggest that they should be instructed to provide relevant information as if the diversion would result in scheduled stopping places being omitted.
66. The Regulations make different requirements of operators, depending on whether a diversion is planned or unplanned. Where the driver knows about a diversion in

advance, operators must ensure that passengers are alerted to it in time to signal their wish to leave the bus at the final scheduled stopping place before it begins. This is important to give passengers the choice to seek further information from the driver or to make alternative travel arrangements. However, where a diversion is unplanned, information indicating the beginning of the diversion must be provided at, or as soon as possible after, the start of the diversion. Operators may choose the specific form of words used to indicate the beginning of a diversion, but such information must be preceded with an alert.

67. Operators are not required to provide specific information indicating the end of a diversion, since the resumption of the provision of information indicating upcoming stops should alert passengers to this fact. Operators may find some benefit to passengers from providing end of diversion information.
68. Where feasible, operators may also choose to provide additional information indicating which stops will be omitted from or added to the route during a diversion. If a manual announcement is used to provide such additional information, operators should ensure that information can be provided to passengers unable to hear it. This may be by using displays showing information generated by speech-to-text software, or by the driver writing relevant information on a notice that can be shown to passengers.
69. Where a diverted route is registered with the Traffic Commissioner, such as for diversions lasting several months, there is no duty to provide diversions information, but operators should consider how they will ensure passengers understand the change.
70. Operators may provide additional information if there is a closed stop on a bus's normal route. It may benefit passengers to provide this information before the bus reaches the stop preceding the closed stop, so that passengers can choose whether to exit the vehicle before or after the closure.
71. Examples of acceptable diversions information provision include:

Example A: Planned diversion

A bus approaches a road closure which the driver has been alerted to by her control centre. As the final scheduled stopping place before the start of the diversion is approached, she presses a button, triggering the provision of the following information: On-board displays show "Diversion begins after next stop."
A voice announces "This bus will shortly begin a diversion. Ask the driver for further information."

Example B: Unplanned diversion

A bus rounds a corner and finds that the road ahead is blocked. The driver turns onto an alternative road and presses a button triggering the provision of the following information:

On-board displays show “Bus on diversion”.

A voice announces “This bus is on diversion”.

Example C: Provision of additional information

A bus approaches a diversion that the driver has been notified about in advance. Prior to the scheduled stopping place preceding the diversion she presses a button, triggering the provision of the following information:

On-board displays show “Diversion after next stop.”

A voice announces “This bus will shortly begin a diversion.”

The bus stops at the scheduled stopping place and the driver makes a manual announcement using a microphone provided: “This bus will be on diversion, and will miss out the next two stops. Passengers for the cinema and Railway Station may wish to leave the bus here and complete their journey on foot.”

On-board displays show the following information generated by a speech-to-text facility: This bus will be on diversion and will miss out the next two stops. Passengers for the cinema and Railway Station may wish to leave the bus here and complete their journey on foot.

Information standards: Audible information**Introduction**

72. The audible information standards are designed to ensure that audible information is available to as many passengers as possible, whilst providing operators with flexibility as to the method for providing it. These standards apply whenever relevant information is provided, except for services covered by the “Partial Compliance” provisions. Where operators provide information which is not relevant information it is recommended that it should also meet the audible information standards.

Audible information volume levels

73. Passengers should be able to hear audible information wherever they are situated on the vehicle. The precise manner in which operators ensure this depends upon whether the system for providing audible information has the ability to vary the volume based on ambient audio levels, a process we have called “Adaptive Volume

Control". The requirements for vehicles with and without Adaptive Volume Control are summarised in Table 1 below.

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Adaptive Volume Control available?	Yes	No
Requirement for audio volume at any seat or wheelchair space.	3dB above Live Measured Ambient Volume.	3dB above Pre-Measured Ambient Volume.
Comparison	<p>Live Measured Ambient Volume:</p> <p>An average of the live volume measured at:</p> <p>Front of lower passenger saloon.</p> <p>Rear of lower passenger saloon.</p> <p>Front of upper passenger saloon (where relevant).</p> <p>Rear of upper passenger saloon (where relevant).</p>	<p>Pre-Measured Ambient Volume:</p> <p>An average of the volume measured at:</p> <p>Front of lower passenger saloon;</p> <p>Rear of lower passenger saloon;</p> <p>Front of upper passenger saloon (where relevant);</p> <p>Rear of upper passenger saloon (where relevant);</p> <p>when empty of passengers and travelling on one of the operator's routes at:</p> <p>5mph; and</p> <p>20mph.</p>
Maximum permitted volume	84dB.	84dB.

Table 1 Audible information volume level requirements

74. Operators are free to choose how audible information is generated, including whether stop names and related announcements are pre-recorded, whether text-to-speech software is used to generate them automatically, or whether the driver will announce them manually. In all cases however, operators should ensure that announcements are clear and concise, and that relevant information can be easily differentiated from any other information that may be provided. They should also consider the

pronunciation of any names used, to maximise understanding of and credibility with passengers. This is particularly important when using announcements generated with text-to-speech software.

75. To maximise the audibility of audible information it must be provided within the frequency range of 300hz to 3000hz.³ If it is not possible to monitor the frequency range used in some circumstances, such as when a driver makes a manual announcement, operators should be able to demonstrate, if required, that processes have been implemented to ensure that audible information is ordinarily provided within the prescribed range.

Information Standards: Audio Frequency Induction Loops

76. The Regulations make provision for people who rely on hearing aids to access audible information, so that they can still benefit from relevant information even if they cannot see or read a visual display. Relevant audible information must be available to somebody using a hearing aid in conjunction with an Audio Frequency Induction Loop (hereafter an “induction loop”) when they are seated in a priority seat or wheelchair space. Operators should also ensure that other audible information not required by law is also available via induction loops. Operators should work with their suppliers to avoid audio interference and to ensure that audible information can be understood when accessed through this method.
77. We recommend that a schedule is established for the regular testing of this functionality, as its operation would not otherwise be apparent to a driver or engineer who does not use a compatible hearing aid.
78. Operators should provide appropriate signage adjacent to priority seats and wheelchair spaces to indicate that an induction loop is present. This should use some version of the international reference symbol. We also recommend that operators provide an additional separate induction loop to aid communication between the driver and passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing at the point of boarding or alighting the vehicle. Appropriate signage should be installed to indicate the availability of this.

³ Real Time Information Group (2018) *Inclusive passenger information*. Available online at: <https://www.rtig.org.uk/system/files/documents/RTIG-PR003-D002-1.10%20RTI%20and%20inclusive%20travel.pdf>



Figure 2 The international reference symbol for hearing loops. Source: hearingloop.org

Information standards: Visible information

Introduction

79. The visible information requirements are intended to provide operators with flexibility on how they are met.
80. We hope that in many cases, compliance for older vehicles can be attained using one display on each deck of the vehicle for the use of forward-facing passengers. On vehicles first used before 1 October 2024, when the vehicle is empty of passengers, there must be an unobstructed line of sight between a display screen showing visible information and 51% of seats on each deck of the vehicle, each priority seat and each forward-facing wheelchair space. For vehicles first used on or after 1 October 2024, there must also be an unobstructed line of sight between a display and all other wheelchair spaces.
81. When considering whether the view of a display is obstructed operators should consider the position of any stanchions, handholds and bulkheads, and the extent to which they would prevent a seated passenger reading visible information without having to move from their seat or wheelchair space. When providing information visible to a passenger in a rearward-facing wheelchair space they should ensure that the information would be accessible to a range of such passengers, including those with limited movement. A display facing inwards from the side of the vehicle might technically meet this requirement, but depending on its placement, it might be difficult to read for passengers with limited head or neck movement.

Visible Information: Minimum Requirements

82. A minimum text height is required to ensure that visible information is readable by as many passengers as possible, including some who are visually impaired. As a minimum, relevant information must be displayed using characters at least 22mm in height. Other information should also be displayed with a 22mm minimum character height. This minimum character height applies to all characters, not just capital letters.

83. Words displayed entirely in block capitals (for example, “BUS STATION” instead of “Bus Station”), and words which scroll across a screen can be difficult to read for some people who are visually impaired or neurodiverse. Relevant information must not be displayed using block capitals, and the use of scrolling text should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Furthermore, other information should also not be displayed using block capitals or scrolling text.



Figure 2 An LED display on the top deck of a bus reading "Seven Dials".

84. Where a message cannot be displayed in one instance because it is too long for the screen, we recommend that information is refreshed (alternating between two parts of the message) rather than scrolled. Operators should consider if abbreviations or stop names would enable the text to be displayed without scrolling. We recommend using the set of abbreviations provided in the NaPTAN user guide. Alternatively, where operators anticipate a need to use scrolling text, they should use displays which maximise readability, and consult with a range of potential users on the scrolling speed to be used. Messages which require screen refreshes or scrolling to communicate may need to be shown multiple times in case a passenger misses the first part of the message.

Welsh language requirements

85. Neither the Equality Act 2010 nor the Regulations make specific provision for the provision of audible and visible information in the Welsh language. This is on the basis that where Welsh language requirements apply, they would in any case supersede any accessible information specific requirements. Operators of local

services which operate in Wales for any part of their route should ensure they understand their duties with respect to the provision of information in the Welsh language, including whether it would be appropriate to provide relevant information in both English and Welsh.

Legacy provision

86. It is important that, in time, passengers can expect a consistent minimum Accessible Information experience whichever service they board in Great Britain. However, it would be disproportionate to require currently existing information provision to be brought into line with the Regulations immediately. For this reason, the Regulations make provision for “Partial Compliance”.
87. A partially compliant vehicle is one where, immediately before 1 October 2023 the following conditions are met:
 - 87.1 Regulations 7 to 9 are complied with, except for Regulation 8 (2) which requires an alert sound for route termination information and is not required to be classed a partially compliant vehicle;
 - 87.2 The volume of audible information at 51% of seats on each deck of the vehicle is at least 3dB higher than either the Live Measured Ambient Volume or Pre-Measured Ambient Volume, as appropriate, but no louder than the maximum specified in the Regulations (84dB); and
 - 87.3 With no passengers on the vehicle there is an unobstructed line of sight between a display and 51% of the seats on each deck of the vehicle.
88. Partially Compliant vehicles will be exempted from Regulations 8 (2) (Alert sound for route termination), 10 (Diversion information), 11 (Hail and Ride sections), 13 (Conditions for audible information) and 14 (Conditions for visible information) for eight years but must comply in full from 1 October 2031.
89. Operators with vehicles which are Partially Compliant should ensure that their status and any evidence of it is documented clearly and can be provided to enforcement officials upon request.
90. For a vehicle to retain its Partially Compliant status, it must meet the conditions of that status on and after 1 October 2023. The enforcement principles set out in Part B of this document will apply to the maintenance of Partially Compliant status. In particular, a distinction will be drawn between isolated, inadvertent, or temporary lapses in meeting the conditions and more sustained breaches.
91. Examples of using the Partially Compliant status include:

Example A: Operator with audible and visible information not available in priority seats

An operator has been providing audible and visible information on board its services for several years, but on double-deck vehicles the lower deck display is routinely installed behind the stairs bulkhead, making it unreadable by passengers in the front priority seats.

The vehicles otherwise meet the conditions to be considered "Partially Compliant" and are exempt from Regulations 8 (2), 10, 11, 13 and 14 until 1 October 2031.

Example B: Operator removes equipment necessary to maintain Partially Compliant status

A vehicle meets the conditions to be considered "Partially Compliant" and is exempt from Regulations 8 (2), 10, 11, 13 and 14 until 1 October 2031.

On 1 January 2028, the operator removes the speakers and screen from the vehicle. As of this date, the vehicle can no longer meet the requirements of Partially Compliant status, such that it loses that status permanently and is considered equivalent to vehicles that never had Partially Compliant status.

If the operator continues to use the vehicle to run services from 1 January 2028, they will be subject to enforcement action, as the vehicle must comply with the full Regulations. Having lost its Partially Compliant status, the vehicle must now be equipped to be fully compliant.

Example C: Technical fault on a Partially Compliant vehicle

A vehicle meets the conditions to be considered "Partially Compliant" and is exempt from Regulations 8 (2), 10, 11, 13 and 14 until 1 October 2031.

During a service, the vehicle experiences a technical fault and the audio-visual information systems stop working. The driver makes a record of this after the service ends, and the fault is fixed before the vehicle enters service again. This inadvertent, temporary inability to comply with the conditions of Partially Compliant status is unlikely to lead to the loss of that status for enforcement purposes.

Implementation timescales

92. The Regulations will take effect on 1 October 2023. The date on which they apply to a given operator's services will however depend upon when the respective vehicles were first used on local services. We have provided a longer lead-in time for older vehicles on the basis that they are likely to be more challenging to retrofit than newer ones, and that the operators using them may need more time to prepare to comply. Spacing out the compliance requirements also ensures that system manufacturers and retrofitters are not overwhelmed.
93. In practice, operators should prepare to comply in good time before the Regulations apply to their services and should not wait until the relevant compliance deadline is imminent. Operators should not expect ad hoc exemptions from the requirements to be granted where they have failed to prepare in time to comply by the respective deadline.
94. The compliance timescales are described in Table 2 below:

Vehicle first used on local services:	Partially Compliant before 1 October 2023?	Comply with Partial Compliance requirements from:	Comply with requirements in full from:
On or after 1 October 2019	Yes	1 October 2023	1 October 2031
On or after 1 October 2019	No	N/A	1 October 2024
On or after 1 October 2014 and On or before 30 September 2019	Yes	1 October 2023	1 October 2031
On or after 1 October 2014 and On or before 30 September 2019	No	N/A	1 October 2025
On or after 1 January 1973 and On or before 30 September 2014	Yes	1 October 2023	1 October 2031
On or after 1 January 1973 and On or before 30 September 2014	No	N/A	1 October 2026

Table 2 Implementation timescales

95. The term “first used” is used here to describe the first time a particular vehicle is operated on a local service regardless of the operator responsible for its operation.

Exemptions

96. Section 181B of the Equality Act 2010 provides the Secretary of State with powers to exempt certain operators, vehicles and services from the Regulations. There are two main types of Exemption:

96.1 Class Exemptions:

Exemptions for Public Service Vehicles of a prescribed description, operators of a prescribed description, and local services of a prescribed description.

These exemption powers have been used within the Regulations to exempt, for instance, services operated by vehicles first used before 1 January 1973. Such exemptions must be made with a Statutory Instrument laid in Parliament, and it is not envisaged that this power will be used routinely in future.

96.2 Ad Hoc Exemptions:

Exemptions for a prescribed Public Service Vehicle, vehicles operated by a prescribed operator, or a prescribed local service.

Such exemptions can be made without the need for a Statutory Instrument and might be used, for instance, where it would be unreasonable for a specific vehicle to have equipment fitted in order to provide relevant information.

97. The remainder of this section focuses on Ad Hoc Exemptions.
98. It is not envisaged that the Ad Hoc Exemption power will be used routinely, and operators must ensure they prepare in good time to comply with the Regulations. Where this is not possible, due to extraordinary circumstances not anticipated by the Regulations, operators may apply to the Department for Transport for an exemption.
99. When considering applications for exemption the Department's decision is likely to be informed by the following factors:
- 99.1 Whether a conscious decision was taken to include services, vehicles or operators of this type when the Regulations were developed.
- If yes, an exemption is less likely to be granted.
If no, an exemption is more likely to be granted.
- 99.2 Whether the granting of an exemption would place the operator at a competitive advantage compared to comparable operators.
- If yes, an exemption is less likely to be granted.
If no, an exemption is more likely to be granted.
- 99.3 Whether the operator has taken all reasonable steps to comply with the Regulations on time.
- If yes, an exemption is more likely to be granted.
If no, an exemption is less likely to be granted.
- 99.4 Whether the failure to grant an exemption will directly contribute to the permanent withdrawal of local services.
- If yes, an exemption is more likely to be granted.
If no, an exemption is less likely to be granted.
100. Where ad hoc exemptions are granted, they are likely to be issued for a temporary period, such as to provide an operator with more time before they need to comply, rather than removing the need for them to comply at any point. The Department for Transport is likely to request evidence to support any request for an exemption.
101. For an exemption application form and details of the ad hoc exemption application process prospective applicants should email PSVAR@dft.gov.uk

Sources of advice and funding

Real Time Information Group

102. The Real Time Information Group (RTIG) is a trade body for public transport technology stakeholders. As a source of technical expertise, they can provide advice on accessible information. RTIG are also managing the Accessible Information Grant on behalf of the Department for Transport.

Grant eligibility and application process

103. The government has allocated £4.65m to support smaller operators to comply with the Regulations. This Accessible Information Grant will be open to applications in 2023.

104. The full timetable, eligibility criteria, and application process will be published on the RTIG website available at: <https://www.rtig.org.uk/aig>

Part B: Complaints and enforcement

Introduction

105. We expect that all operators will take steps proactively to ensure their timely compliance with the Regulations.
106. Non-compliance with the Regulations will be identified in two ways:
- 106.1 Individual or representative complaints.
An individual or organisation representing affected individuals raises a complaint or complaints regarding an operator's alleged non-compliance with the Regulations.
- 106.2 Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) enforcement.
DVSA conducts investigations and inspections in order to identify non-compliance.
107. We anticipate that complaints will be dealt with as set out below.

Reporting and investigating alleged non-compliance

Complaints from individuals and their representatives

108. This process is appropriate for individual bus and coach passengers who have identified a service which they believe (a) to be within scope of the Regulations and (b) to be operating a service which does not comply with them. It should also be used by organisations representing such passengers.
109. **Step 1: Operator complaint:**
- The complainant should raise a complaint with the respective bus or coach operator and give them fourteen days to respond. Operators should provide clear information to passengers on board the vehicle and online regarding how and where they can make a complaint. After receiving a complaint, operators should reply with an acknowledgement of the complaint and what action will be taken.
110. **Step 2: Bus Users UK and London TravelWatch arbitration:**

If the operator fails to respond, or the complainant feels their complaint remains unresolved after fourteen days, and it concerns an operator outside London, it can be referred to Bus Users UK. Complaints about services in London should be escalated to London TravelWatch in this scenario. Bus Users UK and London TravelWatch will investigate the complaint, including identifying whether the service concerned was subject to the Regulations at the time of the incident, and will take one of the following steps:

- 110.1 Isolated, inadvertent or temporary cases of non-compliance, or cases where the service concerned is not subject to the Regulations:

The complaint will be treated as a standard case and handled consistent with the Alternative Dispute Resolution or London TravelWatch complaints handling process, including being escalated to the Bus Appeals Body, where appropriate; or

- 110.2 Sustained, negligent, and deliberate non-compliance:

Cases and series of cases will be reported to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) for investigation.

111. Step 3: DVSA investigation:

DVSA will investigate cases reported to it, seeking further information as required. Where cases or series of cases demonstrate sustained, negligent or deliberate non-compliance by one or more operators DVSA will escalate them to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner.

112. Step 4: Traffic Commissioner:

The Traffic Commissioner is responsible for the ultimate regulation of respective legal requirements and will respond to cases reported to it consistent with its procedures. Operators can appeal Traffic Commissioner decisions to the Upper Tribunal.

113. Separate information will be released to support affected passengers to make a complaint.

DVSA investigations

114. In addition to the complaints reporting process for individuals and their representatives, DVSA may initiate investigations into operator compliance with the Regulations based on other intelligence they have access to. It is our expectation though that, consistent with that process, they will focus on sustained, negligent, and deliberate non-compliance, rather than on isolated cases.
115. Operators should maintain clear audit trails demonstrating the steps they have taken to comply with the Regulations. This will allow them to demonstrate to enforcement officers, where appropriate, that any non-compliance is of an unexpected, inadvertent or temporary nature.

Part C: Accessible information supporting an accessible environment

Introduction

116. Part A of this document focused on the steps that operators must and should take to comply with the Regulations and provide the minimum level of relevant information required by law. There are further steps which they may choose to take to enhance the accessibility of their services further, or to improve the information offering for passengers.
117. When considering adopting one of these measures, operators should consider the principles at paragraph 18, and the need to avoid creating information overload for passengers.

Additional options

Audible information for boarding passengers

118. The Regulations require that audible and visible information indicating the route and direction of respective services is provided at the point of boarding. This is intended to inform passengers in the process of boarding and to reassure those already on board the vehicle. In practice it will sometimes be difficult for passengers to access information whilst boarding, such as at busy stops where they may need to queue to board. This is potentially problematic for visually impaired passengers who cannot read destination blinds and who may therefore struggle to identify the service on which they wish to travel. This issue is amplified at bus and coach stops served by multiple routes, where vehicles may “stack up” during busy periods.
119. Some operators have used external speakers to overcome this issue, playing audible information identifying the route and direction to passengers outside the vehicle as well as those already on board. Operators might consider such an option but should also be mindful of the impact on ambient sound levels outside the vehicle, and the impact on nearby homes and businesses. Drivers should be trained to recognise passengers who might struggle to identify a vehicle, and to announce their presence when appropriate.

120. Operators might also work with local authorities to improve the provision of accessible information at bus and coach stations and stops. Whilst the use of “next bus” displays is increasing, these are not accessible to some visually impaired people unless audible information is also provided. Such information can be provided automatically or on-demand, initiated by a key fob, push button, or smartphone application, and can help passengers travel with confidence, by ensuring that everyone has access to up-to-date departures information. The provision of QR codes linking to live departures information can also support passengers to access relevant information in a manner which works for them. However, operators and authorities should note that the proportion of disabled people with access to smartphone technology remains significantly lower than for the population at large.⁴ Using more than one solution will help ensure that information is available to as wide a group of passengers as possible.

Information on connecting services

121. Few local bus or coach services operate in isolation, with no points at which passengers can transfer to other routes or modes of transport. Passengers can be supported to make seamless end-to-end journeys through the provision of either static or live accessible information concerning connecting services.
122. Static information might, for instance, identify stops served by other routes, or which are located close to railway stations, tram stops or other modes. Live information might present the route and destinations of the next three buses to depart from the next stop served, or upcoming departures from a nearby railway station.

⁴ Ofcom (2019) *Disabled users access to and use of communication devices and services*. Available online at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0023/132962/Research-summary-all-disabilities.pdf



Figure 3 A screen showing National Rail and London Overground from Peckham Rye Station.

123. In both cases, operators should provide such information consistently in audible and visible formats to ensure it is usable by as many passengers as possible.

Provision of screens for passengers in rearward facing wheelchair spaces

124. The Regulations require that new vehicles are equipped to provide visible information within line of sight of a wheelchair user positioned in any rearward facing wheelchair space on board a vehicle.

125. Whilst this requirement is targeted only at new vehicles to avoid disproportionate costs for operators, providing it on a voluntary basis on board existing vehicles would make a significant difference to the ability of wheelchair users to access the same information as other passengers. We therefore recommend that operators give appropriate consideration to including such provision when planning the installation of relevant equipment on their existing fleet.

Accessible information on board other services

126. As mentioned in the discussion of exempted vehicles, there may be value in providing accessible information on services which are not required to comply with

the Regulations. Operators may wish to consider the importance of this, particularly on services where routes and stopping places are variable and interaction with the driver is limited.

Annex A: Glossary

The following terms have been used throughout this document:

- **Accessible Information.**
Information about a local bus or coach service provided consistently audibly and visibly to passengers travelling on board the respective vehicle.
- **First used.**
The specific interpretation of the phrase "first used" in each case depends on the context in which it is used in the Regulations. Please consult the Regulations for detailed definitions.
- **Local service.**
A service as defined in section 2 of the Transport Act 1985.
- **National Public Transport Access Nodes database (NaPTAN).**
A national dataset of all public transport 'stops' in England, Scotland and Wales.
- **Relevant information.**
Accessible information which an operator must provide consistent with the Regulations.
- **The Regulations.**
The Public Service Vehicles (Accessible Information) Regulations 2023.