FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING PARTY

Rail transport of passengers with mobility handicaps

Transmitted by Ann Frye Limited
Passenger Accessibility of Heavy Rail Systems

Ann Frye
Chair of ECMT Working Group on Access & Inclusion
Chair of COST 335
The Facts and Figures

- There are some 50 million disabled people in the 27 countries of the European Union;
- There are over 60 million disabled people across Europe as a whole;
- About 20% of adults have some form of long term disability;
  - 70% of them have difficulty walking and/or climbing stairs;
  - 41% have a hearing loss;
  - 24% have a vision loss;
- Around one in four households has a disabled resident;
- Recent research in the UK has shown that disabled people travel one third less than non-disabled people; in some countries that figure will be much lower.
Who is disabled in a transport context?
The link between age and disability

- There is a strong correlation between age and disability;
- Two thirds of disabled people are elderly;
- Over half the population aged over 75 has a disability.
The shifting population balance

• By 2015 older people will account for 19% of Europe’s population – some 95 million people;
• In parallel birth rates are falling;
• This means that in future the working age population will not be large enough to support older and disabled people;
• Retaining independent mobility is both an economic and a social imperative.
European Trends in Growth of Population aged over 65
Profiling the Baby Boomer Generation

• There are fundamental differences between the generation currently approaching old age and previous generations;
• They have the highest mean income of any age group;
• They also have high expectations of continuing active lifestyles and travel into retirement.
What does this mean for the Rail Industry?

- Rail travel will become an increasingly popular means of travel for older people;
- It is less stressful than air travel;
- It brings you closer to city centre destinations;
- To meet this new and growing market the rail industry needs to provide rolling stock, infrastructure and services that are accessible.
Key Issues for older and Disabled People

- The problems facing older and disabled people include:
  - Lack of information about accessible stations and trains;
  - Poor access at stations;
  - Low platforms which mean steep steps to board;
  - Poor access on the train;
  - Lack of assistance at the station and on the train.
Many countries have introduced legislation (general and/or technical) on accessibility. These include:

- **UK (1995 And 2005)** Disability Discrimination Act (DDA);
- **Germany (2002)**: Act On Equal Opportunities For Disabled Persons
- **Spain (2003)**: National Law For Equal Opportunities, Non Discrimination And Universal Accessibility;
- **Switzerland (2004)**: Federal Act On The Elimination Of Discrimination Against People With Disabilities;
- **France (2005)**: Law On Equal Rights And Opportunities, Participation And Citizenship Of Disabled Persons;
- **Ireland (2005)** Disability Act.
The European Legal Framework

• The European Commission has developed an Action Plan on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People;
• It sets a clear objective of “enhancing the economic and social integration of people with disabilities”;
• Accessible public transport is a key priority for meeting this objective;
• The Commission’s White Paper “European Transport Policy for 2010” also recognises this priority.
European Legal Framework

- There is a Directive in place on Bus and Coach accessibility (2001/85/EC);
- There is also a Regulation on Disabled Passenger Rights for Air Travel (1107/2006);
- A proposal for similar laws on maritime travel is expected shortly;
- Rail travel is an important part of this same package....
Rail: The legal framework

- There are two Directives on procurement procedures (2004/17/EC and 2004/18/EC);
- They apply specifically to the transport field;
- They specify that contracting authorities should ensure that accessibility criteria for people with reduced mobility are taken into account.
Rail: The Legal Framework

• The Third Rail Package was approved in September 2007;
• Regulation 1371/2007 Covers the rights of disabled passengers to be given assistance including boarding and alighting and changing trains;
• It will apply from 2009 to both international and domestic services.
Rail: The Legal Framework

- Directive 2004/50 on the interoperability of the trans-European high-speed rail system includes a technical specification (TSI) dealing with accessibility of stations and trains;
- The TSI covers conventional and high speed rail infrastructure and passenger rolling stock;
- It also includes other issues like ticketing equipment;
- The TSI is the standard against which rail vehicles capable of operating on the Trans-European Network will be assessed.
Technical Specification for Interoperability (TSI)

- The TSI on “people with reduced mobility" came into force on 1 July 2008;
- This definition goes wider than disability and age: it includes those who have a temporary disability or who travel with small children etc;
- The TSI applies to all new, upgraded or renewed stations and trains on the Trans-European Network;
- As an example, in the UK this has been taken to mean all heavy rail trains.
Guidance and Best Practice

- COST (Co-operation in Science and Technology) Project 335 on access to heavy rail systems provides guidance on best practice for accessibility of rolling stock and stations;

- The TSI has drawn on COST 335 in setting standards;

Summary

• Accessibility is a legal requirement;
• It is also a commercial opportunity: growing numbers of older and disabled people would make use of rail travel if they could do so with confidence and in comfort;
• Improvements to meet the needs of disabled and older people will almost always benefit the wider travelling public (for example, lower steps, more handrails, non-slip surfaces);
Summary

• Accessibility should be incorporated into new rolling stock at the design stage;
• It is also possible to make significant improvements to older rolling stock through the refurbishment process;
• Many improvements are simple and low cost;
• Station accessibility improvements should, whenever possible, be made in parallel with the improvements to rolling stock;
• Issues such as staff training and communication are also crucial to giving people the confidence to travel,
Next Steps

• Disabled and older people need confidence before they will make a journey;
• This means that every aspect of a train journey needs to be accessible:
  ▪ Pre journey information
  ▪ Booking arrangements
  ▪ Station facilities
  ▪ Staff assistance at the station (both ends of the journey) and on board
  ▪ Information and facilities on board.
Next Steps

• Technical standards can improve rolling stock design but unless all the other factors are addressed in parallel, people will not travel;
• Best practice and guidance exists but it is often ignored;
• What role can you play in opening up Europe’s railways to a wider travelling public?
Information

ann@frye.demon.co.uk