

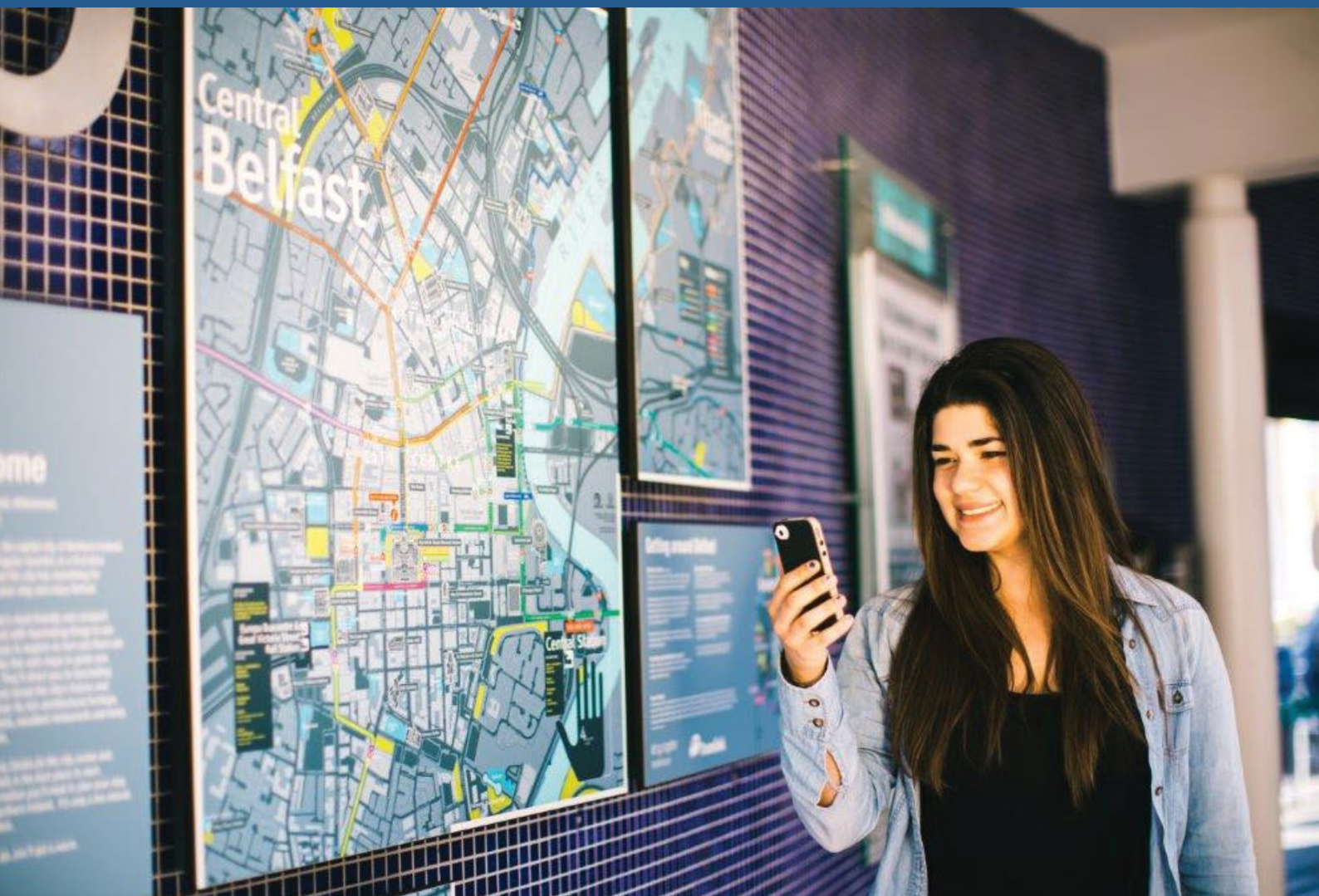


Department for
**Regional
Development**
www.drdni.gov.uk

Accessible Transport Strategy

2025

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT



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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

As Minister for Regional Development I am committed to having a modern, sustainable transport network that meets the needs of all of our community. Accessible transport is a vital component in achieving this. That is why I want to see a transport network in Northern Ireland that is inclusive and accessible to all.

Over the last decade the Accessible Transport Strategy 2005 has been the delivery vehicle for radical change in the accessibility of the transport network within Northern Ireland. Changes driven by a series of action plans have made our transport network today more accessible than ever before.

Through sustained investment in public transport, staff training, information provision and the wider transport infrastructure, we now have one of the most accessible transport networks in Europe. The opportunities for older and disabled people have been greatly enhanced. However, significant challenges remain. I am determined to address these and build on the progress we have made. That is why I am consulting on a new Accessible Transport Strategy and the strategic themes which I believe can help us take the next steps on our journey to build a more inclusive and accessible transport network.

I am determined, despite the current financial environment, to continue to make the case for further significant investment in our transport network. I want to work with others inside and outside of Government to make transport inclusive and accessible.

I believe that older people and people with a disability, those who provide transport services and the voluntary sector can inform how we make change happen and where it is needed most. I hope to hear from you on how we can make your transport network better, more inclusive and more accessible for you.

Danny Kennedy
Minister for Regional Development

INTRODUCTION

The transport network connects us to each other, to the places we want to be, and to the goods and services we need every day. Transport is a key part of our everyday life. Using transport isn't always easy if you are elderly or have a disability. Tasks and opportunities that most take for granted become more difficult if you are restricted in your choice of travel or unable to plan a journey.

Addressing barriers to travel that older people and people with a disability face was at the heart of the Accessible Transport Strategy 2005. It sought to enhance the physical accessibility of the transport network, improve the understanding of passenger needs and information provision through targeted actions and policies over a ten year period.

These actions and policies influenced significant investment in our transport network. Physically there were new buses, trains, stations and upgraded halts. This investment, which included improvements to the pedestrian environment has delivered considerable progress in making our transport network more accessible.

We are now in the position where travel information is now widely available in more formats while websites have been updated to make information about services accessible and inclusive. Disability awareness training is being provided to front line and back office transport staff as appropriate and there is ongoing meaningful engagement with older people and people with a disability at all levels.

As a result, the accessibility of our urban and rural transport services has been greatly improved for those who previously had difficulty in accessing mainstream public transport services. In addition extending concessionary fares to those aged over 60 have made travel for older people and people with a disability more affordable.

As our population gets older how we improve the accessibility of the transport network will take on greater importance. This must also be viewed within the context of a growing focus on promoting more sustainable modes of transport. It is therefore important that we continue to build on the progress that has been made.

In 2005 less than 8.5 million journeys were made on public transport by older people and people with a disability. By 2014/15 this has increased to 13 million journeys¹ highlighting the value of public transport as a sustainable and affordable travel option to these groups.

1. Source: Translink 2015

For this reason in reviewing the need for a new Accessible Transport Strategy the Department proactively sought the views of older people and people with a disability. We commissioned a survey of their views on public transport and met with them and their representatives across Northern Ireland.

A review of the existing Strategy (3rd Year Monitoring Report 2014 - 2015²) was carried out to see what actions were outstanding and also we engaged extensively with the Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac) (who have a role in advising Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and people with a disability) and Translink.

We have concluded that despite the real and positive developments outlined previously that a new Strategy is required to consolidate gains to date, build on the progress made and look at opportunities to make the transport network more inclusive.

Through our pre-consultation engagement with various stakeholders, including those organisations representing older people and people with a disability, the results of the survey and our assessment of progress to date we have identified five themes which will form the basis of a new Strategy.

These are:

- Enhancing the accessibility of the public transport network
- Improving accessibility of the wider transport network
- Enhancing the customer experience
- Enhancing the accessibility of information
- Working in collaboration with partners and stakeholders

Our vision is to deliver a **transport network in Northern Ireland that is inclusive and accessible to all**. This will enable genuine participation in our community, enhance social inclusion, increase personal independence and travel options for those who may have difficulty travelling.

This public consultation is about giving you the opportunity to influence the strategic direction of the Strategy over the medium term.

2 <http://www.drndni.gov.uk/accessible-travel-strategy-action-plan-2012-2015.pdf>

BACKGROUND

Older people and people with a disability are often viewed as the most vulnerable within society. They are much more likely to experience difficulty in accessing the opportunities and services that others have no difficulty getting to or from. This can result in higher levels of exclusion and deprivation.

As a Department we have identified that the availability and accessibility of transport is important in addressing social inclusion especially for these groups.

Recognising this is a key aim of the current Regional Transportation Strategy. The **"Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future"**³ policy document seeks to improve access to our towns and cities and across rural areas. It aims to do this by developing transport services that meet the needs of the community and enhance social inclusion. This policy document recognises that this will require a clear focus on improving the accessibility of the transport network if these objectives are to be achieved.

Our population aged under 60 is projected to decrease by 1% from 2015 to 2025 as the population aged 60 and above or more will increase by 28% over the same period⁴.

There is a clear correlation between age and disability. The last Census in 2011 showed 7% of the population aged below 35 had a long term health problem or a disability that limited their day to day activities a little or a lot. This rises to 35% when we look at the population aged between 55 and 64 and is 71% for those aged 75 and over⁵.

With a growing older population that is likely to have more difficulty in getting around the challenge is in designing transport services that will provide a more accessible and inclusive transport network for everyone.

The Executive's Disability Strategy **'A Strategy to improve the lives of people with a disability 2012 – 2015'**⁶ (extended to 2017) sets out strategic priorities under a number of cross-cutting themes⁷.

These themes are:

- Participation and Active Citizenship
- Awareness Raising
- Accessibility – Physical Environment, Goods and Services
- Accessibility – Transport and Personal Mobility (including Strategic Priority 6)
- Independent Living, Choice and Control
- Children, Young People and Family
- Transition from Childhood to Adulthood
- Transition from Adulthood to Later Life
- Standard of Living
- Employment and Employability
- Justice and Community Safety
- Being Part of the Community

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) has the lead in delivering Strategic Priority 6 of the Executive's Disability Strategy - Transport and Personal Mobility. This aims to eliminate the barriers people with a disability face in accessing transport and ensuring necessary measures are in place to allow personal mobility for people with a disability. While DRD is in the lead, realising this objective requires action across a number of departments.

We see the new Accessible Transport Strategy as the delivery vehicle to achieve these objectives, coordinating action across Government and clarifying the key areas which need to be addressed.

That is why in advance of preparing this document we carried out an extensive pre-consultation exercise primarily with older people and people with a disability and those who represent them. Our pre-consultation included a specially commissioned survey of older people and people with a disability, a series of meetings with older people and people with a disability and direct engagement with the Imtac.

3. http://www.drdni.gov.uk/ensuring_a_sustainable_transport_future_a_new_approach_to_regional_transportation.pdf

4. Northern Ireland 2012 based Population Projections (NISRA 2013)

5. Northern Ireland Census 2011

6. <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/disability-strategy-2012-2015-revised-010313.pdf>

7. linked to rights protected under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The survey sought to find out the views of older people and people with a disability on the public transport services provided by Translink (including Ulsterbus, Goldline, Metro and Northern Ireland Railways) in Northern Ireland. Over 650 people responded to this survey, with the results being published on 23rd April 2015⁸.

In parallel to the survey the Department contacted stakeholders from across the voluntary sector in order to validate our approach. Groups such as RNIB, Guide Dogs in Northern Ireland, Action Mental Health; New Horizons, Barnardos, the Cedar Foundation and Age Friendly Belfast facilitated focus sessions with their clients. This enabled the Department to discuss the barriers faced when accessing the transport network with older people and people with a disability in a structured forum.

These sessions took place across Northern Ireland in order that we could hear the views not just of those from urban areas but also from those who live in more rural areas and the particular issues they may face in accessing the transport network. A report into the issues raised in these focus groups was published in August 2015⁹.

As advisors to government and others in Northern Ireland on the issues that affect the mobility of older people and people with a disability it was important for the Department to engage with Imtac. This engagement focused on what should be the direction of a new Accessible Transport Strategy, its vision, strategic priorities and how to measure progress. The views of Imtac are contained in their publication "The Accessible Transport Strategy 2025: Our views on the vision, strategic priorities and how to measure success for a new Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS)"¹⁰.

8. <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/attitudes-of-disabled-and-older-people-to-public-transport-november-2014-january-2015-internet-version-2.pdf>

9. http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/sustainable_transport_branch.htm

10. <http://imtac.org.uk/publications.php?pid=298>

KEY ISSUES

The Minister's ambition and vision is to ensure that we have **a transport network in Northern Ireland that is inclusive and accessible to all.**

The issues we face in moving towards this vision are not unique to Northern Ireland. For example the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance recently published "The Accessible Transport Strategy and Action Plan for Scotland 2015 – 2020"¹¹. The Scottish Strategy is based on our Accessible Transport Strategy (2005 – 2015) and it seeks to broadly address the same issues and barriers we had identified in our original strategy.

Transport for London's "Your accessible transport network"¹² also identified similar issues. It commits to making travel information more accessible, enhancing infrastructure, improving the customer experience and better engagement to be delivered through targeted investment.

Similarly the Republic of Ireland's "Transport Access for All"¹³ policy sets a priority on the content and quality of disability awareness training, the availability and accessibility of travel information and improving the physical infrastructure.

It is clear from looking at how others move toward having more accessible transport networks that there are a number of common themes. These are around infrastructure, information, the customer and engagement.

The range of these themes shows that continuing investment in physical infrastructure is not enough to deliver a more inclusive and accessible transport network. Investment in infrastructure needs to be complimented by other work around service provision.

For that reason we want our new Accessible Transport Strategy to be based on the following themes around improving the accessibility of public transport and other transport infrastructure:

- Enhancing the accessibility of the public transport network;
- Improving accessibility of the wider transport network;
- Enhancing the customer experience;

11. <http://www.scottishaccessibletransport.org.uk/atsaps.php>

12. <https://tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/your-accessible-transport-network.pdf>

13. <http://www.dttas.ie/public-transport/publications/english/sectoral-plan-accessible-transport-transport-access-all>

- Enhancing the accessibility of information; and
- Working in collaboration with partners and stakeholders

These themes have been drawn up after considering the issues highlighted in our survey, the engagement we have undertaken, best practice elsewhere and actions previously identified but not yet fully addressed. These actions not yet fully addressed centre around the softer issues of staff training, information provision and engagement which have not kept pace with customer expectations.

Each of these themes is explored in more detail further in this document.

We aim to measure progress in delivering the overall Strategy by establishing high level indicators and by producing Action Plans with clearly defined outcomes and outputs.

THEMES

THEME 1 – Enhancing the accessibility of the public transport network

People can find it difficult to access education, employment and health services if they do not have access to a car or are unable to drive. Good quality affordable public transport can bridge this gap and contribute to social inclusion. This theme will focus on the physical infrastructure of the public transport network such as buses, trains, halts and stations by consolidating the significant investment made in recent years and examining options to improve infrastructure and network coverage.

We are doing this because the physical accessibility of public transport and the network coverage are issues that were consistently highlighted in our survey and in our pre consultation engagement and by Imtac. Nearly 217,000 older people and people with a disability used public transport last year highlighting the importance of this sustainable travel mode to these groups.

We aim to deliver this theme by :

- examining the existing public transport infrastructure to identify potential projects to enhance accessibility;
- maintaining and improving the accessibility of the public transport fleet, including working towards step free public transport vehicles; and
- researching how to improve the coverage of the public transport network.

We will measure progress on this theme by:

- measuring the change in accessibility of passenger facilities across Northern Ireland;
- monitoring the percentage of step free vehicles in the public transport fleet;
- by considering trends in the number of older people and people with a disability who use public transport; and
- reviewing feedback from transport surveys.

THEME 2 – Improving accessibility of the wider transport network

Despite the improvements to mainstream public transport some people may not be able to use it or prefer alternative forms of private or publicly funded transport. Others simply want to use their car because it is more convenient and best meets their travel needs.

This theme focuses on improving the accessibility of other forms of transport and the pedestrian environment - key to moving between different modes of transport.

Taxis and specialised transport schemes were raised in the pre consultation engagement phase and by lmtac as important travel options for those who are older and those have a disability. Having dedicated parking spaces for those with a disability and ensuring that the pedestrian environment is without clutter and safe to traverse were all highlighted especially for those with sight difficulties or who use mobility aids.

We aim to deliver this theme by working with others to:

- improve the pedestrian environment especially around transport interchanges;
- promote the benefits offered by the Blue Badge Scheme
- ensure adequate car parking provision for those who have a disability; and
- continue to examine options to deliver integrated transport.

We will measure progress on this theme by:

- publishing details of investment and improvements in the pedestrian environment;
- ensuring that new and existing parking infrastructure takes account of the needs of people with a disability; and
- taking forward the Integrated Passenger Transport Project.

THEME 3 – Enhancing the customer experience

It is important that all of us, including older people and people with a disability can use the transport network with ease and confidence. Improving the experience of those who use our transport network can overcome physical and psychological barriers to travel.

Our survey informs us that the way services are currently provided can make it difficult for older people or people with a disability to use them. Our focus sessions also highlighted that assistance either through travel training or through the presence of transport service staff being available at stations can make a real difference to an individual's ability to travel independently.

Within this theme therefore there will be a strong focus on examining training for those who directly provide transport services and transport infrastructure. It will also look at ways of raising awareness of the needs of older people and people with a disability among providers of transport services.

We aim to deliver this theme by:

- working with others to deliver high quality disability awareness/equality training for all staff involved in the provision of transport services;
- examining ways to improve assistance at stations and interchanges;
- promoting the benefits of the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme and encouraging greater usage by pass holders;
- encouraging travel mentoring\training schemes; and
- working with others to examine the potential of new technology to improve the mobility of individuals.

We will measure progress on this theme by:

- the number of staff trained and feedback from service users;
- the number of transport interchanges where assistance is available;
- the uptake of the half fare concession; and
- feedback from travel training/ mentoring schemes.

THEME 4 – Enhancing the accessibility of information

The provision of accurate and timely information is crucial to all users of the public transport network. Information about the type of transport services available; when and where they operate; the accessibility of transport modes and the cost of travel are important especially if those using the service have mobility difficulties.

Customer information should be accessible and easy to understand by everyone and be produced in accordance with the relevant standards. Within this theme consideration will be given to the most efficient way of providing information to passengers, including the use of emerging technology and how this can be done in partnership with key stakeholders.

Problems with accessing information was highlighted by many in our survey and throughout our focus sessions as being something that discouraged them from travelling on public transport. Imtac has also undertaken work looking at the provision of transport information. Issues with accessing information affect all who travel.

We aim to deliver this theme by:

- improving the accessibility of travel information;
- improving detail about the accessibility of services and infrastructure;
- considering how best to address queries or complaints about the accessibility issues;
- exploring options to roll out Audio Visual information systems on all public transport vehicles; and
- examining new ways to provide information in different media or formats.

We will measure progress on this theme by:

- examining feedback from transport users and
- measuring usage of different media.

THEME 5 – Working in collaboration with partners and stakeholders

In order to improve and promote the accessibility of the transport network everyone needs to work together. That includes those who provide the transport services, those who set transport policy and those most affected by the decisions that are made.

There are examples of good practice in operation such as Belfast Streets Ahead and Belfast Rapid Transit which have delivered an appropriate level of engagement and designed services for the better. Elsewhere in Foyle where RNIB directly engaged with Translink to provide awareness training highlighting that the voluntary sector can play a key role in leading change.

This theme will look at how engagement can be improved to ensure that older people and people with a disability have a voice in shaping transport services.

We are doing this because we see the value of engagement and the sector sees this as central to the delivery of a new Strategy.

We aim to deliver this theme by:

- continuing to engage positively with older people and people with a disability in the design or delivery of transport services;
- examine new ways to maximising participation and engagement; and
- considering the introduction of mystery shoppers to independently monitor how well we are doing.

We will measure progress on this theme by:

- seeking feedback on public transport services; including the use of mystery shoppers and
- monitoring the number of older people and people with a disability using public transport.



NEXT STEPS

The Department will use the responses received in this consultation in a number of ways. It will help us identify stakeholders and potential delivery partners; inform the new Accessible Transport Strategy and the development of action plans to take it forward.

Within this consultation we have already highlighted that delivery of a new Strategy will require co-ordination across Government. This is because transport and accessible transport in particular impacts on objectives of other Departments. Therefore the new Strategy will need to be endorsed by the Executive before publication.

Moving forward in developing this Strategy and associated action plans we will engage broadly with older people and people with a disability and those who represent them including Imtac. This engagement will also include transport providers.

HOW TO RESPOND

In this consultation document, we have set out the vision and proposed strategic themes for the new Accessible Transport Strategy. This has been developed following extensive engagement with older people and people with a disability and their representatives.

You can respond to the Accessible Transport Strategy 2025 public consultation by either:

- accessing the electronic version of the Accessible Transport Strategy 2025 public consultation document which is available at <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/department-for-regional-development/accessible-transport-strategy-2025>
- or sending your response by e mail to **atsinfo@drdni.gov.uk**
- or sending your response by post to:

Accessible Transport Strategy 2025 Consultation,
Sustainable Transport Branch,
3rd Floor Clarence Court,
10 - 18 Adelaide Street,
Belfast, BT2 8GB

Tel: 028 90540363/028 90540468

MINICOM/TEXTPHONE: (028) 90540662

TEXT RELAY SERVICE: (028) 90540179

We will be pleased to provide, on request, hard copies of this document, the document in accessible formats, e.g. in large print, easy read, Braille or audio CD.

Please contact us with your requirements using the contact information provided above.

This public consultation will close on 20th November 2015.

Confidentiality and Freedom of Information

The Department may, following this consultation process, publish a summary of responses received, or provide this information to a member of the public in response to a Freedom Of Information Act 2000(FOI)/ Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) request. In this case, the Department will publish details of responses received from the public, including names. You should assume that the information that you provide may be released into the public domain.

If you do not wish your name to be made public, please state your reasons. While the Department will take this into consideration, it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, in itself, be regarded as binding on DRD. For further information about the confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioners Office (or see website at www.ico.gov.uk).

Screening

The Department has completed an Equality of Opportunity Screening Template¹⁴, in order to identify the importance of the proposed policy on Section 75 groups and has concluded that there may be minor positive differential impact on the age, persons with a disability and dependent groups. These groups will benefit from improvements in the physical environment making it easy for those with mobility difficulties to get access to goods and services. Other benefits include improved travel information and better customer care. In general improvements to the transport network are likely to benefit everyone who makes journeys by public transport, private car or as a pedestrian.

The Department has also completed a Rural Issues Statement¹⁵ examining how the policy will impact on rural areas. This proofing process has determined that improvements in the accessibility of transport infrastructure or transport services could benefit those who use them in rural areas, reducing social exclusion and improving access to goods and services.

14. <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/current-public-consultations.htm>

15. <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/current-public-consultations.htm>

YOUR VIEWS ON A NEW ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Accessible Transport Strategy 2025 Consultation

To assist us in the collation and analysis of responses, please provide us with the following information, using BLOCK CAPITALS:

Name:

Organisation (if applicable)

Position in organisation

Address

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Postcode

Phone Number (optional)

e-mail (if applicable)

Accessible Transport Strategy

Since the launch of the Accessible Transport Strategy in 2005 do you think the accessibility of the transport system for older people and people with a disability has improved?

Yes

No

Can you say why? We are especially interested in your views on concessionary fares; the accessibility of our trains, buses and stations; and your experience as a customer of public transport and (if applicable) as a car driver or pedestrian.

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THEME 1: Enhancing the accessibility of the public transport network

This theme is targeted at improving the accessibility of the public transport network. At a strategic level we aim to deliver this theme by maintaining and improving the public transport fleet and researching how to improve the coverage of the public transport network. Do you agree with this approach?

Yes No

Do you have any comments on what is proposed?

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THEME 2: Improving the accessibility of the wider transport network

This theme is targeted at improving the accessibility of the wider transport network. At a strategic level we aim to deliver this theme by improving the pedestrian environment and examining options to deliver integrated transport. Do you agree with this approach?

Yes No

Do you have any comments on what is proposed?

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THEME 3: Enhancing the customer experience

This theme is targeted at improving the passenger experience. At a strategic level we aim to deliver this theme by examining how those who provide transport services are trained to deal with customers; by encouraging mentoring or travel training schemes and by working with the voluntary sector to explore the potential of new technology. Do you agree with this approach?

Yes No

Do you have any comments on what is proposed?

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THEME 4: Enhancing the accessibility of information

This theme is targeted at improving the accessibility of information. At a strategic level we aim to deliver this theme by looking at ways to improve the detail of travel information, how it is presented, and its availability within different formats or media. Do you agree with this approach?

Yes No

Do you have any comments on what is proposed?

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After receiving responses to the public consultation the Department will consider the responses and what actions need to be taken forward to deliver a new Strategy. We hope to consult on a new action plan with partners and stakeholders rather than having a full public consultation. Would you like to be consulted on action plans for the new Strategy?

Yes No

If you would like to be consulted on action plans for the new Strategy how would you like to be contacted?

Email Hard copy

Banscor Platform 1 09:00 On Time Callaghan Portlaoine Naurs Dendalk Facilities	Dublin Platform 2 09:00 On Time Callaghan Portlaoine Naurs Dendalk Facilities barrier closes 2 min before train departs	Enterprise 09:11 Dublin - Enterprise Platform 2 09:00 On Time Portlaoine Naurs Dendalk barrier closes 2 min before train departs	Lisburn Platform 3 09:55 On Time Callaghan Botanic City Hospital St. Victoria St Duncraig Facilities	Carrickfergus Platform 4 09:57 On Time Callaghan Yorkville Whitelock Jordanstown Greenisland Trenchmore Clonsilla Clonsilla Facilities
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Accessible Transport Strategy

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