



EUROPEAN CONFERENCE
OF MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

IMPROVING ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT



GUIDELINES

for Transport Personnel

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Personnel

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT (ECMT)

The European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) is an inter-governmental organization established by a Protocol signed in Brussels on 17 October 1953. It comprises the Ministers of Transport of 43 full Member countries: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, FRY Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. There are seven Associate member countries (Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States) and one Observer country (Morocco).

The ECMT is a forum in which Ministers responsible for transport, and more specifically the inland transport sector, can co-operate on policy. Within this forum, Ministers can openly discuss current problems and agree upon joint approaches aimed at improving the utilization and at ensuring the rational development of European transport systems of international importance.

At present, ECMT has a dual role. On one hand it helps to create an integrated transport system throughout the enlarged Europe that is economically efficient and meets environmental and safety standards. In order to achieve this, it is important for ECMT to help build a bridge between the European Union and the rest of the European continent at a political level.

On the other hand, ECMT's mission is also to develop reflections on long-term trends in the transport sector and to study the implications for the sector of increased globalisation. The activities in this regard have recently been reinforced by the setting up of a new Joint OECD/ECMT Transport Research Centre.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT (UITP)

The International Association of Public Transport (UITP) was founded back in 1885 by Belgium's King Leopold II, who wanted to make his country a leader in the tramway sector and to provide a stimulus for its steel industry.

Today, the Brussels-based UITP is the global organisation for public transport authorities and operators, policy decision-makers, scientific institutes and the public transport supply and service industry. It is a platform for worldwide co-operation and the sharing of know-how between its 2 500 members from some 80 countries.

UITP's prime mission is:

- To be the international network of public transport professionals, bringing together all of the key mobility players.
- To act as the point of reference for the public transport sector and a centre of knowledge on past and current developments and future trends.
- To house an international forum for public transport policy, stimulating interaction and debate.
- To be a prime advocate and promoter of public transport.

A word from the ECMT and UITP

Public transport that is accessible to all is an essential element of a high-quality, efficient, sustainable transport system. The joint work of the ECMT and UITP on *Improving Access to Public Transport* has shown how commitment and joint initiative between public transport service providers and authorities can help to make this happen.

But even with accessible transport vehicles and infrastructure, if the transport company staff running the system is not meeting the travel needs of persons with mobility difficulties – the system is not really accessible at all.

Transport personnel – the hearts and minds of the public transport system – are in fact the real key to accessibility of public transport. As the *Guidelines* point out, being able to recognize and respond to the needs of people with either long-term or temporary mobility impairments can mean for them a pleasant journey where they feel confident navigating the system with as much autonomy as possible, or a travel experience that is filled with anxiety and frustration.

These *Guidelines for Transport Personnel* are designed by the ECMT and the UITP to highlight ways to ensure helpful and efficient customer service and care – particularly of disabled and older clients of the transport system. Making the transport experience as pleasant, efficient and worry-free as possible for their clients is the goal of all transport company managers. For this reason, we hope these *Guidelines* will be a helpful customer service reference.

With the publication of these *Guidelines*, the ECMT and UITP renew their mutual commitment to encouraging transport authorities and operators to fully integrate accessibility into their long-term transport planning.

We hope you find the *Guidelines* useful and welcome your comments.

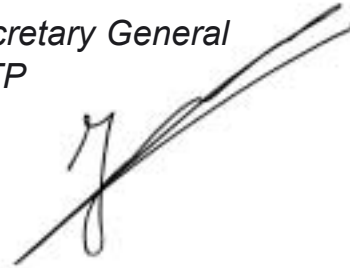
Jack Short

Secretary General
ECMT



Hans Rat

Secretary General
UITP



NOTE TO EMPLOYERS

The attached set of *Guidelines* is intended to be a brief good practice guide for staff employed in the passenger transport industry — rail, road, air and maritime (including sea and inland navigation).*

The approach taken in the *Guidelines* is based on the social model of disability, which recognises that people are not disabled by their impairments alone, but by the environment and society in which they live. It argues that disability is a direct consequence of people's attitudes and the way things are organised in society. For example, if wheelchair-users cannot get into a building, is it because of their disability, or is it because the principles of universal design have not been applied in designing the building? The social model supports the latter.

Disabled people at present comprise 10-13% of the population in the European Union and those with reduced mobility — including older people, parents with children and people with heavy luggage — make up an average of 25% of the population at any one time.

Disability discrimination is about exclusion of disabled people from important aspects of everyday life. There are many barriers preventing disabled people from participating fully in society. Accessible and user-friendly transport means that disabled people can use without hindrance the transport system to participate in society on an equal basis without losing their independence.

* These *Guidelines* are published alongside the ECMT-UITP report, *Improving Access to Public Transport*, 2004 (ISBN 92-821-1323-X).

These guidelines challenge transport personnel to recognise and dismantle some of these barriers.

Throughout the European Union and in many other countries it is increasingly accepted that disabled people have the same right to equality of access as other citizens.

These guidelines for transport personnel are written with the bus or tram driver, train conductor, ship purser, member of cabin crew or equivalent front-line member of staff foremost in mind, though they are valid too for all staff and management. Additional specific guidelines may be usefully added for some modes of transport.

The aim of these guidelines is to encourage understanding of the specific problems experienced by disabled and older passengers when using the transport system and to provide guidance on how best to respond to their needs. They provide a practical approach to providing good customer care.

In addition to providing training along these lines for front-line staff, passenger transport managers should encourage staff to learn to fingerspell and/or to use basic sign language, as well as to be aware of the needs of assistance animals and how to interact with them. More generally, transport companies need to develop the right "culture" for the future by ensuring that they have in place approved policies, practices and procedures for responding to the needs of disabled customers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The text of this guide was prepared by Ad van Herk of the Netherlands for the ECMT and Andrew Braddock of the United Kingdom for the UITP under the supervision of the ECMT-UITP Task Force on Improving Access to Public Transport and the ECMT Working Group on Access and Inclusion.

The text has been drawn from the following publications:

- *Disability Awareness* by Transfed, United Kingdom.
- *Disability Awareness Training Programme* by Bus Eireann, Ireland.
- ECMT - UITP report on *Improving Access to Public Transport*, ECMT (2004).
- *The way to go: Transportation Services and Persons with Disabilities* by Transport Canada.
- *Hela Resan*, Sweden.

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INTRODUCTION

Millions of people around the world are disabled. Many of them find travel by bus, coach, tram, train, metro, boat or airplane a challenge.

Recent innovations and adaptations in all modes of transport have gone a long way towards making travel easier and more pleasant for all passengers. In spite of these technological advances, however, it is the attitude and skill of the driver, captain, pilot etc. that can make the difference between a pleasant and safe journey for a disabled person and one that is fraught with worry, frustration or confusion.

Providing quality service is at the core of all successful businesses, and the provision of enlightened customer care is paramount to the passenger transport industry.

These guidelines are intended to help you, the transport industry professional, to make your interactions with disabled passengers effective and helpful. As a result, other passengers will benefit as well.

Understanding passengers' needs will help to:

- Reduce accidents.
- Reduce boarding and alighting delays.
- Make travel a more pleasant experience.
- Make a more rewarding job for operating staff.

Assisting disabled passengers in an effective way will encourage them to continue to travel on the transport system, and thereby:

- Increase the use and revenue of the transport mode.
- Help safeguard jobs in transport.

What are the main fears of passengers?

- Where can I get my ticket?
- Where do I find my platform/desk/gate?
- Is this the right bus, train, ship, plane?
- Where do I position myself for boarding?
- Can I get on and off OK?
- Will I fall and make a fool of myself?
- How will I get on or off in time?
- Are people looking at me?
- Am I holding everyone else up?

How do I recognize someone who may need my assistance?

You will be able to identify some disabled passengers in advance, for example:

- Wheelchair-users.
- Passengers using a cane or crutches.
- Blind or partially-sighted people with a white cane or a guide dog.
- Deaf-blind people (people with no or limited sight and who are also deaf or hard-of-hearing) with a red and white cane.

It will also be easy to spot passengers who are:

- Loaded with shopping bags.
- Carrying luggage.
- With small children in push-chairs or buggies.



There are, however, many passengers who have disabilities which may not be visible:

- People with arthritis.
- Individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- Persons with heart disorders.
- Passengers with artificial limbs.
- People with intellectual disabilities or with mental health problems.
- Blind, partially-sighted or deaf-blind passengers who do not use canes or guide dogs.



You should never automatically assume that young or apparently non-disabled passengers are without need of assistance – able to identify immediately the service they need, jump on board quickly and pay the correct fare whilst keeping their balance on a moving vehicle. Awareness of possibly less visible disabilities will help you to avoid confusion and distress to disabled passengers as well as embarrassment to yourself.

Think about the meaning of 'independence'.

Most disabled people, irrespective of the severity of their disability, are capable of travelling on their own and acting for themselves.

By providing practical assistance to disabled or older persons, you help enable them to retain their travel independence.

Assisting passengers who are blind or partially sighted

Impaired vision is one of the most common types of disability.

Many blind or partially-sighted people use white canes. Others will be accompanied by a guide dog with a distinctive harness. Increasingly however, new technology will assist in guiding people with impaired vision.

So remember that some blind and partially-sighted people will not be using any kind of easily identifiable mobility aid.

What can I do?

When you meet and assist blind or partially-sighted people, keep in mind that they rely on sound, smell and touch, as well as light and contrasts of surfaces, rather than sight to get around.

People with impaired vision will probably not be able to read the service or flight number or destination shown. Some may also have a hearing loss, and because of this, they may not be aware of an approaching vehicle or be able to signal for a bus or tram to stop.

Identify yourself, and let the person know that you are speaking to him or her if necessary by a gentle tap on the arm. Speak to him or her directly – not to the guide dog! Speak in a normal tone and at a normal volume.

Remember that guide dog users will need a seat that has room underneath for the dog. Do not pet or feed the dog, except with the approval of the owner.

Find out where the passenger is going and, if possible, notify him or her when the bus or tram reaches the required stop. Remember that the person cannot see landmarks en route.

When assisting a blind or partially-sighted passenger, let him or her take your arm. Do not offer your arm on the side where the person is holding their cane or guide dog harness. The person will then hold your arm just above your elbow or occasionally put their hand on your shoulder. Tell the person about any hazards you encounter, such as steps and doorways. With steps indicate whether they are going up or down, and with doors, whether they are opening inwards or outwards. Indicate turns to the left and right as you come to them.



Let the passenger know when you are leaving him or her. Do not leave suddenly and without notice.

What must I always do?

Always be polite and patient and address yourself to the passenger. Always ask first if the passenger requires assistance; never assume this to be the case.

Assisting passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing

The number of people who have a hearing impairment runs into millions. It is an extremely common disability.

Remember that many hearing-impaired people will watch your lips (and your face) to see what words are being spoken. Do not turn away, hide your mouth behind your hand or chew gum when speaking. Speak normally, but slow down a little if you are a fast talker.

Never shout.

Common everyday gestures can assist with understanding. Allow your facial expressions to show that you do or do not understand.

It maybe useful to use a pen and paper at times.

A red and white cane often identifies someone who is deaf-blind.

Try to communicate with the person by “writing” on his or her hand with your finger as though it were a sheet of paper. Try to reduce anxiety and take your time.



Assisting passengers with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems

Intellectual disabilities and mental health problems are very different; therefore doctors, therapists and teachers do not treat these difficulties in the same way. However, the experiences of people with these disabilities and problems in using the transport system can be similar.

Most people with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems will manage perfectly well without assistance, but some may require your help.

Following are some suggestions to keep in mind when communicating with passengers with these disabilities or problems.

Do not patronise, but be prepared to offer assistance if things go wrong.

People with these disabilities may find it difficult to read notices: do not rebuke a passenger by asking “Can't you read the notice?”. This could embarrass the person. Instead, simply provide the information that he or she needs.

Speak clearly and a little bit more slowly than usual. Use short sentences, but do not use jargon. Give instructions in the order the person needs to follow them. Try to avoid using negatives, but when you have to, accompany them by shaking your head. Point out differences in landmarks.

Make sure that you have been understood.

People with intellectual disabilities or people with mental health problems can be victims of bullying or insults while using transport. Try where possible to prevent or stop this from happening.

Assisting passengers with speech difficulties

The most important thing to remember when helping a passenger with speech difficulties is to be patient and polite. Do not stare. Ask what is needed if you do not understand the passenger immediately.

Assisting passengers with mobility impairments

There are millions of people with mobility impairments. The majority of them are older people, but young people can also break a leg, for example, or need to carry small children, luggage or push prams.

Do not assume that your assistance is required; always ask before offering.

When assistance is requested, offer your arm. Do not grab the passenger by the elbow.

Be aware of uneven surfaces and dirt. Act as a safety buffer when negotiating steps.



Do not rush.

Do not rock a wheelchair (it is not a pram). Do not push, pull or turn a wheelchair too quickly or without warning. Ensure wheelchair brakes are on before assisting someone from/to their wheelchair.

Help with the passenger's luggage and seat belt if possible and necessary.

Ask the passenger if he or she prefers to use the lift, escalator or stairs.



Assisting passengers with facial disfigurements

Avoid expression of over-concern, shock or horror. Do not stare, but do not avoid looking at the person's face. Use eye contact wherever possible. Smile and move quickly into normal conversation.

Assisting passengers with epilepsy

Be reassuring and protective if someone with epilepsy has a seizure. Do not try to restrain the legs and arms of the person during the seizure. Do not put anything in the mouth of the person in an attempt to keep their airway clear - this is a very bad practice. Clear the area of obstacles which may injure the person during a seizure.

Stay with the passenger until he or she is fully recovered. Help the passenger to breathe normally by turning him or her on his or her side.

It is not usually necessary to call an ambulance or a doctor. However, medical help should be sought if the seizure shows no sign of stopping after five minutes; or if a series of seizures take place without the passenger properly regaining consciousness in between the episodes; or if there is physical injury during a seizure.

Assistance

If a passenger is being met by a professional assistant, inform the passenger where, when and by whom this will be provided.

S U M M A R Y

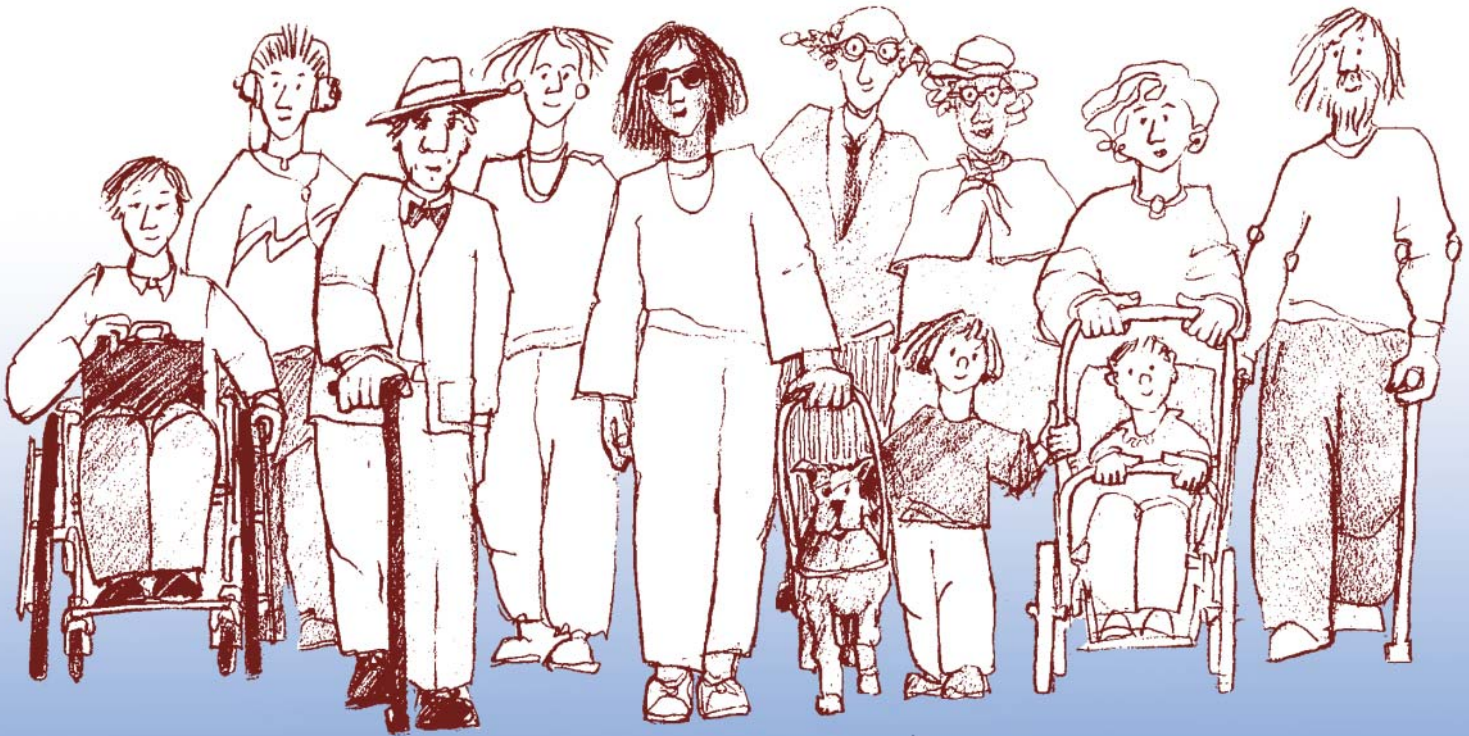
Disabled people are neither sad nor tragic; nor are they necessarily wonderful, courageous or brave. They are just ordinary people who want to lead ordinary lives like everyone else. Because everyone is different, people's attitudes towards their own disability will differ.

Here are the main things you need to bear in mind to make sure that you interact with passengers with disabilities in an appropriate and helpful way. All passengers – disabled or not – are first and foremost people; treat them as equals.

- Be welcoming, but there is no need to be over-enthusiastic.
- Good communication skills are vital. Remember to look at passengers when speaking to them. You will not always be able to recognise individuals with communication needs immediately, so treat all your passengers in the same way in case they lack confidence or need to lip read what you are saying.
- Speak directly to the disabled person whenever possible – not to the carer or companion. With guide dog users, talk to the person not the dog.
- Be patient – allow people to move at their own pace; it saves time in the long run.
- Ask someone to repeat themselves if you do not understand what they have said. Do not just guess what was meant.

- Be sensitive, ask, listen and react. Someone with a disability may not like to ask for help, but they may not mind having help offered either. Try to be sensitive in your approach. Ask what is required, listen to the response and react accordingly.
- Avoid fussing unduly over the person. Many disabled people are totally independent. Such behaviour can therefore be very insulting.
- Try to be neither patronising nor intolerant. People with physical or sensory disabilities will generally have the same levels of understanding as you.
- If you are a bus driver, always drive smoothly, avoiding harsh braking or rapid acceleration.
- When you are guiding a blind, deaf-blind or partially-sighted person, remember to let them take your arm.
- When helping someone with walking difficulties, offer your arm for him or her to hold rather than taking his or her arm. Do not grab, squeeze or pull any part of the arms – including the hands – of someone with arthritis. You may cause them pain. Where possible, stand on the side away from any walking stick or frame.
- Be aware of the surface you are walking on. A wet or uneven surface could cause a fall.
- When assisting wheelchair-users, push the chair smoothly and not too fast, asking them what they need. Make sure you know how to help the wheelchair-user up and down kerbs safely and comfortably.

- If the passenger transfers to a seat, make sure their wheelchair is safely stowed away. Reassure the passenger that their wheelchair is on board. The same applies to any other mobility equipment that cannot be accommodated in the passenger area of the vehicle.
- Again, do not be afraid to make a mistake.
- Do not jump to conclusions.
- Be honest, natural, and
- Remember, reassurance gains the passenger's confidence.



A WAY WITH WORDS

Here is a useful list of expressions to avoid when referring to disabled people, along with suggestions for alternative terms you can use. These suggested expressions embody the dignity and respect that should characterise your interactions with people with disabilities. Terminology evolves over time, so this list may evolve as well.

Do not use

Use instead

Aged (the) Elderly (the)

Older people
(adjectives like frail, senile, feeble suggest a negative image of older people and should not be used)

Blind (the)

Blind people

Visually impaired (the)

Partially-sighted people

Confined to a wheelchair
or wheelchair-bound

Wheelchair-user
(for some people with a mobility impairment, a wheelchair is simply a means to get around independently)

Crippled

Has a mobility impairment

Lame

Has a mobility impairment

Do not use

Use instead

Deaf and dumb

Without hearing and speech

Hearing impaired (the)

Hard-of-hearing
(people who are not deaf and may compensate for a hearing loss with an amplification device or system)

Epileptic (the)

Has epilepsy

Fit

Seizure

Handicapped (the)

Disabled people, unless referring to an environmental or attitudinal barrier (in such instances “handicapped by” is appropriate)

Insane

Has a mental health problem

Invalid

Has a disability (the literal sense of the word “invalid” is not valid)

Mentally-retarded

Has an intellectual disability

Normal

Able-bodied or non-disabled

Spastic

Has cerebral palsy

Suffers from, victim of, stricken with, afflicted by

Has a disability (having a disability is not synonymous with suffering)

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Accessible, user-friendly transport means that disabled and older people can use the transport system without hindrance to participate in society on an equal basis without losing their independence.

Whilst much progress has been made in all modes of transport to make travel easier and more pleasant for all passengers, it is the attitude and skill of the driver, captain, pilot, etc. that can make the difference between a pleasant and safe journey for a disabled or older person and one that is fraught with worry, frustration or confusion.

These guidelines are designed to encourage understanding of the specific problems experienced by disabled and older passengers when using the transport system, and to provide guidance on how best to respond to their needs.

They provide a practical approach to providing good customer care – a priority for all transport companies.

