



**From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State**

Department for
Transport

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June 2011

Dear

**Public Bodies Bill – Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC):
Seeking Views and evidence to inform the Department for Transport of possible
successor arrangements**

I am writing to seek your views about possible successor arrangements to the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) and to invite you to a **workshop on 27th June or 11th July** to discuss the possible options. I would also welcome in writing any further comments you have by **21st July 2011**.

DPTAC's primary function is to provide independent advice to Government on the impacts of; transport policy development, legislation, regulation and guidance as they affect travellers with disabilities. The Public Bodies Bill is currently before Parliament and as currently drafted allows the Government to make an Order abolishing DPTAC. If the Bill is passed with this provision in it I am minded to abolish DPTAC.

The Government's approach to disability has moved forward significantly since 1985 when DPTAC was established. At a practical level, although there is still more that could be done, for example in areas such as information provision. I am happy to say that access to public transport for disabled people has been much improved. Legislative provisions for improving access to public transport are in place and rather than seeking access for disabled people as a specialist topic, transport operators, local authorities and other transport bodies across the sector are now expected to incorporate their needs into their mainstream transport planning and delivery.

The Government believes that there is scope to reform and improve the way disability advice is provided to increase flexibility and accountability to the taxpayer, but the final decision on whether or not to abolish DPTAC will be subject to consultation, most likely this Autumn. No final decision on abolition will be made until I have taken into account the responses to that consultation.

In advance of any consultation, I would like to hear the views of all those with an interest on what successor arrangements should be put in place if DPTAC is abolished. I am seeking to ensure that any successor arrangement will continue to provide my Department with consensual, pan-disability advice in a flexible way and that any arrangement represents good value for money.

I am now inviting your views on the options listed below:

- Option 1: Rely on existing expertise in the Department for Transport, including its agencies. Where ad-hoc specific advice is needed, it could be sought by individual policy divisions from third party stakeholder groups, the transport industry, and experts. This would have minimal cost (although commissioned consultancy advice could be expensive) but perhaps risks disability issues being overlooked.
- Option 2: Establish a stakeholder forum, which could be convened and provide advice as and when issues arose. Again this would have minimal cost, but could result in an increased consultancy bill (additional consultancy may be required by policy leads – which could be expensive). It might also be difficult to decide who to appoint to the forum. There are over 50 disability groups, and their interests sometimes conflict (e.g. the interests of the visually impaired, and those using mobility scooters). Achieving consensus could therefore be difficult.
- Option 3: Rely on a cross-government body to provide transport advice – for example the existing (non statutory) Equality 2025, run by the Department of Work and Pensions. This option should ensure that disability issues do not get overlooked. Equality 2025 is likely to be able to offer general advice – for example on transport access to the Olympics by disabled people – but would not be in a position to offer more specialist advice, such as the type of mobility scooter models suitable to be carried on public transport.
- Option 4: Establish a non-statutory specialist body which would be flexible and accountable to Ministers. This may cost more than the options above, but should be less expensive than the current arrangements. However, a smaller body, because of its size, may not cover all disability areas, and therefore could reduce the scope of pan-disability advice available.
- Option 5: A wide ranging panel of experts from which members could be called on an ad hoc basis when specific advice is needed. A once a year meeting of all specified stakeholders could be held so that they all have the opportunity of voicing wider concerns.

My initial thinking is that option 5 would be the most appropriate path to take, but I would welcome views to inform my decision making in this area.

I have also published the options above in a written statement to Parliament.

I would particularly welcome your views on some questions which will be discussed at the workshops and are attached (Annex A). Significant policies in Government require an impact assessment to be produced and so it would be helpful if you could submit any evidence on the costs and benefits of the various options.

I would be grateful if you could let my officials know whether you wish to attend the workshop on either 27th June or 11th July by 17th June. Please note that while we will endeavour to meet your request this may not be possible. I regret that we will only be able to accommodate one representative from your organisation as space is limited.

The workshops will be held at the address below and will start at 11am and aim to finish at 4pm.

Department for Transport
Zone 1/23a Concordia
Great Minster House
76 Marsham St
London SW1P 4DR

If you wish to make written comments, it would be helpful if you could do so by 21st July 2011. Your views should be sent to PostDPTACviews@dft.gsi.gov.uk or to the address below:

Disability Advice (post DPTAC)
Department for Transport
Sustainable Travel and Equalities
Zone 2/24
Great Minster House
76 Marsham St
London SW1P 4DR

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman', written in a cursive style.

NORMAN BAKER

ANNEX A:

Q. In your opinion, what disability advice does the Department need?

Q. Could this advice be delivered solely through stakeholder bodies?

Q. Can you give examples where DPTAC has either provided good/poor advice or failed to act?

Q. Are there different areas of advice needed to ensure mode specific transport is addressed? For example, are disability issues in the aviation context substantially different from railways, or from street design?

Q. Do you think the Department requires specific i.e. technical advice or does it need further general disability awareness advice? Are the means of obtaining this advice different – for example would only general policy advice be available from representative bodies, or would they be able to provide technical advice?

Q. Would the Department receive better disability advice if it procured it from consultants? Could examples be provided? How much would you estimate procuring advice would cost?

Q. Please look at the options and consider what the advantages or disadvantages are. Providing data to substantiate your views would be helpful.