

2012 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002

May 2013



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1 Response to Commonwealth Government Issues Paper

Yarra Trams thanks the Attorney General, the Accessible Public Transport Jurisdictional Committee, the Accessible Public Transport National Advisory Committee and the Aviation Access Working Group for the opportunity to contribute to the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Review.

2 Recommendations

- > Yarra Trams recommends that the current boarding gap limits set out in clause 8.2 of the DSAPT be revised with respect to trams after giving consideration to a standard that is appropriate for trams.
- > Yarra Trams recommends that the current milestones should be revised to integrate budget, tram life expectancy, physical and community constraints.

3 Yarra Trams' values

Yarra Trams recognises that accessibility has a broader context than simply meeting the requirements of DSAPT. Our strategy is to enhance access for all passengers, including those with mobility and vision impairments and other special needs. This strategy is supported by Yarra Trams' core values of:

- > Zero Harm
- > Think Like a Passenger
- > Continuous Improvement.

Yarra Trams' dedication to continuous improvement brings a focus on improvements by:

- > Providing high quality and appropriate information to passengers
- > Communicating with passengers, employees and stakeholders
- > Assisting the Victoria Government to improve the physical design and layout of vehicles and stops
- > Considering the needs of people with disabilities in all of our projects
- > Making it easier for all passengers to use the network.

Yarra Trams is also proud to have been active in supporting the community, sponsoring Disability Sports and Recreation, Victorian Wheelchair Rugby, Victorian Senior's Festival and participating in the Australian Accessibility Day.

4 Major Accomplishments and Improvements

In conjunction with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) Yarra Trams has made a number of substantial improvements to Melbourne's tram network. These improvements focus on providing particular benefits to our passengers with special needs. Below is a list of some of these achievements:

4.1 Organisational change and accessibility awareness

4.1.1 Accessibility Advisor

Yarra Trams has created the role of 'Accessibility Advisor' to ensure a greater focus on the accessibility of the network as part of our commitment to Continuous Improvement.

The major responsibility of the Accessibility Advisor is to implement and monitor the 'Accessibility Action Plan' and ensure the needs of people with disabilities are taken into account in all projects within Yarra Trams.

4.1.2 Customer service personnel and tram driver training

Customer service employees complete a training module that specifically focuses on disability awareness and how to assist passengers with special needs. The training includes interactive activities to allow staff to experience a simulated disability and associated difficulties.

Yarra Trams has also increased employee awareness through training of Fleet Controllers, who manage and regulate the network 24 hours a day. This promotes consideration of low-floor trams when resolving unplanned disruptions. Drivers undergo this training to raise awareness of passengers with special needs. Depot trainers and other key staff also receive the training, to enable standards to be maintained on an ongoing basis.

All new tram drivers receive disability awareness training, to help them understand passenger's needs and their obligation to provide direct assistance when requested by a passenger

4.2 Communication and passenger information

4.2.1 A website fully accessible

Yarra Trams launched a new website in January 2012. The user experience is enhanced by a new visual design, easy navigation and accessible, accurate and up to date information.

The website design is compliant with Website Management Framework Standards provided by the EGovernment Resource Centre, including DDA and privacy requirements. It conforms to Level 2 web accessibility standards (W3C) and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

4.2.2 Better communication of disruptions and special events

Widely communicating accurate and timely advice about planned service changes (for special events) and unplanned disruptions is vital to ensuring that passengers can plan their travel accordingly.

Yarra Trams now advises customers in advance about planned disruptions and special events using traditional and social media. In 2012, planned works affecting tram operations were advertised on Vision Australia Radio for the first time.

In 2012, Yarra Trams introduced a new protocol for improving distribution of information to passengers during unplanned disruptions. Passenger Information Officers (PIOs) now work in the Fleet Operations Centre to assist the controller during disruptions. PIOs are responsible for on-board announcements, updating tramTRACKER®, Smartguide Passenger Information Displays (PIDs), the website and providing service alteration information to Customer Service Employees and Authorised Officers.

4.2.3 tramTRACKER® on smartphones and PIDs

tramTRACKER® provides real-time information for every tram and tram stop on the network. When tramTRACKER® receives a request it uses this information to predict the arrival time of the tram at a particular stop. It shows whether the next three trams to arrive at a stop are low-floor trams and whether the next stop is an accessible platform stop.

tramTRACKER® is available as a VoiceOver friendly iPhone app, an Android app, desktop widget, via SMS (charges apply) or online at yarratrams.com.au. This year, it

has been introduced to all PIDs at tram stops, with larger font size and improved disruption message features

There are around 800,000 tramTRACKER® requests each day, while approximately 40 per cent of passengers board a tram at a stop with a PID. The public appreciation and increased demand for these systems raises the importance of maintaining real-time information where possible.

4.2.4 Social networking

Information concerning the network is also communicated to approximately 9,000 followers of the Yarra Trams Twitter account.

These followers include the Australian Traffic Network and a number of news and radio stations. This results in the content of Yarra Trams' tweets being broadcast to a much wider audience and well beyond the direct reach Yarra Trams has with its followers.

4.2.5 Updated accessibility video and brochure

The 'Yarra Trams – Your Accessible Journey' video was created to assist people using the tram network for their journey. The video is used to train both internal and external stakeholders on how to meet the needs of people with specific disabilities.

An accessibility guide has been created to help customers plan and complete their tram journey. It is available as a hard copy, or to view and download from the Yarra Trams website.

4.3 Regular passenger consultation

Yarra Trams conducts 'Meet the Managers' sessions three times per year.

These allow passengers to provide direct feedback and ask questions of senior Yarra Trams management. Accessibility was the theme of the session held in July 2011 at the Box Hill Terminus.

4.4 Accessible boarding

4.4.1 Level access stops

Yarra Trams, in conjunction with PTV, has increased the number of level access tram stops from 40 in 2004 to 365 in 2013.

Yarra Trams is pleased to report that planning and funding arrangements have been finalised for the following additional tram stop upgrades to take place before the end of the year:

Elizabeth Street, Melbourne – three pairs of accessible platform stops are planned to be built in or around August / September 2013.

Collins Street, (Victoria Harbour) Docklands – A new centre island platform terminus is currently being constructed to accommodate the future planned extension of the tram track. This stop and track extension is expected to be commissioned in October 2013.

The following sites have been earmarked for accessible stop upgrades and initial planning is currently under way:

- > Intersection of Elgin and Lygon streets, Carlton
- > World Trade Centre, Southbank
- > Port Junction, Southbank
- > Fitzroy Street, St Kilda
- > Acland Street (Terminus), St Kilda
- > Blyth Street (Terminus), Brunswick
- > Two pairs of easy access stops in Nicholson Street (North), Carlton
- > Nine central island platform stops along Nicholson Street (South), Carlton
- > Intersection of Wests Road and Cordite Avenue, Maribyrnong.

In order to guarantee the consistency between the various considered solutions for level access stops, Yarra Trams has actively contributed to the development of a set of guidelines concerning 'Client Design Requirements for Accessible Trams Stops'.

This project has been led by PTV in collaboration with VicRoads. It provides standards for the installation of level access stops including desirable and minimum dimensions for platforms. It aims to ensure that the *Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992 (DDA)* standards are observed in each project.

Yarra Trams also consulted on the design of stops with various special interest groups including Blind Citizens Australia and Vision Australia.

4.4.2 Pre-boarding – tram stop priority seating

To improve the waiting experience, Yarra Trams provides priority seating stickers at the tram stops to help passengers identify these seats. This is done in compliance with the DSAPT standards.

4.4.3 Boarding assistance for vision impaired passengers

The current tram fleet comprises different types of vehicles (low-floor, high-floor and heritage), each of varying lengths, with different numbers of doors and door configurations.

People with a vision impairment generally board at the front door, so consistency in door location is important at stops. This year, yellow stop lines have been painted at selected accessible stops to help the tram driver align the tram with the stop. This is the case at the MacArthur Street level access stop where three yellow studs have been installed.

4.4.4 Fleet improvement – E-Class low-floor trams

PTV has purchased 50 new E-Class trams. These trams will be progressively introduced on to the network from 2013. The trams are equipped with additional accessibility features for passengers, including automated stop announcements, low-floor access, platform gap reducers at each doorway and designated wheelchair spaces with accessible intercom and next stop request button.

4.5 Travelling on the network

4.5.1 Priority seating onboard the tram

Following feedback from disability groups and a successful trial, priority seats and signage are being installed across the tram fleet. Orange seat fabric and orange decals are now used to identify seats and space allocated for passengers with special needs.

4.5.2 Onboard passenger announcements

Since April 2013, Yarra Trams' D-Class fleet of 59 trams has been fitted with audio and visual automated tram stop announcements. Audio and visual tram stop announcements is also featured in Yarra Trams' fleet of five 'Bumblebee' trams.

The E-Class tram will be fitted with both audio and visual automated tram stop announcements. In addition to this, PTV has allocated funding for the visual and audio tram stop announcements to be retro fitted to Yarra Trams' major classes of trams.

Where there are no automated passenger announcements, in compliance with the DSAPT, Yarra Trams drivers make stop announcements when requested by passengers. To make this service more efficient and user friendly, Yarra Trams is currently trialing a 'sticky note' system. A passenger simply has to hand a note to a driver requesting a particular stop to be announced. Drivers are required to verbally acknowledge the request and then stick the note on the dashboard where it can easily be seen. This also means that even when there is a driver change the new driver can deliver the service seamlessly.

4.6 Alighting the tram

Drivers of C-Class low-floor trams have the ability to deploy a retractable step to reduce the gap between the tram and the platform. This may assist wheelchair users to alight from the tram. Accessibility stop buttons are now coloured blue, rather than green, as blue is more commonly associated with accessibility signage.

Yarra Trams conducted trials regarding the use of a gap reducer for D-Class trams, for instances where there is a vertical or horizontal gap even when a low-floor tram is at a platform stop. Those trials have been successful and the implementation to the entire fleet is currently underway. This project is funded by PTV.

Yarra Trams has conducted an assessment of emergency ramp use on low-floor trams. Yarra Trams is working with stakeholders including occupational health and safety representatives and customers to review issues with the current ramps. Detailed instruction and refresher training are intended to result in a smooth deployment of the ramp in emergencies.

Yarra Trams is working with PTV to raise existing tram platforms from 260mm to 290mm, in accordance with the Client Design requirements.

5 Challenges faced by Yarra Trams

While striving to meet DSAPT targets and in pursuit of our value of Continuous Improvement, Yarra Trams recognises that Melbourne's tram network presents some significant inherent challenges.

5.1 Unique and large infrastructure

Melbourne's tram network, comprising the track, stops, trams and other infrastructure, is owned by the Victorian Government (held by VicTrack) and leased by Yarra Trams pursuant to the terms of the Franchise Agreement and Infrastructure Lease.

It is the largest operating tram network in the world, with 250km of track spread over 29 routes and with more than 1700 stops.

Yarra Trams and PTV are working together on projects to continue to upgrade the network in all respects. These projects are subject to the obvious constraints of budgetary limits and time associated with such a large network.

5.2 Building accessible stops in mixed traffic conditions

Logistical and practical limitations are faced when developing improvements to network infrastructure.

Melbourne's tram network has grown with the city over more than 100 years. Currently, around 80 per cent of routes are not separated from road traffic. This means that construction of accessible stops cannot be standardised and each require unique engineering solutions for their specific location.

This is especially true in highly developed inner suburbs with narrow streets. Often this can result in opposition to the proposed development from sections of the community and road users.

As a result, there is an increase in the amount of planning, consultation and design considerations required to implement this program across the network. Such matters increase the time and cost to implement such changes.

5.3 Physical variations

The gap between trams and platforms is particularly problematic due to the relationship between the vehicle and the infrastructure. This gap exists due to required clearances and tolerances that must be allowed for in design and construction of each element.

The height of the tram floor will vary as a consequence of the tram's suspension system. The height will change from time to time depending on the number of passengers and the total weight of the tram.

To meet clause 8.2 of DSAPT, there needs to be no boarding gap greater than 12mm (vertical) and 40mm (horizontal). It is understood that these limits are based on an Australian Standard for hoists and ramps used for road transport (ie, buses and taxis) and that there is no specific standard for trams. Yarra Trams recommends that the current boarding gap limits set out in clause 8.2 of the DSAPT be revised with respect to trams after giving consideration to a standard that is appropriate for trams.

5.4 Consents and cooperation

Not only does Yarra Trams rely on the consent and cooperation of the Victorian Government through bodies such as VicRoads, VicTrack and PTV, but a large commitment to improvement of the network is also required by the various local councils.

The installation of kerb ramps to easily access the tram stop from the kerbside are required at about 43 per cent of tram stops within the network. In each of these cases, the party responsible for the land in question is a local council.

5.5 Ageing rolling stock

Melbourne operates a diverse fleet of rolling stock, made up of both modern and historic trams. Out of the current fleet of 486 trams, 100 are fully accessible from the 365 constructed platform stops.

The arrival of 50 new E-Class trams is a major commitment currently being undertaken by PTV and Yarra Trams in the improvement of the network. This is expected to increase the percentage of low floor trams to 31.3 per cent by 2017.

The balance of the fleet has significant constraints in design in order to make accessibility changes. We further note that these trams are now well advanced in their anticipated operating life.

5.6 5.6 Not meeting the 2017 milestones

In addition to the above challenges, the 2017 milestones are unlikely to be achieved due to fleet and network constraints. To meet the 2017 milestones, a further 300 trams in the current fleet would need to be converted to become accessible. Many of these vehicles are already very old and it would very unlikely be economically viable to convert them to have low-floor access. In addition, it is unlikely that the market would be capable of supplying the volumes of new low-floor trams required to make the system 90 per cent accessible by 2017 – even if funding from the government were available.

To meet the 2017 milestone of 90 per cent DDA infrastructure compliance, a further 1200 accessible stops would need to be constructed (more than 20 per month). Substantial costs, potential effects on the existing road network, physical constraints surrounding the installation of platform stops and community concerns slow the implementation of accessible stops to meet the DDA standard.

6 The way forward

Yarra Trams' current Premium Line Program (commencing with Route 96) and the State government E-Class Tram Procurement Program are key components of Yarra Trams' long term strategy.

The programs integrate creative infrastructure upgrades, track development, procurement of 50 new low-floor trams, power supply upgrade and the redeployment of existing low-floor trams to other high patronage routes. These programs come at an investment of \$800M and represent a long term improvement to the network.

Route 96 will be the first Melbourne tram route with 100 per cent accessible stops and 100 per cent low-floor trams. Options are being investigated to allow complete separation between trams and road traffic, better spacing between tram stops and traffic light priority at major intersections.

Benefits to passengers of a fully operational Premium Line are expected to include material reductions in journey times, improved reliability, greater network efficiency, superior passenger comfort and safety, best practice accessibility, clearer passenger information and enhanced connectivity.

Yarra Trams' long term vision is for passengers on all routes to reap these benefits. The continued improvement of the network will require a close partnership between Yarra Trams and stakeholders such as PTV, VicTrack, VicRoads, local councils, community groups and passengers.

