



Disability Advice (re DPTAC)  
Department for Transport  
Sustainable Travel and Equalities  
Zone 2/15  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

**Our Ref:**  
**Your Ref:**

14<sup>th</sup> September 2012

Dear Sir / Madam

**Consultation on the abolition of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) and options for successor arrangements**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above consultation.

London TravelWatch would like to put on record that it believes that the DPTAC organisation has been instrumental in changing attitudes and service provision in the public transport industry in the past 25 years towards disability. Without it, much of the innovation – in particular low floor buses, would not have been possible. However, there is still considerable work to be done to ensure the continuation of the work that DPTAC has set in motion – particularly in the rail industry.

DPTAC has been able to do this because of the pan-disability nature of its remit and of the expertise that it has – being able to look at all types of disability, yet focused on the transport industry and the Department. London TravelWatch believes that whilst a wider pan-government body may have its merits, it would dilute the specific efforts to address transport issues affecting disabled people. It could also potentially lose the corporate memory and awareness to take account of issues affecting the mobility impaired. This we feel is particularly important when there is considerable pressure to reduce costs in the public transport industry and also to reduce the staffing complement of the Department.

A recent example of this kind of pressure and failure to take account of the needs of people with disabilities is the recent decision not to provide step free access at Alexandra Palace station where a new platform is being constructed. (See attached letter).

The experience of DPTAC is unlikely to be available through consultancies, and even if it is the chargeable cost of any advice given is likely to be considerably more expensive.

For these reasons London TravelWatch believes it is important for Ministers and the Department to retain the independent advice that a body like DPTAC provides. We would

therefore support the proposal for a wide ranging panel of experts from which members could be called on, on an ad hoc basis where specific advice is needed.

However, the relationship between health care provision and transport is one area where there is a great need for pan-government working, and which has a significant impact on people with mobility impairments. London TravelWatch has raised this issue over a number of years and has been successful in forging much closer working relationships between health care providers, planners and Transport for London (TfL), so that transport is considered as part of the planning and development of the health service. This has added urgency given the current proposals for reform of the health service, and it is essential that this knowledge is not lost or set aside. Ministers should consider whether any new advisory body should be given the task of taking this issue forward.

If you have any queries on this response please contact me.

Yours sincerely

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