

24 September 2009

Station Car Parking Policy in Scotland

SATA's response to Transport Scotland's consultation

Introduction

SATA's aim is to work for the provision of accessible transport in Scotland as a basic right for all people. This includes working not only for the provision of vehicles, vessels and rolling stock which are accessible but also for the provision of an integrated system of public transport, affordable services, accessible information and appropriate support services.

SATA provides the major inclusive forum in Scotland on transport issues of concern to disabled people. It works by enabling groups and individuals to share information about current developments in transport, as well as carrying our research and identifying gaps in provision. This allows SATA to press for changes to transport services.

This response to the consultation concentrates on the provision of car parking spaces for disabled people as SATA's main concern.

Policy

First ScotRail is responsible for 342 rail stations in Scotland. In its 2008 Disabled Person's Protection Policy (DPPP) it says (page 8) it offers free car parking to disabled customers at all car parks as shown in Appendix A. There it gives details of the number of spaces at each location where these are provided, with the undertaking that they are in accessible locations close to the station and of correct

size in accordance with the '*Accessible Train and Station Design for Disabled People: Code of Practice*' (Department for Transport and Transport Scotland 2008)

First ScotRail says it closely monitors the use of spaces to ensure that there is a sufficient number to meet demand and to discourage non-disabled motorists from parking in them. A report with details of weekly average usage is sent to the Department of Transport and Transport Scotland every six months. It also says it has carried out a review of car parks which require new and additional facilities or have no facilities for Blue Badge holders and that all improvements identified have been prioritised with some work being progressed.

SATA agrees that there should be a nationally applied consistent policy on the provision of car parking and the level of charges at railway stations. This policy must include an objective to provide all stations in Scotland with designated parking spaces for Blue Badge holders provided in accordance with the *Code of Practice*, including the recommended location, number, monitoring and enforcement.

Suppressed demand

There are estimated to be well over 200,000 Blue Badge holders in Scotland and the number is increasing steadily year by year, so the demand for parking spaces at stations is also likely to increase and especially where train and station access is improved. However we are not aware of any specific evidence and the ScotRail data on existing usage is not available to us. So more research into unmet need and potential demand is needed. If more spaces are provided, a major area for increased take up would be amongst older people but most of such spaces would need to be reserved for off-peak travel.

Station choice

SATA members point out that there are many factors influencing the choice of stations some of which may not be so important for non-disabled people such as the distance between the station car park and the platform, the availability of staff assistance, and of course the accessibility of the trains. They may well be prepared to travel further by car to find a station that offers better facilities, that is if they do not opt to travel the whole journey by car.

Overpricing

If a link is made between parking charges and fares to encourage off-peak travel, the position of Blue Badge holders and those with fare concessions must be considered.

Supply and demand

This has to be calculated on an local and regional, as well as a national, basis. The needs of disabled and older people must be included as an important sector to whom price, comfort and convenience are important factors in addition to accessibility. These must be addressed if there is to be an increase or shift in demand.

References

'Disabled Persons Protection Policy' First ScotRail 2008

'Inclusive Mobility': A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure' DfT 2002

'Accessible Train and Station Design for Disabled People: Code of Practice' DfT and Transport Scotland 2008

'Policy Statement on Rail Travel'. Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) 2007

'Takling the Abuse of Off-Street Parking for People with Disabilities in Scotland'

Transport Research Findings No 7/2007

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