
Busways Accessible Transport Action Plan 2023-2028

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Outlining our commitment to providing and adapting bus services, as far as practicable, to remove barriers that prevent people from using it.

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Recognition of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Busways recognises and supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and commits to promoting, protecting and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Acknowledgement of Country

Busways respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

Introduction

It is estimated that one in six people - approximately 4.4 million - have disability in Australia, around 17.7% of the total population. Another 22% have a long-term health condition, and the remaining 60% may experience injury or some other temporary reduced mobility at some point during their lives¹.

Acknowledging disability prevalence is essential to providing a community-focused transport service. People rely on local bus services to participate in employment, access health services and recreation, and connect with friends and family. As a public service, we must best use our resources to serve the majority – yet we understand that the majority is not ‘one group’. Equitable consideration and care for the needs of many is essential to fulfilling our role as a public service.

Busways operates hundreds of route and school bus routes on behalf of state governments, providing more than 26 million passenger journeys every year.

Proudly Australian-owned and operated since 1942, Busways’ vision statement includes a commitment to our customers to provide a service that makes them feel safe, welcome, comfortable and impressed every time they travel with us.

This involves providing and adapting services, as far as practicable, to remove barriers that prevent people from using them. This means considering the needs of all people that may experience barriers to use – including people with disability, temporary injury or sensory impairment (including physical, intellectual, mental, invisible and people traveling with mobility aids, carers and assistance animals), seniors, people who are linguistically diverse, pregnant women and people travelling with prams.

It is important to us that everyone at Busways understands what factors make positive and negative experiences for our customers. Acknowledging that there are barriers to using and enjoying our services to is key to building this understanding. Being prescriptive and accountable in the steps we will take to remove these barriers is a commitment we have made to delivering the service we aspire to.

This Accessible Transport Action Plan, supported by Busways’ Customer Experience Plan, helps us deliver on our commitment with consideration for the varied needs of all customers to remove barriers to the bus network and supports inclusion for all people.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) People with disability in Australia 2022, catalogue number DIS 72, AIHW, Australian Government.

Supporting accessible bus journeys

Busways is focused on providing accessible transport services for people in the community, including people with disability, seniors, children, students and commuters.

Since the introduction of our first Accessible Transport Action Plan in 2005 we have steadily improved the accessibility of vehicles, network, and information.

Accessible information and trip planning

Customers can access service information and accurate timetable, route and bus stop data through the integrated transport network's passenger information systems including trip planning websites, apps and information displays. Accessible services are identified by the universal wheelchair symbol on timetables, buses and bus stops.

Concise, consistent information is published through social media, news media and printed marketing collateral like posters at bus stops, to promote services and communicate changes.

Inclusive customer service and feedback management

Busways Infoline supports the official transport network information services. We answer customer enquiries about bus services and investigate customer feedback and complaints.

Resolution and continuous improvement are achieved by analysing feedback insights and trends and providing information to internal departments and stakeholder review forums. We make improvements to services where possible, such as through training programs and timetable reviews, or we escalate suggestions to stakeholders like Transport for NSW and Councils.

Accessible bus stops

Bus stop infrastructure is owned by other network stakeholders – primarily Councils, road authorities and precinct owners. We work collaboratively with stakeholders to make bus stops as accessible as possible. This includes choosing bus stop locations and improving surrounding infrastructure (like pathways and road crossings) and access cues (like tactile ground surfaces).

At some bus stops, Busways is responsible for maintaining service information and for installing supporting infrastructure such as bus stop poles and timetable signs and cases. Busways has a standard installation method so that signage and pole locations are consistently located in relation

to other infrastructure such as curbs and concrete paths. This consistency is helpful for people with vision impairment.

Where customer feedback suggests changes, or auditing activities identify improvements, we advocate on behalf of our customers, working with the local authority to achieve these.

Accessible buses

Busways has been committed to increasing the accessibility of our fleet and achieving the targets set by the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport under the Disability Discrimination Act. We achieved the milestones for accessible route bus services in 2012 (55%) and 2017 (80%) in all our Contract regions. Busways met the full compliance target milestone in 2022 in most of our operating regions. Vehicle procurement challenges delayed the arrival of replacement accessible buses in 2022 in three of our regions - Western Sydney, Coffs Harbour region and Port Macquarie. Busways is operating 100% accessible services on weekends, public holidays and weekdays (school holiday timetable). Weekdays (school term timetable) is expected to be fully accessible by 2023.

Bus timetable information clearly identifies services that are operated by an accessible vehicle. Busways has made every effort in scheduling the timetable to minimise the number and impact of non-accessible services until replacement accessible vehicles are delivered.

Accessible buses have features that meet Australian Design Rules to support travellers with mobility considerations. Such features include:

- Low floors reducing the distance of bus doors from the ground
- Automatic ramps and kerbside kneeling technology for easier boarding
- Wide doorways and aisles
- Priority seating areas identified by stickers on the window and markings on the floor
- Handrails and stop buttons in easy to reach areas
- Colour contrasting within the bus to distinguish between steps, aisles and priority seating areas
- Door handrails ergonomically designed to support ascending and descending the bus
- Gradual, shallow steps through the bus to rear seating areas

Concession fares and free travel

Concession fares make travel on participating transport services more affordable and easier to access. Government travel subsidies exist for concession holders including pensioners, seniors and through a variety of travel passes. Current concession information can be found on the official government transport website.

Passenger Travel Training

The mission of the Busways Passenger Travel Training Program is to help vulnerable groups in the community feel safe, comfortable and confident travelling by bus. Our trainers help passengers interested in building their travel confidence through customised travel training sessions. This can involve bringing an accessible bus to a group or individual and conducting training, or providing support to community trainers or school teachers for use in assisted travel training programs.

Focus Area 1: Provide inclusive customer service and support

It is important to us that our customer commitment is a driving force within our organisation, that everyone on our team understands what factors make positive and negative experiences for our customers and has clarity on service standards we strive toward.

Through training programs we support our team to develop customer thinking and customer-centric behaviours that are empathetic to the different needs people have when travelling. Key to this is co-designing and delivering training with representatives and advocates from our customer groups.

We support customers to feel safe and confident making public transport journeys through travel education and coaching. Our goal is to provide comfortable journeys that are easy to identify and board, enjoyable to use and stress-free when the unexpected occurs.



Table 1 Focus Area 1 Action Plans

Strategy	Target	Timeframe
Objective 1.1 Foster a culture of inclusion and customer service within Busways.		
Educate all customer-facing employees about the spectrum of customer needs, rights and experiences through customer experience training modules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of new customer-facing employees complete customer experience module in induction training. Disability awareness training and communications campaign delivered 100% substantiated customer feedback about unsatisfactory experiences relating to access or inclusion triggers re-training. No substantiated complaints are received relating to accessibility barriers. 	Annually
Train drivers how to use fleet equipment and to proactively deploy features to meet customer needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of drivers are adequately trained on bus accessibility features and how to operate them. 	Ongoing

Strategy	Target	Timeframe
Raise workforce and community awareness about inclusive transport behaviours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An internal engagement campaign and public promotional campaign is implemented 	Annually
Make a company-wide customer experience commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Busways employees sign and uphold a commitment to caring about people and their experience. 	Ongoing
Conduct inclusive communications training for Busways' marketing and communications roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busways' communications are produced with a comprehensive understanding of accessible formats and communications tools. 	Annually
Acknowledge the impact of double disadvantage for people with disability from diversity groups and identify focus areas for minimising service barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation of Busways' Reconciliation Action Plan and Diversity & Inclusion Plan which considers people with disability from diversity groups mentioned in the Disability Inclusion Act. Focus areas inform future Accessible Transport Action Plans 	2022-2023
Objective 1.2 Support community groups to feel safe and confident using our services		
Include positive images of people with disability or with access needs in Busways' publications and website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum one annual photoshoot contributes photos of people with varied access needs to the digital asset library 	Ongoing
Provide travel training programs to passenger groups with customised on-board training sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program promotion on Busways' digital channels and through engagement with targeted community groups is conducted periodically. Busways conducts training with all suitable groups that request support. 	Ongoing
Support community-led training and assistance programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All requests for assistance are considered and programs that meet criteria are supported. 	Ongoing
Communicate to customers safe carriage restrictions and requirements of mobility scooters, wheelchairs and other mobility aids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information materials exist in multiple accessible formats Passengers using mobility aids on buses travel safely and comfortably. Zero injured passengers using a mobility aid on our buses 	Ongoing
Introduce Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative to improve bus journeys for people living with hidden disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busways' workforce has completed Hidden Disabilities training modules Customers with hidden disabilities feel more confident and comfortable using Busways' services. 	2024

Focus Area 2: Improve equitable access to bus services

We work with government, other service providers, suppliers and manufacturers to eliminate barriers to hailing, boarding and disembarking from a bus. We have a long history working with bus manufacturers to custom build and continuously innovate beyond compliance for accessibility features onboard.

We work collaboratively with local road authorities to make bus stops as accessible as possible. This includes choosing bus stop locations and improving surrounding infrastructure (like pathways and road crossings) and access cues (like tactile ground surfaces and wayfinding).

Where customer feedback or auditing activities identify improvements, we advocate on behalf of our customers, working with the responsible authorities to achieve these.



Table 2 Focus Area 2 Action Plan

Strategy	Target	Timeframe
Objective 2.1 Progressively improve the accessibility of bus services		
Schedule and allocate accessible buses on route services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of route services are accessible 	Ongoing
Consider service access when planning new bus routes and consult road infrastructure stakeholders to maximise pedestrian safety, comfort and access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New bus routes are accessible for all customers 	As required
Ensure bus signage that clearly promotes accessible buses and priority seating with internationally recognised symbols is installed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practice signage is installed and up to date. Customers understand what services are available and suitable to their needs 	Annually
Coordinate bus rank proximity and service stand allocation to support easy identification and access to services at boarding points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busways engages at every opportunity with precinct owners and other operators in relation to bus rank layout, wayfinding and stop signage 	Ongoing

Strategy	Target	Timeframe
Objective 2.2 Progressively improve vehicle accessibility		
Implement fleet procurement timeline to achieve the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 targets for Busways' Western Sydney, Port Macquarie, and Coffs Harbour bus networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of route services are accessible 	2023
Innovate, wherever possible, to enhance vehicle accessibility beyond compliance of the Australian Design Rule (ADR) Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elevated the industry benchmark for accessible vehicle innovation 	Ongoing
Advise on bus specifications and lessons learned to improve industry standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved accessible vehicle options on bus procurement panels 	Ongoing
Maintain accessibility features in good, reliable working order with preventative and corrective maintenance regimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All customers who need to use bus accessibility features can do so Busways' Asset Management Plans are implemented fully in relation to predictive, preventative and corrective maintenance All defects reported are entered into the Asset Information System which manages timely repairs 	Ongoing
Objective 2.3 Progressively improve the accessibility of network infrastructure		
Work collaboratively with authorities and councils in our operating areas to improve bus stop accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of bus stops that comply with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002. 	Ongoing
Use standard bus stop installation method so that signage and pole locations are consistently located in relation to other infrastructure such as curbs and concrete paths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All applicable bus stop installations are consistent Customer familiarity with bus stops enables more confident navigation of the bus network 	Ongoing
Busways on-road staff report infrastructure defects or opportunities for infrastructure improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All bus stop defects that impede access are resolved promptly 	Ongoing

Focus Area 3: Design accessible information and engagement

Equitable access to information for planning the journey and navigating disruptions throughout the journey, is a key that unlocks the integrated public transport network for all people. Responsibility is shared by transport authorities and mode operators. We provide accurate data to support the effectiveness of integrated information tools. As technology advances, we look for better ways to communicate information.

Accessible and inclusive avenues for giving feedback are essential for incorporating customer insights into service design and improvement efforts, whether through our own efforts or as an advocate to government and other decision makers. We are committed to giving all customers, representing a broad spectrum of user experiences, a voice within our organisation through our Voice of Customer Council.



Table 3 Focus Area 3 Action Plan

Strategy	Target	Timeframe
Objective 3.1 Provide equitable access to information for all customers		
Assess the Busways website's compliance to W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and produce a scope of works to meet 2.0 Level AA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Busways website complies with technical standards organised under 4 principles - perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust – that support access for all. 	By 2025
Promote service information accessibility tools including transport accessibility apps, official transport infoline TTY, and translation and interpreting services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers are aware of apps and tools they can use for information about our services. 	Ongoing
Implement inclusive design guidelines and include in relevant procedures, standards and templates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People can access and understand information without aesthetic barriers 	Ongoing
Produce service, route and other information communications using	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People can access and understand information without barriers 	Ongoing

Strategy	Target	Timeframe
clear, concise and simple language and standardised templates where possible		
Ensure Busways' properties, that provide services for members of the public, are physically accessible for people with varied mobility needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Busways' properties adhere to relevant Disability Discrimination Act and Building Code of Australia requirements. All significant property refurbishments proactively seek to increase access for people with mobility needs. 	Project basis
Provide captions and audio description on public-facing videos produced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People can access and understand information without barriers 	Ongoing
Objective 3.2 Provide accessible platforms for customers to have input		
Engage with local disability and advocacy groups to discuss transport requirements, issues and barriers to travelling on public transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local advocacy groups are included in relevant stakeholder engagement plans. 	Ongoing
Objective 3.3 Incorporate customer needs and experience in service design and improvements		
Include accessibility agenda item on the Voice of Customer monthly meeting, which unites business units to discuss and improve customer experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A monthly forum provides a regular space for discussion and consideration of accessibility improvements. Actions are recorded and reported on in contract reports and forums 	Monthly
Customer feedback relating to accessibility is escalated to decision makers in the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision makers are informed about customer experiences and consider customer insights in decision making about fleet design, bus stop location, network planning and operational practices. 	Ongoing

Feedback and information

We welcome all feedback relating to this Accessible Transport Action Plan and our services. Contact our customer service team at infoline@busways.com.au or call 1300 692929.

Bus service information is available at busways.com.au.