



Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC)

Response from the PTSC regarding the recommendations of the Second report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities with Specific Focus on Access to Services and Employment

Date: October 18, 2016

Overview of the Elderly and Differently Abled Mobile (ELDAMO) Service

The ELDAMO service was officially launched in Tobago on the 21st October 2012 and in Trinidad on the 3rd December 2012 respectively at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA).

The service was developed with the approval of the Cabinet by Minute Number No. 263 of February 3, 2011. The Cabinet agreed, inter alia:

- b) to the establishment of a special Para Transit Unit within the Corporation with responsibility for operating the service, that Unit to constitute a cost centre separate and distinct from all other services.

The ELDAMO service was designed and developed in collaboration with the primary stakeholders inclusive of The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, The Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) and The Rotary Club. ELDAMO is the acronym for the official service named the "Elderly and Differently Abled Mobile" Service. The service was designed to provide 'free' transportation to the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities who have challenges utilizing other conventional modes of public transportation (such as buses or taxis) or individuals who require specialized assistive technologies to get on-board.

The PTSC ELDAMO fleet is comprised of twenty four (24) buses each with a capacity of eight (8) passenger seats and three (3) wheelchair positions. Each bus is equipped with a rear-loaded wheelchair hydraulic ramp, wheelchair restraint systems and passenger chair restraint systems.

Recommendations:

To understand the challenges to access services faced by persons with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago included but not limited to Transport.

(4.9.) The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Works and Transport evaluate the ELDAMO service and seek client feedback in order to improve, create a definition and a policy framework for the service. The Ministry of Works and Transport should review the stakeholder recommendations in Appendix III.

Response:

The Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) has commenced the evaluation of the ELDAMO Service. On the 7th October, 2016 at 9:30 am at the conference room of the Ministry of Works and Transport level 22, Tower "D" of the Waterfront Complex the PTSC hosted a stakeholder consultation. The consultation themed **ELDAMO, "Understanding our Stakeholder Roles"** was attended by the major stakeholders who champion the cause of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago. The consultation involved obtaining feedback from the stakeholders themselves.

The stakeholders in attendance included:

1. National Centre for Persons with Disabilities
2. Consortium of Disability Organizations
3. Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (Division of Aging)
4. Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (Disability Affairs Unit)
5. Rotary Club of Port of Spain
6. Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Peoples' International
7. Management and staff of the Public Transport Service Corporation
8. Membership of the Transport and Industrial Workers Union
9. Membership of the Public Services Association

The consultation captured its data within a workshop setting. Stakeholders were placed on cross-functional teams to discuss inter alia topics of policy, a service definition and improvements in service operations. A report is being developed to treat with the accompanying recommendations. The report is to be submitted for the review and acceptance by the Management and Board of Directors for development and adoption of a definition and policy framework.

(4.10) The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Works and Transport consider purchasing regular buses that are outfitted for Persons with Disabilities, since the current demand for the ELDAMO Service exceeds the capacity of the current fleet.

Response:

The PTSC notes the recommendation of the Committee to purchase regular service buses with accommodations for Persons with Disabilities. The PTSC has included in its specifications to procure new buses in the future features that would facilitate universal access with accommodation for three to four wheel chairs. The buses will also be outfitted with kneeling technology and access ramps.

(4.11) The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Works and Transport redesign City Gate, bus stops and bus terminals to improve the level of access to Persons with Disabilities.

Response:

The PTSC's public transport facility in Port of Spain once housed the former Trinidad Government Railway. The facility was adapted to facilitate the operations of the PTSC. The infrastructure was not reconfigured to accommodate the operations of public bus transportation. The entrance, egress and access to buses on the loading bays is not user friendly to the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities. It is recommended that a comprehensive feasibility study be undertaken to complete a redesign of the transportation hub in keeping with "International Standards" to make it universally user friendly. This process must engage full stakeholder

participation of interest groups to ensure that all demands are catered for. It is extremely important that funding for this extremely important development project be allocated in the "National Development Budget". The PTSC has held preliminary discussions with the Traffic Management Branch of the Ministry of Works and Transport and intends to engage other stakeholders with a view of improving and redesign City Gate, bus stops and bus terminals to improve the level of access to Persons with Disabilities.

Appendix III of the JSC Report- Stakeholder Transportation Recommendations:

Stakeholder: Persons Associated with Visual Impairment:

- A. More working ELDAMO buses are required to adequately serve the population of persons with visual impairment.**

Response:

- A.** The PTSC is currently collaborating with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to find an efficient workable model to deliver the ELDAMO bus service with quality, reliability and at low cost. It has been established by both primary stakeholders that there is an urgent need to expand the service to meet growing commuter demand. The Ministry of Social development and Family Services has given its commitment to finance the proposed fleet expansion project in collaboration with the PTSC. The proposed expansion coupled with the mandate for PTSC to purchase universal buses in the future will make adequate provision for this segment of the population that cannot access the generic modes of public transportation.

The conversation is ongoing with reference to applying a subsidized fee to offset the cost of operating and sustaining the service.

- B. Within regular Buses, there should be assigned seating in the first two rows in the Bus for persons with visual impairment to enable them to easily enter and exit the Bus.**

Response:

- B. The recommendation to assign the seats in the first two rows of the Corporation's buses is fully endorsed. The PTSC is at present developing a policy for implementation which seeks to ensure that the proper signage is in place to communicate to commuters that seats in the first two rows are allocated for Persons with visual impairment and Disabilities.

Stakeholder: Squeaky Wheels

- A. Ensure that Universal Design features including wheelchair access be included in each PTSC bus being procured in the future.**

Response:

- A. The global approach to the provision of public transportation is now focused on the "Human Rights" approach of inclusiveness for all. The old model of excluding the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities from universal access is no longer recommended. The Elderly and Persons with Disabilities are now encouraged to mingle and interact with the population in the conduct of their daily activities to contribute to National and Social Development.

The PTSC endorses the universal concept of public transportation inclusiveness. The Board of Directors has taken a decision that all buses that are to be purchased in the future must provide "universal access" for commuters.

The "Rationalisation of the Public Transport Service Corporation Bus Fleet" report as approved by the Cabinet by Minute number 2318 of August 30, 2011 states within its recommendations inter alia:

3.3 “A mainstreaming approach be used by the PTSC in its future design of its service delivery for Persons with Disabilities. The Universal Design concept should be adopted and included in the specifications for new bus purchases”.

The Corporation is committed to implementing these recommendations.

B. Discontinue the current ELDAMO service and Re- engineer the existing ELDAMO service to facilitate “First Mile, Last Mile” services. Re- engineering should take place before the service is discontinued to facilitate smooth transition and least disruption to passengers.

Response:

- B. The re-engineering of the ELDAMO service to provide “First Mile, Last Mile” services requires a series of mechanisms to precede this phase. This includes but is not limited to:
- i. Audits of all designated loading facilities to ensure universal design and access elements have been implemented to the required specifications.
 - ii. A bus shelter access survey of all PTSC shelters to determine accessibility, safety and accommodation.
 - iii. Pavement design legislation to ensure conformity to international standards, compatibility to bus kneeling and ramp machinery, predictable step up heights etc.
 - iv. The acquisition of additional buses.

The PTSC notes the importance of the first mile/ last mile service and commits to consider it at the appropriate time.

C. Include NSAB in maintenance of transport facilities.

Response:

- C. PTSC notes the submission of the stakeholder as it refers to the use of NSAB in maintenance of transport facilities. Attempts to contact the stakeholder for further clarification had proved futile. Notwithstanding, PTSC places high priority on the treatment and maintenance of its facilities.

D. Include pupils of Special Schools in the PTSC's School Bus Service.

Response:

- D. The routes and schedules which utilizes the contracted maxi taxis for the school bus service are determined by the Ministry of Education. The PTSC will continue to collaborate with the Ministry to encourage inclusiveness in the school maxi taxi transport programme. Consideration will also have to be given to the number of students with disabilities that currently utilizes the service to get to school and encourage maxi taxi providers to procure maxi taxis with "Universal Access" in the future.

Stakeholder: T&T Association for Hearing Impaired:

- A. **A care-giver/ sign language interpreter is required to ensure communicate with the student/s.**

Response:

- A. PTSC notes the importance of a caregiver/ sign language interpreter on-board the ELDAMO service. The caregiver is envisaged to provide a diverse range of skill sets including but not limited to:
1. Strong observation and customer care skills
 2. Knowledge of first Aid, body mechanics and the various conditions experienced by the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities.

3. Proficiency in the operation and handling of wheel chairs and other assistive technologies.

The PTSC has held preliminary discussions on the matter and commits to continue discussions with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services and other stakeholders to satisfy the need of having caregivers/ sign language interpreters to ensure communication with the students on-board the buses.

- B. The bus schedule is irregular as it relates to pick up time for the student/ students. Rarely are the student/s picked up at 2:00 pm (school closing time)**

Response:

- B. PTSC acknowledges the comments of the stakeholder as it refers to the schedule for student pick up times. Attempts to contact the stakeholder for further clarification had proved futile. Notwithstanding, PTSC is committed to the improvement of the reliability and on-time performance of its services.

- C. The student/s remain on the bus until the standard bus schedule is completed and are then taken to their destinations.**

Response:

- C. PTSC notes the submission of the stakeholder as it refers to students remaining on the bus until the standard schedule is completed. Attempts to contact the stakeholder for further clarification were unsuccessful. Notwithstanding, PTSC is committed to the review of this service with a view to improve its performance.

Stakeholder: T&T Blind Welfare Association:

- A. The public transport system is not reliable and also does not run on time.**

Response:

- A. The Public Transport Service Corporation notes the comment of the stakeholder and commit to the increase in reliability and on-time service of the buses.

B. Certain seats on the bus should be allocated to the blind and visually impaired.

Response:

B. The recommendation to assign seats to persons who are blind and visually impaired is fully endorsed. The PTSC is at present developing a policy for implementation which seeks to ensure that the proper signage is in place to communicate to commuters that seats in the first two rows are allocated for Persons with who are blind, visually impaired and/or have Disabilities.

C. Vouchers could be given to persons who are blind to be presented to other forms of transportation to assist in reducing the cost of transportation for persons who are blind and visually impaired.

Response:

C. The request for a travel voucher system that caters to the transportation needs of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities must engage the attention of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for careful consideration in implementing this proposal. The PTSC undertakes to hold discussions with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to discuss the provision of vouchers to be given to the blind and visually impaired (Persons with Disabilities) to assist in reducing the cost of transportation.

Response from the Licensing Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport regarding the stakeholder Proposed Amendments to Motor Vehicle Legislation (Appendix X) contained in the second report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on Challenges Faced by persons with Disabilities with specific focus on Access to Services and Employment

Stakeholder: United Nations agencies in Trinidad and Tobago

1.0 Proposed Amendment

Provisions for accessible parking zone permits and plates

Response

The Motor Vehicle Authority Bill has been substantially completed and is at present undergoing final review. It is anticipated to soon form part of the Parliament's agenda. This Bill proposes certain new Legislative provisions that are novel and do not form part of the current Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act. One of these novel provisions recognises the need to specially provide for vehicles driven or utilized by the persons with disabilities.

As currently drafted the Motor Vehicle Authority Bill provides as follows;

“90. (1) Subject to sections 79 and 97, a person who is permanently **disabled** may apply to the Authority to have a vehicle registered and assigned with special identification marks to be carried on the licence plates of the vehicle.

(2) Where an application is made under subsection (1) and the applicable fee for registration of a vehicle under section 79 has been paid, the Authority shall assign to the vehicle special identification marks to be carried on the licence plates of the vehicle where the applicant provides a certificate from a registered medical practitioner certifying that the applicant's disability or immobility is permanent.

(3) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, where a licence plate is issued to a **person with a disability** and affixed to a vehicle, the licence plates shall be deemed to be a **disability** parking permit to the extent that -

- (a) the **person with a disability** to whom the licence plates is issued, may stop, leave standing or park the vehicle in the parking zone designated for a **person with a disability**; and

- (b) any person, other than a **person with a disability**, may stop, leave standing or park the vehicle in the parking zone designated for a **person with a disability**, where the person stops, leaves standing or parks the vehicle for the purpose of transporting a **person with a disability**.

1.1 Proposed Amendment

The establishment of a Medical Advisory Committee to provide information, recommendations and opinions concerning a person's medication condition, medical report or visual screening with respect to the person's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle and/or necessary adjustments to the vehicle to accommodate the disability.

Response

Currently the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act 48:50 at section 48(1) states

“The Transport Officer shall not issue a driving permit to any person unless he has personally satisfied himself that the vision, hearing and bodily and mental fitness of the applicant are such as to warrant the issue of a driving permit and that the applicant is of good character.”

If the Transport Officer is not satisfied that the vision, hearing and bodily and mental fitness of the applicant are such as to warrant the issue of a driving permit, the applicant is requested to complete Form 12 of the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Regulations “Medical Test for Driving Permit” This form requires the opinion of the a qualified and registered medical practitioner and ask 8 questions relative to the applicant's vision, hearing and bodily and mental fitness as it relates to his responsibilities in the performance of his duties as a driver.

The Motor Vehicle Authority Bill as is currently replicates the provisions of the follows Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act 48:50 at section 48(1)

A review of the provisions as expressed above seems to indicate that the comments relative to the establishment of a Medical Advisory Board are sufficiently treated in both the current and proposed legislation.

1.2 Proposed Amendment

Mobility Aid Accessible Taxi Standards established for vehicles that are made for transporting persons with disabilities.

Response

Currently there is no legislative provision to treat with Mobility Aid Accessible Taxi Standards established for vehicles that are made for transporting persons with disabilities however the point raised by the stakeholder is duly noted and will be considered.

Consortium of Disability Organisations

2.0 Proposed Amendment

Allow persons with disabilities the same accommodation as others.

Response

The comment by the stakeholder is not treated with under the Motor Vehicle and Road traffic Act or the MVA Bill however the Ministry and by extension the licensing is highly committed to allowing persons with disabilities the same accommodations as others

2.1 Proposed Amendment

Motor Vehicles Act must standardize the hand controls always keeping in mind the new technology being discovered daily

Response

Currently there are no legislative provisions to treat with standardize hand controls however the point raised by the stakeholder is duly noted and will be considered.

2.3 Proposed Amendment

Interpreters for the Deaf community should be part of the staff to accommodate those who need it.

The comment by the stakeholder is duly noted and will be considered.

Stakeholder: Persons Associated with Visual Impairment

3.0 Proposed Amendment

Persons with Visual Impairment should be allowed to own a vehicle in their own name for business purposes and otherwise.

Response

Vehicle ownership by the visually impaired is provided for under the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act 48:50, section 12 (9)

Stakeholder: Trinidad and Tobago Association for Hearing Impaired

4.0 Proposed Amendment

Issuance of driving permits to Deaf persons in addition to Hard of Hearing persons (persons with residual hearing loss who require hearing aids). Currently, only Hard of Hearing persons can legally be issued driver's permits.

Response

The comments/ proposed amendments raised by the stakeholder are duly noted and will be considered.

4.1 Proposed Amendment

Renewal of driving permits for both Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons should maintain a three (3) year duration.

Response

The comments/ proposed amendments raised by the stakeholder are duly noted and will be considered.



WATER TAXI SERVICE

Joint Select Committee on Human Rights and Equality and Diversity

i) **The current policy to treat with Persons with disabilities who utilize the service of the Water Taxi**

The Water Taxi Service (WTS) in its bid to provide efficient, safe and courteous service to all passengers has incorporated procedures within its Safety Management Systems (SMS) specifically relating to passengers with disabilities. These are as follows:

- Customer Service Representatives (CSR) greet the differently-abled passenger on entry to the Terminal with assistance rendered where necessary in ticket purchasing and seating within designated areas.
- The on-shift Customer Service Supervisor is tasked with alerting the Master / Mate of any person(s) with disabilities travelling with the Service in order for the crew to be prepared to receive them on board. The Supervisor is also required to contact the receiving Terminal to be in readiness to receive the differently-abled passenger.
- The differently-abled passenger is escorted / wheeled from the Terminal building by the CSR unto the pontoon, from where the passenger is transferred to the care of the vessel's crew for assistance with boarding the vessel. The passenger is seated in the specially provided seating on-board. In the case of a wheelchair bound passenger, the wheelchair is secured in the designated area on-board and the passenger remains seated in the wheel-chair while in transit.
- On arrival at the receiving Terminal the vessel's crew assists the differently-abled passenger in disembarking the vessel and transfers care of the passenger to the CSR who then escorts / wheels the passenger to the Terminal for awaiting transportation.

ii) **How are the Water Taxi Infrastructure and processes designed to accommodate Persons with Disabilities?**

Terminal Access

Both Terminals are easily accessible for differently abled passengers, with the Port of Spain building being level with the outside pavement and free from major obstacles. The San Fernando Terminal building is outfitted with a ramp to provide access to differently abled passengers and is similarly free from major obstacles.

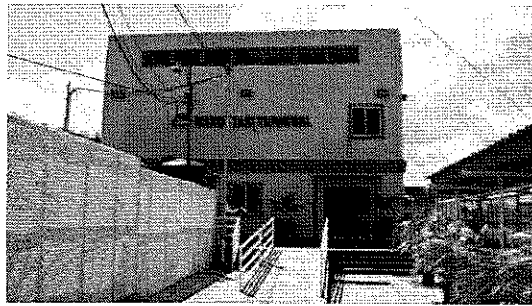


Figure 1 San Fernando Terminal Building showing access ramp

Seating Accommodation – Terminal Buildings and Vessels

Differently-abled passengers are provided with specially designated seating at the Service's Terminal buildings and onboard the vessels. Within the buildings, seats closest to the boarding exits are reserved for differently abled passengers and there are designated areas for wheelchair bound passengers.

Washroom Facilities

The public washroom facilities at the Port of Spain and San Fernando Terminals are outfitted with both male and female toilets which can be utilized by members of the public who are differently abled.

Car Park Facility

The Service's only parking facility, which is located at its San Fernando terminal, is outfitted with a designated spot for differently-abled passenger parking.

Vessel Boarding

To facilitate safe access from the floating pontoons unto the vessels, access ramps are provided at both Terminals, in addition to the boarding stairs infrastructure.



Figure 2 Boarding stairs infrastructure with access ramp

iii) What if anything was done to treat with the specific challenges identified to the Parliament-Joint Select Committee?

The Water Taxi Service noted the concern recorded at **Section 4 Findings and Recommendations (4.3)**:

“...as well as the policy that PWDs with motorized wheelchairs can only utilize the Water Taxi Service with a personal aide.”

Response:

Access to the vessels is provided via the gangway / floating pontoons and boarding stairs. While passengers with disabilities - including those who utilize non-motorized wheelchairs, access the service with relative ease, due to infrastructure constraints the following challenges are faced in respect of a PWD utilizing a motorized wheelchair:

As indicated previously, the boarding stairs infrastructure is outfitted with a ramp to facilitate wheelchair access. The ramp's slope of 1:4 however poses difficulties for PWDs utilizing motorized wheelchairs, as the combination of the steep gradient and the heavy weight of the chair makes climbing difficult, even with in-house assistance as more than one member of crew is needed to assist , requiring boarding procedures to be temporarily suspended at the time. Additionally, health and safety concerns for members of crew are also a matter of consideration.

The solution accordingly entails the installation of a ramp with a suitable slope however, given the footprint of the floating pontoons, a suitable slope for access by motorized wheelchair without assistance is not currently feasible as this requires a much longer jetty.

In this regard the Service has in the past requested funding for new terminal and berthing facilities and once such funding is available, suitable boarding infrastructure will be incorporated within the design.

In the interim the Service will continue to assist as far as practicable.

iv) Any other information you may regard as relevant which treats with persons with disabilities.

The Water Taxi Service in association with the Blind Welfare Association has conducted sensitivity training for CSRs in a bid to enhance interaction with visually impaired passengers during reception to the Terminal and escort to vessels.



Figure 3 Water Taxi CSRs being addressed by a Blind Welfare officer



Figure 4 Water Taxi CSRs in training

Sharon Taylor
Project Director, Water Taxi Service

2016 November 08th