

These questions are extracted from a DPTAC email to the DfT in May 2019. For further information: contact@abcommuters.com

DPTAC questions for Ministers: to be discussed at planned meeting on the 10th June

1. Would the Ministers consider adopting an explicit policy with regard to accessibility that ensures that disabled passengers can always expect to have assistance provided either by a member of station or on-board staff? This would address DPTAC's strong concern around journeys by disabled people that suffer from the toxic combination of unstaffed stations and trains that do not have a second member of on-board staff able to provide assistance. Such a policy would, of course, benefit not just disabled passengers, but also passengers more generally.

2. Could the Ministers confirm what, if any, policies the Department has with regard to the use of DOO by train operators or reductions in on-board staff more generally? Does the Department have access to legal advice on the operation of DOO, and the extent to which operating trains where neither station nor on-board staff are able to provide assistance is lawful under the Equality Act? Would Ministers be prepared, in confidence, to share any such legal advice with DPTAC?

3. We believe that ministers are potentially considering the wider use of Driver Controlled Operation ('DCO'), which entails the provision of a second member of on-board staff solely or largely focussed on customer service activities. Whilst this would address many of DPTAC's concerns, there are still some significant issues from an accessibility perspective. Firstly, how would the Department ensure that train operators maintained adequate roster cover of staff, so that trains did not operate without a second member of staff due to staff sickness, or operational disruption for instance? Secondly, would on-board conductors be able to alight from trains at stations (particularly unstaffed stations) to identify any passengers needing assistance, and would they be able to hold doors open so that boarding assistance could be provided where required? Are there any circumstances in which DCO services would be allowed to operate without a second member of on-board staff?

4. In terms of DCO operations, does the Department have access to legal advice on some of the potential associated with this mode of operation such as DCO operation without a second member of on-board staff in defined circumstances, the use of 'roving' staff, and the

use of accessible taxis? Would Ministers be prepared, in confidence, to share any such legal advice with DPTAC?

5. With regard to DCO, would Ministers consider providing funding for the development of new technology that would facilitate the provision of assistance by on-board staff, such as an 'app' that allowed passengers at unstaffed stations to alert on-board conductors to the need to provide assistance at a forthcoming stop, noting that this would not obviate the need for station and on-board staff as set out in 1 above?

6. What is the initial reaction of the Ministers to the paper on a 'fully accessible railway' submitted by DPTAC to the Williams Review?