

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

8th Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Wednesday 1
December 2021

PE1866: Introduce legislation to improve bus
travel for wheelchair users

Note by the Clerk

Lodged: 20 May 2021

Petitioner Daryl Cooper

**Petition
summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce legislation so that wheelchair users are able to face forwards when travelling on a bus.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1866>

Introduction

1. This is a continued petition that was last considered on [8 September 2021](#).
2. At that meeting, the Committee decided to write to the Scottish Government to seek clarification on whether a requirement to provide forward-facing wheelchair accessible spaces on buses could be addressed via non-legislative means.

Petitioner submission

3. In his written submission of 24 June 2021, the petitioner highlights that the regulations are in place “to enable disabled people to travel safely and in comfort.”
4. He explains being forced to travel in a rear-facing space may not be comfortable for disabled people. Some may feel travel sick when travelling backwards, others may feel uncomfortable facing all the other passengers.

5. The petitioner explains that, as such, he believes that it should not be for bus operators to choose whether wheelchair spaces should be forward- or rear-facing.

Scottish Government submission

6. In its written submission of 17 June 2021, the Scottish Government states that legislation governing bus travel for wheelchair users is reserved to Westminster, specifically the [Public Sector Vehicles Accessibility Regulations \(PSVAR\) 2000](#).
7. The regulations require buses and coaches carrying over twenty-two passengers on local or scheduled routes to incorporate features such as a ramp, wheelchair space and lift to enable disabled people to travel safely and in comfort.
8. The regulations provide for both forward and rearward facing wheelchair spaces, and operators may select the option which best fits the circumstances of the service being provided.
9. The submission highlights that as part of its recently published [National Bus Strategy, "Bus Back Better"](#), the UK Government committed to complete a review of the PSVAR by the end of 2023.
10. The review is expected to be wide-ranging, and consider—
 - the extent to which the Regulations are currently effective in supporting access to respective services;
 - whether they cover the types of journeys that disabled people need to access; and
 - how they could be improved in the future.
11. The Scottish Government states that it will continue to work closely with the UK Government on these matters.
12. In its submission, the Scottish Government also highlights its publication of [Going Further](#), the first national Accessible Travel Framework for Scotland.
13. The Scottish Government states that this framework provides a national vision and outcomes for accessible travel and a high-level action plan to tackle the key issues facing disabled people.
14. Following its meeting of 8 September, the Committee wrote once again to the Scottish Government to ask whether the issues raised in the petition could be addressed via the implementation of provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

15. In its response dated 21 October 2021, the Scottish Government reiterates that the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR) are reserved legislation.
16. It goes on to state that the provisions in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 'operate in such a way as to place the setting of any service standards for local bus services within the competence of local transport authorities (either through a partnership scheme in the case of a Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) or a franchising framework in the case of a local services franchise (LSF))' noting that 'whilst there is no provision for Ministers to intervene directly, we would expect local transport authorities and bus operators to work closely together to ensure the required service standards meet the needs of local communities include people with disabilities.'
17. The Scottish Government also highlights a recent consultation carried out in relation to Part 3 (bus services) of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. Results of this consultation are currently being analysed.

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe

The following submissions are circulated in connection with consideration of the petition at this meeting -

- **PE1866/C: Scottish Government submission of 21 October 2021**

Written submissions received on the petition be viewed on its [webpage](#).