

CAN I GET THERE?

PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPTIONS IN THE 1980's
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Final Report to the Working Party
on Transport for the Disabled in
Greater Manchester



Published for

ADAPT

Action on Disabled Persons' Transport

by

Reprinted
with an
update

PRICE £2.50

**The
Spastics
Society**

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Manchester M3 3BW

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FINAL REPORT TO THE WORKING PARTY ON TRANSPORT
FOR THE DISABLED IN GREATER MANCHESTER

Dedicated to
people with disabilities
in Greater Manchester
and to the memory of
Aron Holzel

Photographs in main report by Diane Olsen

Cover photograph and photographs in "The Preface Part II" by Nigel Smith

*Front Cover photos: South Yorkshire P.T.E. modified Leyland National
Bus in "kneeling" position; and Stockport "Easy Go" Mini Chairman*

FIRST PRINTING JULY 1979

SIXTH PRINTING MAY 1982 (with revisions and a new
preface)

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THE PREFACE, PART II - AN UPDATE, MARCH 1982

As "Can I Get There?" goes into its sixth reprint, I feel it is time to add the following brief update of what has happened since the report was first published in 1979.

"CAN I GET THERE?"

"Can I Get There?" was well received upon publication, and demand has forced us to reprint six times. A large number of the first printing were sent to decision makers, but subsequently the report has sold to institutions, organisations and individuals in Britain, Europe, North America and Australia. We know that it has influenced decision makers, although the squeeze on public expenditure has meant that local public transport is still not accessible to non-ambulant physically impaired people in most of Britain. Nevertheless, there has been progress!

DOOR-TO-DOOR TRANSPORT

Since "Can I Get There?" was written, different types of door-to-door transport services for disabled people using wheelchair accessible vehicles have been set up in Coventry, Islington, Milton Keynes, Reading, Stockport and Wythenshawe. Full details of these schemes, which differ from each other and provides interesting comparisons, can be found in the new A.D.A.P.T. pamphlet, "Getting There", by Graham Lightfoot (March 1982), available from The Spastics Society, 62 Bridge Street, Manchester M3 3BW, price 50 pence (70 pence by post).

Also included in "Getting There" are details of developments in Europe, in particularly the exciting "Telebus" scheme in West Berlin, which was instrumental in the development of the Neoplan Unibus, one of the most exciting developments in the history of vehicles designed to carry disabled people.



A Neoplan Unibus of the Berlin TELEBUS fleet

A.D.A.P.T.

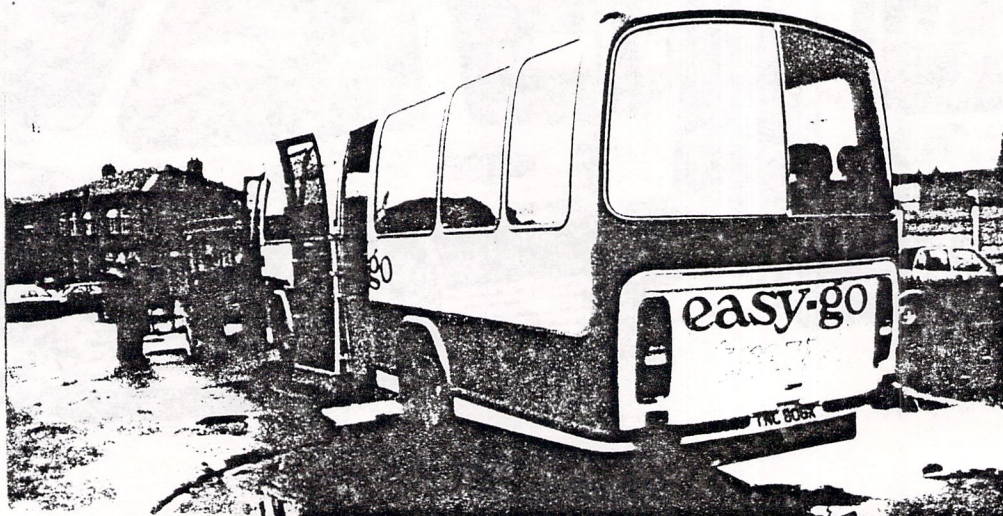
Because of the good reception "Can I Get There?" received at its launch, and because there so obviously needed to be a group devoted to securing public transport for disabled people, The Spastics Society's North West Region decided to continue sponsoring the Working Party, but with an expanded and partially revised membership. It was decided we needed a better name, and one of our members, John Brownhill, thought up the appropriate acronym A.D.A.P.T., "Action on Disabled Persons' Transport". The Spastics Society continues to provide the Secretariat (albeit on an inevitably limited scale!) and some minor funding. A list of the current membership of A.D.A.P.T. will be found as a Supplement at the end of this book, whilst a statement of our aims appears on the back cover. Although we are still Greater Manchester based, we feel that our views and work have a national significance, and this is recognised by various statutory and other bodies. Readers who would like to become involved with A.D.A.P.T. are asked to ring or write to me at the address on the cover.

SERVICE BUSES

Little has happened since the publication of "Can I Get There?" other than that Metrobuses and Titans can now be found in many different bus fleets. South Yorkshire P.T.E. now have 15 "kneeling" Leyland Nationals (see page 35), and the NBC subsidiary, Maidstone and District, is also experimenting with these. South Yorkshire P.T.E. have also made it policy for all their new double deck buses to have "split-steps" (see page 35), but some other authorities are opposed to the split step on the grounds that it is potentially dangerous for blind and partially sighted people. NBC subsidiaries Alder Valley and Ribble are experimenting with a "Bus-Helper" scheme, whereby local people are recruited as volunteer helpers to enable disabled and elderly people to travel on occasional buses on specific routes.

LUXURY COACHES

In the past two years, several private and public operators have equipped luxury coaches with lifts and with the capability of carrying some passengers in their wheelchairs. These vehicles range from Crosville's converted single deck bus, which is primarily signwritten as a disabled persons' coach, and which has an inadequate level of ordinary seating, to brand new vehicles externally indistinguishable from any other luxury coach, except to an expert.

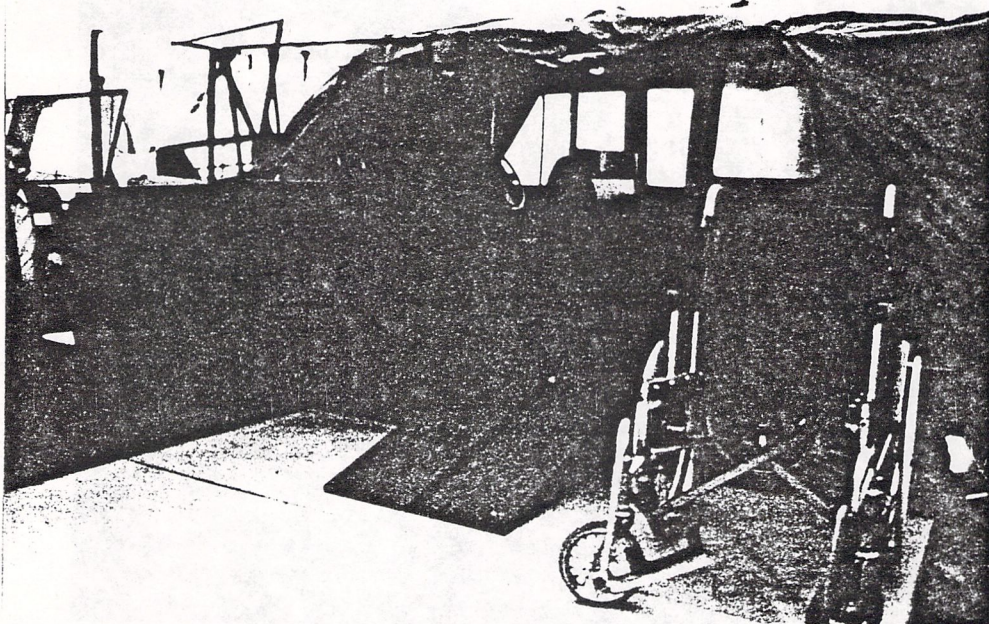


*Plaxton bodied Ford luxury coach from
the Stockport "Easy Go" fleet*

Operators of such vehicles include "Easy Go" (a consortium of Stockport Social Services and Stockport Council for Voluntary Service), whose vehicle is intended for hire, and the Chalfont Line, a London independent specialising in coach holidays for disabled people. Greater Manchester Transport are currently building a vehicle, which will be operated by one of their coaching subsidiaries.

THE CR6 TAXI

An exciting development in the past two years has been the Carbodies CR6 taxi, a Range Rover based vehicle designed to replace the twenty-five year old Austin FX4 "London Taxi". Following a small seminar held by the Department of Transport in October 1980, Carbodies amended their original CR6 design to make the rear compartment wheelchair accessible.



CR6 Taxi mock-up exhibited at Edinburgh Special Vehicles Exhibition, June 1981

Prototypes will be undergoing operational trials in 1982, including one to be placed for three months with Community Transport in Newcastle, and it is hoped that this vehicle will enter production in late 1983 and rapidly become the standard taxi in London, Manchester and many other towns and cities. It will be of tremendous value to disabled people, although their regular access to it will be limited on financial grounds unless and until Britain introduces a Swedish type system of concessionary taxi fares for disabled people.

TEXTUAL CLARITY

The phraseology of the recommendations at the end of the report was very poor in places, and we have therefore taken the opportunity of this reprint to rephrase certain of the recommendations to make them clearer. This has deliberately been done in such a way to ensure the meaning of the recommendations have not been altered.

FEEDBACK FROM READERS

We would be very pleased to receive letters from readers, both commenting upon the report and giving us information to enable us to keep up-to-date with developments.

NIGEL SMITH
HON. SECRETARY OF A.D.A.P.T.
MARCH 1982



Readibus Mercedes 308 Tail-lift equipped Minibus



Mini-van conversion by Victor Poynting of Salisbury

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

ABSTRACT

This chapter gathers together the major points made in the report. Firstly it restates the problem, what is needed to overcome it and how this might be done. Secondly, it proposes a number of general recommendations which it is believed would lead to substantial improvements in transport for the disabled and finally it summarises the conclusions stemming from the investigation or existing provision.

1. THE PROBLEM

The essential defect of transport provision for disabled people, as it now stands, is that it does not fully meet their need for transport. For the majority of disabled people it does not provide them with the degree of personal mobility they require to be able to lead full and independent lives. Even worse, significant numbers of disabled people are left immobile and house-bound because of the inadequacy of transport provision.

Without action disabled people will remain second class citizens. With action a further barrier to genuine equal opportunity is removed.

2. WHAT IS NEEDED?

A comprehensive policy towards transport for the disabled, a policy which recognises that disabled people need transport if they are to be independent and able to exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities. Such a policy must be clear in its purpose and predicted effect. If the recent Government White Paper on Transport¹ is taken to represent future policy, the present government does not seem to have a comprehensive attitude, let alone policy, on transport for the disabled. Metropolitan county councils and non-metropolitan county councils must consider the transport needs and problems of the disabled when they formulate their Transport Policies and Programme, and Public Transport Plans, respectively. There is no such consideration by GMC in its TPP submission for 1977/78.

3. HOW IS THIS TO BE DONE?

The working details of such a comprehensive policy are likely to be complex. Action and developments will be necessary at several levels. For example developing public transport so it consists of two systems, one catering for the less severely disabled and the other for the severely disabled, will provide disabled people with the physical resources they require if they are to achieve mobility, but many disabled people also have limited financial resources. It will be important for the government to make sure that the system of benefits and financial concessions for the disabled works and does not merely result in their confusion.

Consequently, before the details of a comprehensive policy towards transport for the disabled could be finalised a number of alternatives would have to be examined. The alternatives to be considered are such things as: should the special system of transport be local or regional? Should one universal benefit be given to disabled people whether they intend to spend it on fares on 'ordinary' buses or special buses, taxi fares or on running a car?

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve on the present situation it is recommended that:

- A. Central government should confer on public transport operators, clearly defined and stated responsibilities with respect to transport provision for disabled people. +
- B. There should be better co-ordination of "special transport" both within and between local authorities, and between local authorities and voluntary agencies. This would produce widespread initial improvements. In particular local authorities and voluntary agencies should develop a better understanding of ways in which their resources might be better used to satisfy the mobility requirements of disabled people. Voluntary organisations whose vehicles are little used should consider pooling their transport under an umbrella group. Vehicle donors should be encouraged to give to such pools.
- C. Ways of making the 'ordinary' public transport system capable of catering for less severely disabled people must be investigated. Any investigation will need to examine:
 - (i) The routing and scheduling of services.
 - (ii) The training and education of drivers, conductors and passengers as to the requirements of the disabled user.
 - (iii) Methods of adapting vehicles, stock and access facilities.
 - (iv) Ideas for the establishment of certain minimum design standards. All road vehicles and railway stock ought to be capable of catering for all of the less severely disabled. Design standards should be introduced so that vehicles and stock passing them can be used by less severely disabled people.

- D. The idea of creating a special complementary transport system for severely disabled people should be seriously and immediately investigated, preferably with the aim of finding a working solution.

The purpose of such a system should be to remove the handicap severely disabled people face because of their physical impairment.

Some of the vehicles and facilities such a system would require are already operating, run by public and voluntary agencies and indeed many of them are idle for large parts of the day.

- E. Urgent consideration must be given to the design and production of a purpose-built "ambulance/minibus" suitable for severely disabled people; it could be an integrated vehicle design. This would replace the present unsatisfactory variety of vehicles which are built on standard commercial chassis.
- F. The effectiveness of the present financial provision available to disabled people should be reassessed. Present provision often fails by being too small (mobility allowance): not well enough known and of restricted function ("Fares to Work" Scheme): or because of difficulties in using the available vehicles. (Concessionary fare schemes). A further shortcoming regarding concessionary fares is the lack of national uniformity which creates anomalies in qualification standards and conditions of use. These must be rectified, using the more generous schemes as examples.

+ In particular the responsibilities of Social Services Departments should be defined. Defining clearly the responsibilities of transport operators does not seem to be part of the present government's Transport Policy.²

- G. Attention should be given to whatever new financing arrangements any of these recommendations might necessitate. It is essential to avoid the situation which has occurred with the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, various clauses of which have not been fully implemented because of the government's failure to provide the necessary finance.
- H. Central government must promote legislation or directives necessary to the implementation of the above recommendations. The power to enforce the legislation and directives should be available. Too much of the legislation associated with disabled people lacks this power, making it well-meaning but ineffective, e.g. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act and the employment 'quota' scheme.

5. CONCLUSIONS

There are three major conclusions:

- (a) That many disabled people have little personal mobility because transport provision for them is inadequate. Consequently, these people are unable to enjoy a full degree of independence. Able-bodied people have the ability to fulfil their responsibilities and to enjoy a degree of independence because they are able to achieve a much higher level of personal mobility.
- (b) Existing transport provision for the disabled in Greater Manchester (and also it would appear throughout the country) is inadequate because many less severely disabled people are unable to use the services of the major transport operators, and because the transport provision made by other agencies does not cater for all disabled people and does not meet all the transport needs of those for whom it does cater. It is people with the most severe disabilities, who are penalised most.
- (c) The present, inadequate, system of transport provision for the disabled should not be allowed to continue. For disabled people to be able to achieve a degree of personal mobility similar to that achieved by able-bodied people, transport provision for the disabled needs to be radically improved. Improvements to the public transport system of the PTEs and British Rail and to the transport systems of the agencies offering other services to the disabled would not be sufficient, by themselves, to enable disabled people to achieve an adequate degree of personal mobility.

6. SUMMARY

Transport provision for disabled people is inadequate. Better co-operation between organisations already providing transport for disabled people, and more clearly defined and stated responsibilities for all operators (including PTEs and Local Authority Departments such as Social Services) should lead to some improvements in the provision of transport for disabled people.

However, what is needed for major improvements are:

- (a) Better accessibility to the 'ordinary' public transport system as a result of adaptation and design, improved driving standards and changes to schedules.
- (b) The creation of a special transport system.

- (c) A concessionary fares scheme, which would enable those people eligible to benefit from it to choose the most appropriate form of transport.

REFERENCES

1. H.M.S.O. 1977 "Transport Policy" (9).
2. Ibid.

ADAPT - LIST OF MEMBERS AT 10.5.82Chairman

Mr. Nigel Smith Senior Regional Officer, The Spastics Society.

Hon. Secretary

Mr. Graham Lightfoot Author of "Getting There", Co-ordinator,
Milton Keynes Community Transport, 1980-82.

Members

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Mr. K.W. Bateman | Divisional Ambulance Officer, NWRHA. |
| Mrs. Jennifer Blunt | Hon. Secretary, Bury MENCAP. Vice Chairman, Salford HA. |
| Mr. John Brownhill | Group Development Engineer, Greater Manchester Transport. |
| Mr. Bob Buxton | Designer. |
| Mr. Eric Cooper | Regional Officer No. 3, COHSE. |
| Mr. Matthew Doyle | Research Student (joint project with Mechanical Services Ltd.), Department of Transport Technology, Loughborough University of Technology. |
| Mr. Pat Entwistle | Member of TUCC, North West Region (representing disabled passengers). |
| Mr. Malcolm Fisher | Central District Rep., Transport Advisory Committee. |
| Mrs. Joan Golder | Representing District Planning Team, Manchester South Health District. Also member DIG and Multiple Sclerosis Society. |
| Mr. Derek Henshaw | South District Rep., Transport Advisory Committee. Member of Trafford Federation of Clubs for the Disabled. |
| Dr. Frieda Holzel | Physician, formerly at Rodney House Assessment Centre, Manchester. |
| Ms. Sharon Hughes | Secretary of Hyde Lea Management Committee, Bolton & District Spastics Society. Research Student re integrated education, Manchester University Department of Educational Guidance. |
| Ms. June Maelzer | Consumer; ex Open University Tutor. |
| Mrs. Eileen Milnes | Member of Executive Council, The Spastics Society; parent of physically impaired daughter; member of original Working Party. |
| Mr. John Mitchell | Lecturer, academic adviser to original Working Party. |
| Mr. Norman Morlidge | North District Rep., Transport Advisory Committee. Chairman, Bolton Handicapped Care Committee. |

Mr. Kevin O'Neill

Mr. Dave Rogers

Mr. Jan Skorecki

Mr. John Taylor

Ms. Pat McGough

Mr. Bernard Walsh

Ms. Dorothy Whitaker

Mr. George Creighton

Co-ordinator, Wythenshawe Mobile.

PHAB, C/o Greater Manchester Youth Association.

Lecturer, UMIST, Department of Mechanical Engineering.

Co-ordinator, Community Transport.

Research Worker, Community Transport.

Divisional Officer, NUPE, Ambulance Division.

Development Officer, GMCVS.

Director of Social Services, Metropolitan Borough of Stockport
(Representing North West Regional Branch of the Association of Directors of Social Services)

ADAPT

Action on Disabled Persons' Transport

Statement of Aims

1. ADAPT affirms its belief that personal mobility is the right of everyone.
2. ADAPT seeks to make this belief a reality for the estimated 100,000 people with disabilities living in Greater Manchester. It intends that advances in provision which occur in Greater Manchester should be emulated, as relevant, elsewhere in the United Kingdom.
3. To the above ends, ADAPT aims to seek the implementation of the recommendations of "Can I Get There?", the report of the Working Party on Transport for Disabled People in Greater Manchester which was published in July 1979. ADAPT sees these recommendations as having national significance. To this end, ADAPT will lobby at both local and national level.
4. ADAPT aims to keep abreast of relevant events, changes and action taken in Greater Manchester and elsewhere, including countries abroad.
5. ADAPT will liaise with operators, designers and organisations with an interest in the mobility of people with disabilities (including elderly people).
6. ADAPT intends to monitor and evaluate changes to the Mobility Allowance and to concessionary travel arrangements.
7. ADAPT intends to monitor the services provided by public transport operators, local authorities and the Ambulance Service, as they affect disabled people.
8. ADAPT intends to monitor and evaluate transport provided by voluntary and community organisations.
9. ADAPT hopes to publish a series of pamphlets of relevant topics, based on the work incorporated in points 4 - 8 above. ADAPT will update the report "Can I Get There?" when this is necessary.