

Legislative Council
Panel on Welfare Services
MTR's Facilities for People with Disabilities

Purpose

1. In response to the invitation extended to MTR Corporation by the Panel on Welfare Services, this paper summarises the facilities for people with disabilities using the MTR with a view to providing Members with a better understanding of the application of the Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 1997 in the MTR system.

Background

2. With an objective to provide barrier-free access for all, the Corporation has since 1991 had a policy on facilities for people with disabilities. Under this policy, all new lines and properties would provide acceptable and useable standards of accessibility for all passengers. In doing so, the Corporation wished to include not only those with obvious disabilities such as vision, hearing and mobility impairment, but also to cater for the needs of the elderly and parents with children.
3. The Airport Express, Tung Chung Line, Tseung Kwan O Line and Disneyland Resort Line constructed after 1991 have all followed the new policy and associated standards. 15 out of the 53 MTR stations are under this category.
4. The Corporation has also taken on the challenge of upgrading, as far as is reasonably practical, other stations which were constructed before 1990 including 38 stations along the Island Line, Kwun Tong Line and Tsuen Wan Line. The programme commenced in 1992 and is still on-going.

The New Works Design Standards

5. To ensure that the policy is followed consistently in all new MTR projects, comprehensive design standards are established with reference to the Building Department's Design Manual Barrier Free Access 1997 as well as international practices for railways to ensure adequate and co-ordinated accessibility provisions for MTR stations and trains.

6. In addition to the obligatory requirements stated in the Design Manual: Barrier Free Access 1997, the Corporation has been committed to making a number of enhanced provisions for the disabled as follows:

In stations

- Public address & electronic information displays on train services and other passenger information
- Colour contrasting tactile paths throughout public areas
- Fare & remaining value reading facility at exit gates
- Portable ramp
- Help line (intercom) with braille and induction loop
- Braille on Add Value Machines
- Tactile warning strips in front of entrances, escalators and passenger lifts
- Audible signal at escalators
- Contrasting colours at ends of handrails
- High visibility stripes on glass panels
- Cane detectable rails or barriers at obstructions and projections
- Designated drop-off for the disabled in some stations

In trains

- Wheelchair parking space in each car
 - Contrasting colour grab rails and hand-holds
 - Public address and electronic information displays on train stops and emergency information
 - Flashing route map
7. The overall objective is to enable all our passengers with special needs to be able to move around our system more easily. The key features, which we provide in new stations and trains are summarised in **Annex I**.

Retrofit Programme at MTR Stations built before early 90s

8. Whilst the Corporation wishes to be able to provide all the accessibility features in the Urban Line stations in the same way which we now do for new stations, the fact remains that this is extremely difficult, and in some cases, impossible, for all stations built before 1990, on the following grounds:
- Inadequate space and/or available land to accommodate lifts and ramps at street level
 - Inadequate space or station configuration which makes adding internal lifts impossible
 - Works has to be carried out predominantly during Non-Traffic Hours which results in substantially increased cost or extended implementation programme
9. The Corporation has nevertheless since 1992 committed to improving its existing station facilities with a retrofit programme in order to bring about a better travelling environment for people with disabilities. The programme is based upon priority established based on need and usage. Over HK\$400 million has

been spent in retrofitting new station facilities. A further \$100 million is being committed for the next 5 years. Some of the key facilities already put in place under the retrofit programme are summarised in **Annex II**.

Facilities

10. Other than the hardware, MTR Corporation also provides information cards in all stations to facilitate communication between station staff and the hearing/speech impaired.
11. A booklet entitled “Caring for Our Customers” is available to provide information on all the facilities for people with disabilities and the designated access route at each station. The booklet is distributed to appropriate organizations and can be obtained from MTR stations.
12. Information relating to the facilities for people with disabilities can also be found in the MTR webpage <http://www.mtr.com.hk/eng/train/disabled.html>.

Conclusion

13. We are pleased that our commitment in providing barrier free access in the past 15 years has been recognised by the MTR being chosen as the “Most Barrier-free Public Transport Facilities and Services” and “Public Transport Operator Most Committed to Improving facilities and Services for the Disabled” in an election organized by the Hong Kong PHAB Association sponsored by the Health and Welfare Bureau in 2001. We regard these awards as an endorsement of the direction that we have taken. The Corporation remains committed to deploying a high level of resources in carrying out the retrofit programme and to improve accessibility of the MTR system.

14. Other than following the established policies and standards, we are fully aware that targets do not stay still in an ever progressing city like Hong Kong. This is why we have held half yearly consultation meetings with the special interest groups since 1994, sharing with them regarding developments, concerns and practicalities on both sides. New provisions which are being implemented such as tactile station layout maps, audible signal for escalators, exit ticket gates that read out remaining value on Octopus cards, etc. are results of the close liaison with the special interest groups.

MTR Corporation

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Key Provisions for the Disabled under the New Works Design Standards

1. Unassisted access throughout the station for mobility impaired passengers by means of ramps at entrances and the access by means of a lift from the street to the concourse area and a second lift within the paid area between the concourse and the platform.



2. Lifts are provided with tactile/ braille signs, intercoms, illuminated visual indicators and audible signals/ announcement for floor stops.



3. A “Tactile Path” which provides a cane and foot detectable route from a designated drop-off point or points at street level to an entrance or entrances, through the concourse to the platform and onto the train. The tactile Path is made more visually discernible by means of a required level of luminance contrast.

4. All escalators, stairs, ramps and lifts are provided with tactile warning strips at top and bottom to assist those who do not need to rely upon the Tactile Path.



5. Audible signals at the escalator landing leading out of the platform.

6. Obstructions, projections and barriers are provided with warning patterns or cane detection rails where these might present a hazard to the partially sighted.



7. Stairs and ramps are provided with continuous handrails, which have hi-visibility ends and are co-ordinated with tactile warning strips.
8. Floor finishes are tested with high performance of slip resistance.
9. Enhanced communication by means of induction loops and communication cards for hearing-impaired passengers.
10. Clear, logical, legible and internationally recognisable signage with braille enhancement at key passenger facilities.

11. Individual help provisions at our Customer Service Centre where our staff can provide direct assistance. The Tactile Path leads to this point and generally a wide ticket gate is located here, which is suitable for use by wheelchair users.



12. “Helpline” intercom panels with induction loop are provided at strategic locations that are equipped for use by all passengers.



13. Adequate spatial provision throughout the station public areas for wheelchair maneuvering.
14. Spaces adequate for wheelchair parking are provided in each train.

15. All grab-rails and hand-holds in trains are in contrasting colour.



16. Signage, passenger information displays, flashing route maps and audible announcements are provided on train services.

Key Facilities already completed under the Retrofit Programme in Stations built before early 90s

1. Unassisted access through the station by either ramp, lifts, or stairlift have been achieved in 25 stations
2. Passenger lift between concourse and platform has been installed in 35 stations.
3. Stairlifts installed in Tin Hau Station and Shek Kip Mei Station.
4. Permanent ceramic tactile guide paths and warning strips provided in all stations.
5. Wide gates have been installed in all stations.
6. Audible device for exit gates along the designated routes which read out fare deducted and remaining value on Octopus cards installed in all stations.



7. Passenger information display systems at entrances, concourses and platforms have been installed in all stations.



8. Induction loops installed at all Customer Service Centres.



9. Braille plate on add value machines installed for all stations.



10. Tactile station layout map installed in 6 stations and will progressively be provided at all stations.



11. Wheelchair space provided in each car of the trains.



12. Flashing system map/dynamic route map installed on all trains.



13. Info panels installed on all trains.



14. Inter-car barriers between train carriages are provided.



15. Platform portable wheelchair ramp introduced to all stations.

