



# Universal Design in NZ Transport: From Guidance to Enforceable Standards



# Context and Imperative for Action



# Why Accessibility in Transport Matters Now

## **Growing Accessibility Needs**

An ageing, mobile population demands transport systems that ensure independence, dignity, and safety for all users.

## **Design Impacts Journey Quality**

Small design elements like kerb heights, ramps, tactile surfaces, and signage critically affect journey success or failure.

## **System Failures Affect Many**

Inconsistent accessibility infrastructure causes journey breakdowns for disabled people, older adults, parents with prams, and temporary injuries.

## **Need for Enforceable Standards**

Embedding accessibility as a mandatory, enforceable requirement ensures equitable transport access across all projects and regions.



# People, Journeys, and System Trust

## **Journey Continuity**

Transport journeys are continuous sequences involving navigation through diverse public spaces and interfaces.

## **Universal Design Benefits**

Universal design ensures predictability and legibility, benefiting a wide range of users including those with disabilities and caregivers.

## **Impact of Consistency**

Consistent design across the network builds user confidence and trust, encouraging public transport use and social inclusion.

## **System-Level Accessibility**

Embedding accessibility system-wide prevents costly retrofits and supports mode shift, social inclusion, and economic participation.



# **CPAG and PTAG: Lived Experience in Practice**



# Origins and Evolution of CPAG and PTAG

## **CPAG Origins and Evolution**

CPAG began as an accessibility advisory group during the ARTHA period and evolved into a mature infrastructure advisory forum.

## **PTAG Focus and Role**

PTAG complements CPAG by focusing on customer experience and operational accessibility in public transport services.

## **Dual Structure Benefits**

The CPAG and PTAG dual structure addresses both physical infrastructure and service delivery accessibility challenges.

## **Strategic Influence and Integration**

The groups have matured to integrate lived experiences into decision-making from concept to operational readiness.



# Membership, Cadence, and Capability Building

## **Diverse and Credible Membership**

CPAG includes representatives from various disability organisations and experienced practitioners to ensure grounded and informed advice.

## **Regular Meeting Cadence**

CPAG meets monthly for scheduled sessions, with additional meetings during critical project decision points to maintain momentum.

## **Capability Building Initiatives**

Auckland Transport develops internal guidance, standards, and staff skills to extend CPAG's impact beyond direct project reviews.

## **Systemic Organizational Influence**

CPAG's influence shapes organisational practices by embedding knowledge into processes, skills, and standards for lasting change.



# Project Experience and Practical Impact



# High-Profile Programmes and Early Engagement

## **Complex High-Profile Programmes**

CPAG advises on complex, high-visibility programmes with long timelines and multiple interfaces.

## **Value of Early Engagement**

Early involvement of lived-experience advisors helps identify challenges before detailed design or construction.

## **Accessibility as Integral Design Input**

Incorporating accessibility alongside safety, cost, and constructability reduces costly redesigns and improves outcomes.

## **Impact of Timing on Accessibility Advice**

Accessibility advice is most effective when it shapes decisions early, not as a reactive compliance check.



# Examples Where Advice Changed the Trajectory

- **City Rail Link Improvements**
  - CPAG identified costly issues early in City Rail Link station mock-ups, leading to improved user-focused design within constraints.
- **Eastern Busway Accessibility Audit**
  - CPAG recommended an independent accessibility audit on Eastern Busway, revealing compliance issues and improving project focus.
- **Clarifying Accessibility Expectations**
  - Independent review aligned expectations on accessibility features like integrated parent-child public toilets, enhancing lived experience.



# Pre-Opening Checks and Continuous Improvement

## **Pre-Opening Accessibility Audits**

Audits identify gaps in design and construction before network opening, ensuring accessibility issues are resolved early.

## **Continuous Improvement Mindset**

Accessibility is seen as an ongoing responsibility, with projects adapting over time based on real user experiences.

## **Respecting User Experience**

Testing outcomes against lived experience prevents costly retrofits and demonstrates respect for disabled users.



# Delivery Models and Systemic Risk



# Alliance Delivery and Decision-Making Complexity

## **Complex Alliance Models**

Alliance delivery models involve multiple partners with distributed responsibilities creating complex decision-making layers.

## **Accessibility Risks Accumulation**

Incremental decisions across phases can cause accumulated accessibility risks impacting design consistency.

## **Need for Shared Baseline**

A transport-specific baseline is essential to unify expectations and prevent varied interpretations of accessibility standards.

## **Challenges in Universal Design**

Without clear shared guidance, achieving consistent universal design solutions is difficult despite strong intent.



# Why National Standards Are the Missing Piece



# From Guidance to Enforceable Consistency

## **Limitations of Guidance**

Guidance relies on persuasion and interpretation, leading to inconsistent accessibility outcomes across regions and projects.

## **Need for Enforceable Standards**

A national, transport-specific accessibility standard would provide legal certainty and a clear baseline for all delivery partners.

## **Complementing Advisory Forums**

Standards would support advisory groups by focusing efforts on exceeding minimum requirements instead of basic enforcement.

## **Scaling Good Practice**

Enforceable standards enable consistent, system-wide accessibility outcomes, especially for smaller projects with limited advisory input.



# What a Transport Accessibility Baseline Should Enable

## **Practical and Measurable Standards**

The baseline should be practical and measurable, focusing on the entire journey to ensure accessibility at every stage.

## **Defined Physical Interfaces**

Standards must specify kerb heights, platform tolerances, gradients, widths, and turning spaces for seamless navigation.

## **Supportive Sensory Features**

Incorporate tactile, visual, acoustic cues, and effective lighting to aid navigation and information access.

## **Co-design and Innovation**

Embed co-design principles to integrate lived experiences and enable innovation beyond minimum accessibility requirements.



# Conclusion and Call for Action



# Embedding Universal Design Through Standards

## **Importance of National Standards**

A national, transport-specific accessibility standard is essential for consistent and scalable universal design implementation.

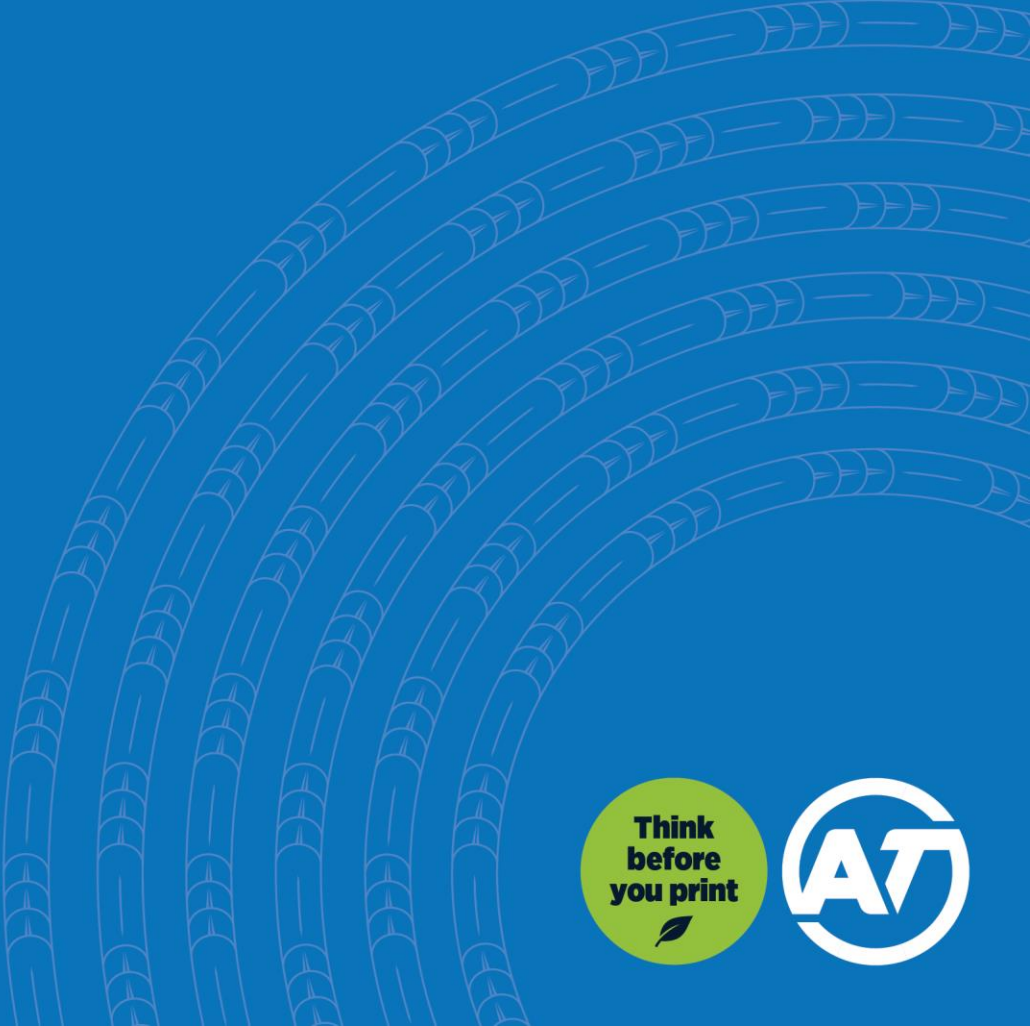
## **Benefits of Standards Anchoring**

Standards enable organizations to design once and deliver universally, reducing costly late fixes and inconsistencies.

## **Community Engagement Value**

Lived-experience engagement ensures accessibility becomes a fundamental, trusted part of transport infrastructure quality.





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