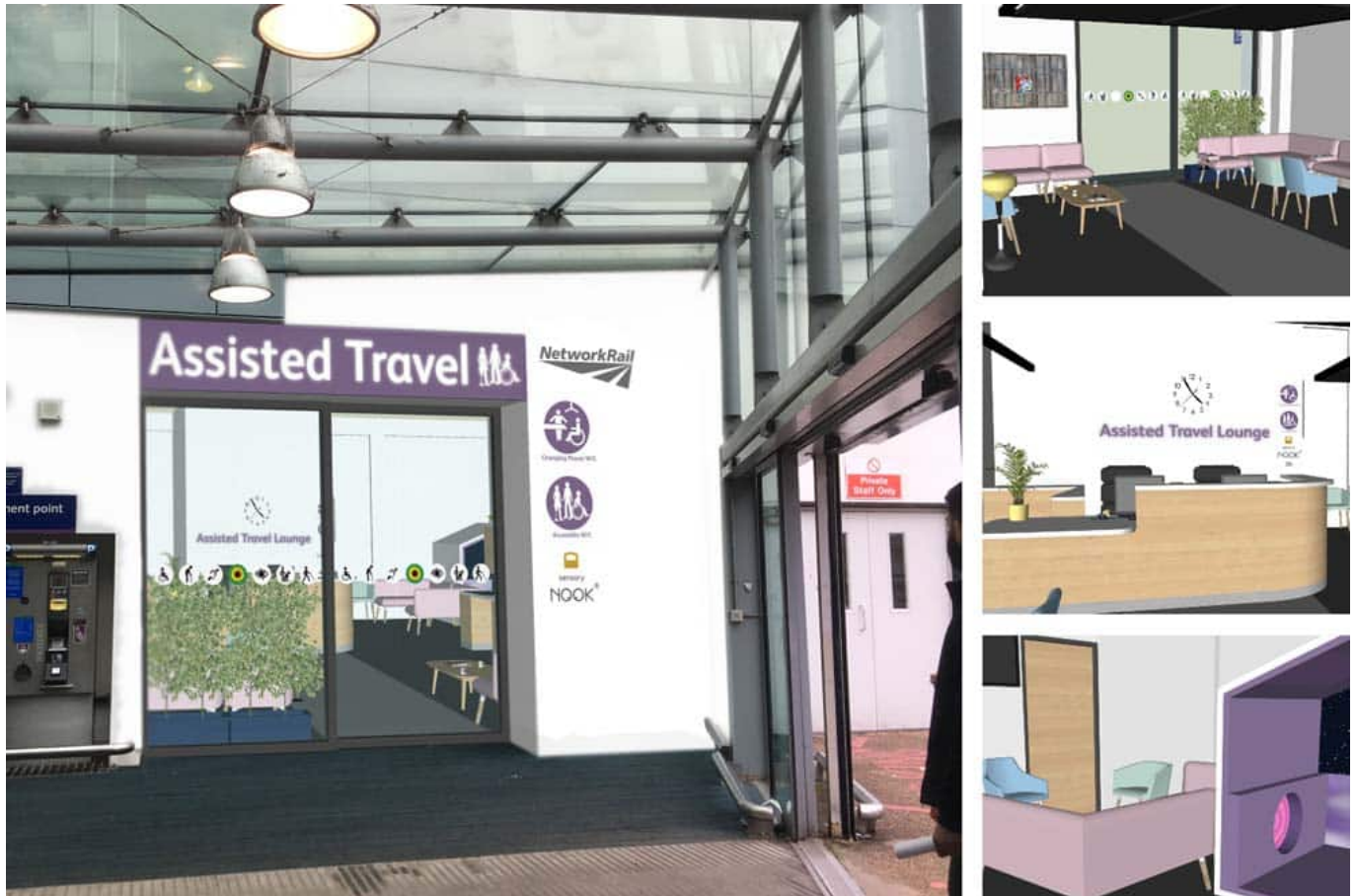


# Design for new Assisted Travel Lounge in Manchester Piccadilly revealed

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Network Rail has revealed plans for a new Assisted Travel Lounge for Manchester Piccadilly station.

The area is to be used to provide assistance for those who require it getting on and off trains.

The plans see Network Rail spending £800,000 to completely transform a disused room near platform one. It is being designed to become a welcoming space for those with additional mobility or sensory needs, and will have a dedicated team on standby to assist.

The room will have:

- Accessible seating and seven wheelchair bays
- An accredited Changing Places toilet facility
- A sensory space for people who find stations overwhelming
- A staffed welcome desk
- A water bowl for service dogs

Work on the new lounge will start in June and is expected to be complete by the autumn.

The room is being designed with the guidance of Manchester Piccadilly's disability task and finish group. The group includes disabled people, their carers and advocates.

Maisie Hogan, Network Rail sponsor for the project, said: "It's a priority for Network Rail to provide first-class service to our customers. Travelling through a busy railway station can be daunting for those with additional needs, but the new Assisted Travel Lounge will provide a friendly space for people to wait and get the help they need from a dedicated team. It will transform the way passengers access rail travel at Manchester Piccadilly."

Stephen Brookes MBE, rail policy adviser at Disability Rights UK, said: "We welcome the provision of a new Assisted Travel Lounge at Manchester Piccadilly station. Major rail stations are intimidating places for many rail passengers and for those with a range of disabilities the experience can even put some of us 'off' using rail travel, so the fact that the design and location of this important facility involved the views and requirements of a group of disabled people is a significant move towards future cooperation on such projects across the rail network."

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, said: "It's encouraging to see a key station in central Manchester deliver a facility that will benefit many passengers from within and outside of the region."

"TfGM have been working in partnership with Network Rail and local train operators for a number of years on various accessibility and inclusivity initiatives and, although we are pleased to see this valuable facility being installed in Manchester Piccadilly, there is still a long way to go to ensure that all stations across our city-region are accessible to all."

Assisted travel is offered to all passengers who need help getting between trains and the station concourse, with 22,300 using the service at Manchester Piccadilly last year. Pre-pandemic, the number was about 44,500.

For more information on how to book assisted travel, [click here](#).

Major train operators which serve Manchester Piccadilly have said that they welcome news of the Assisted Travel Lounge for their passengers.

Brandon Peat, accessibility and inclusion manager for Avanti West Coast, said: "We want everyone to use the railway and we welcome Network Rail's work to provide a space that meets the needs of people who require assistance."

"This investment in a new Assisted Travel Lounge highlights the industry's commitment to making rail travel accessible and inclusive for all and this lounge will help improve the overall journey experience for disabled customers when travelling to and from Manchester."

Kathryn O'Brien, customer experience director for TransPennine Express said: "The introduction of a brand new Assisted Travel Lounge is excellent news for rail customers, and will make a real difference in making

Manchester Piccadilly more inclusive for all.”

Chris Jackson, regional director for Northern, said: “The installation of a dedicated Assisted Travel Lounge at Manchester Piccadilly is fantastic news and will be another positive enhancement for the station.

“Great progress has been made to make the railway as inclusive and welcoming as possible and I’m sure our customers will welcome the new facilities on offer.”

John Robson, CrossCountry regional director North West and West Midlands, said: “CrossCountry welcomes this new facility which will ensure we can continue to provide the best possible service to those of our customers who need it most. A safe place to wait and qualified staff to hand makes the difference to a customer’s journey. It can allay fears and promote confidence when travelling.”