

Transport for London asks customers to help shape the future of step-free access

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Transport for London (TfL) has this week launched a public consultation to shape future step-free access priorities and improvements on the London Underground network, the first of its kind in 15 years.

The consultation, which runs until 10 February 2022, has been designed to help TfL identify which aspects of making London Underground stations more accessible it should prioritise, to bring the most far-reaching and beneficial impacts and help more Londoners use the public transport network independently.

Over half (51 per cent) of the TfL network – spanning Tube, DLR, London Overground, London Trams and TfL Rail services – is now step-free. Since 2016, 21 Tube stations have been made step free as part of the London Underground accessibility programme, the Crossrail project and the Northern Line Extension. The recent completion of work at Osterley Tube station brings the total number of step-free stations on the Tube to 89 – close to 33 per cent of the whole Tube network. Information from the consultation responses will be used to shape and inform TfL's future approach for step-free Tube stations, should the Government provide funding for future programmes.

As part of the consultation, respondents will be asked whether they would prefer future funding to focus on

upgrading a single, complex central London station, or be divided between smaller or medium sized stations located outside central London. They will also be asked whether they would prefer for future funding to be used to improve clusters of accessible stations to create a close group of accessible stations or upgrade areas with limited accessibility, or a combination of both.

TfL welcomes the views of everyone across London who would benefit from a more accessible public transport network, including older people, disabled people, parents, carers, and people with long or short term medical conditions, as well as those travelling with bulky luggage or equipment for work. Borough councils will also be asked for their feedback during the consultation process.

Once the consultation closes, TfL will analyse all responses received and publish findings in the spring of 2022. Findings from this consultation will be analysed alongside TfL's own passenger data, transport modelling and engineering feasibility to help deliver a better and fairer future London Underground step-free station programme, should vital additional funding be made available. With funding likely to be limited going forward it is essential that TfL prioritises effectively, and the consultation results will help enable this.

Esther Sharples, Director of Asset Performance and Capital Delivery, said: "Making independent, spontaneous travel easier for Londoners is one of TfL's top priorities. By launching this important public consultation, we will hear directly from Londoners about how we could best make Tube stations more accessible through the provision of step-free access when more funding is available. This will enable us to prioritise delivering the most impactful changes to make London's public transport more equitable and inclusive, should we receive funding from Government.

"We encourage you to share this consultation with everybody who would benefit from it and look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible."

Heidi Alexander, Deputy Mayor for Transport said: "Making the public transport network accessible for all is a top priority, and this consultation will play a vital part in TfL's future plans for improvements to stations. We want everyone to be able to travel around the capital easily, whether they have a disability, are elderly or carrying heavy equipment, and I urge people to take part in this consultation and share their views.

"It is absolutely vital that the Government provide TfL with adequate support in the forthcoming funding settlement to allow us to move forward with these hugely important plans for more accessible stations."

Katie Pennick, Transport for All's Campaigns Lead, said: "Step-free access is one of the biggest challenges facing the Tube network. While in recent years there have been dramatic improvements, with key stations such as Bond Street and Finsbury Park opening up to disabled passengers, there is still a long way to go. Currently 89 out of the 272 Tube stations have step-free access from at least street level to platform. Many disabled Londoners live, work, or socialise in areas that aren't served by an accessible station, meaning journey times can often be four times longer¹ than those of non-disabled people.

"We really welcome TfL's approach to ensuring the views, experiences and priorities of disabled people are factored in to the strategy for future step-free improvements. We have long campaigned for disabled people to have a say in the design and delivery of schemes that impact us. We encourage all disabled

people – across all the impairment groups – to share their views as part of this consultation, to ensure the data is as representative and reflective as it can be.”

Making travel more accessible and inclusive for Londoners is one of TfL’s top priorities. The most recent Tube stations to become step-free are Osterley (October 2021), Battersea Power Station and Nine Elms (September 2021 – both as part of the Northern Line extension), Wimbledon Park (August 2021), Ickenham (June 2021), Debden (April 2021) and Amersham (February 2021). In addition, Ealing Broadway was made step-free in May 2021 in preparation for the Elizabeth line, and Whitechapel became step-free when the original station entrance on Whitechapel Road re-opened in August 2021. Once open, the entire Elizabeth line will be step-free, providing a new and accessible route for Londoners.

Work is continuing on Harrow-on-the-Hill and Sudbury Hill stations in West London, which are scheduled to go step-free later this year, and discussions have re-started with TfL’s supply chain on the paused step-free improvements at Burnt Oak, Hanger Lane and Northolt. Subject to these discussions, construction work at these stations could begin by next spring, allowing them to be completed in the coming years. In 2022, TfL will also complete step-free access at Knightsbridge as part of a third-party development scheme as well as at Moorgate, which is already step-free to the Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines via the recently opened station entrance.

TfL is also progressing step-free access work that will make Bank (Northern line only) and Paddington (Bakerloo line only) partially step-free in 2022.

TfL works with a number of groups representing older and disabled people. These conversations inform TfL’s projects, programmes and policies. TfL’s Independent Disability Advisory Group – a panel of 10 members, appointed for their lived experience of disability, as well as their extensive expertise and knowledge of the key issues and barriers to accessing public transport – continue to provide strategic and practical recommendations based on inclusive best practice.

The TfL Go app is regularly updated to show not only fully step-free stations but also where accessible journeys can be made due to particular platforms within stations being step-free for entry and exit as well as to interchange between lines. It was recently updated to show journeys with the ‘least walking’.

Londoners can share their views using the online consultation platform <https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/tube-step-free-access> or participate at in-person sessions held across London.

¹ According to research by Muscular Dystrophy UK