Dear (Your Local Member of Parliament)

I am writing to you concerning The Equality Watchdog taking action against the Department of Transport and the Rail Regulator. Many people and organisations have voiced concern that public transport is becoming increasingly more inaccessible to disabled people and those requiring passenger assistance to travel.

Sections 20 and 21 of the Equality Act 2010 require all transport providers to “take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid putting disabled people at a substantial disadvantage”. Accessible Rail Transport Guidance (2015) by Gov.uk state elaborates that rail providers must ensure that they do not discriminate against disabled people. While Network Rail and the Department of Transport are raising the prices of train tickets, the rail networks are becoming less accessible to those who need it for essential journeys.

In many cases, disabled travellers are experiencing no support being provided at train stations or on trains, even when booking passenger assistance, leaving numerous stranded and unable to complete their journeys. Many have had to spend money on a taxi to the next station (which has not been reimbursed) hoping that there will be assistance, and in some cases, forgo a trip because of inaccessibility.

In 2019, disabled adults in England made 26% fewer trips than those without a disability. 93% supported the statement “there should be special provision made on public transport to accommodate disabled people”. However, only 71% supported the statement “there should be more accessible public transport for those with illnesses or conditions that find public transport more difficult, even if that raises fares” (Transport: Disability and Accessibility Statistics, England 2019).

Research conducted by the A2BForAll campaign in 2012 found that 66% have felt discriminated against by either the staff or passengers when using public transport – in half of these cases it was by both the staff and passengers. This is not a one-off occurrence. All passengers can feel ill-treated at times, for most it is a regular circumstance, with 45% of all disabled passengers reporting experiencing discrimination regularly. This is unacceptable.

In every business around the country, we are required by law to ensure that there is reasonable accessibility for all. Why is the rail network not currently complying with this law? Please could the Department for Transport and Rail Regulator explain having:

1. no working lifts in many stations
2. no ramps provided or kept in acceptable condition for use
3. not enough available station staff to support the public, often not turning up at all and with very limited training in supporting disabled passengers and appropriate interactions, causing many instances of discrimination and mistreatment.

Can the Department for Transport and Rail Regulator explain how this is “reasonable steps to ensure that they do not discriminate against disabled people”? This is simply not providing the public transport that the rail network is designed for.

We demand that the Department of Transport and the Rail Regulator be held accountable to those who use their networks, and we insist that they provide a service fit for purpose and designed for all.

Kind regards

(Sign Name Here)

Local Constituent