



Department
for Transport

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Dear Chief Executives of the Bus and Coach Trade Bodies, the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers, and the Rail Delivery Group,

On 6 July, I wrote to the bus and coach trade bodies regarding the application of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (“the Regulations”) to home-to-school (HTS) and rail replacement (RR) coach services. That letter can be viewed [here](#).

Disabled people have waited too long to be able to travel on services subject to the Regulations as easily as non-disabled passengers. Progress has been made, but we must maintain it. I recognise the concerns of operators in terms of both the challenge of investing in their fleets in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the efficacy of the Regulations in supporting safe access to buses and coaches for disabled people pending the government’s planned review of the Regulations by the end of 2023. This letter explains our plan to bridge the gap between the current HTS and RR exemptions ending, and any post review changes to the Regulations coming into force.

The most recent HTS exemptions expire on the 31 March 2022. I recognise that a lack of clarity on what will follow them could prevent local authorities, schools and colleges from making plans for the remainder of the current academic year. Therefore, we will extend those exemptions to 31 July 2022 and will contact affected operators directly.

After the RR and HTS exemptions expire at the end of June and July 2022 respectively, vehicles subject to the Regulations but unable to comply with them must be covered by a further exemption to operate relevant services or adapted to be compliant. We intend to offer further

qualified medium-term exemptions after these dates and we will write to operators in sufficient time, specifying the terms on which medium-term exemptions will be issued, to allow for applications to be submitted and processed.

I have asked my officials to explore medium-term exemptions which:

- are tailored by size of fleet, recognising that larger operators are more likely to be able to increase compliance faster than smaller ones; and
- offer a full exemption to all non-compliant vehicles for a further 6 months but beyond that require operators to meet increasing levels of compliance over the lifetime of the exemption.

These medium-term exemptions will ensure that essential HTS and RR services can continue operating, helping passengers to make the journeys important to them whilst operators step up their efforts to comply with existing legal obligations.

Validity of existing exemptions.

Existing exemptions will remain valid until the date on the exemption certificate, or any authorisation from the Department that extend them, or until they are withdrawn. Where an HTS operator has an exemption ending on 31 December 2021 they may apply for closed door exemptions expiring on the 31 July 2022, by emailing HometoSchoolExemptions@dft.gov.uk.

I know that the bus and coach industry understand the importance of ensuring everyone can travel together on the service of their choosing, regardless of any impairment, if they wish to. I look forward to your continued support as we develop and implement these exemptions.

I have copied this letter to the Department for Education, Education Scotland, and the Department for Education and Skills, Local Authority Chief Executives and the Managing Directors Train Operating Companies.

*Yours,
Charlotte*

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON