

# New Bus for London AMTS Report 2012



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# Executive summary

## **Boarding and alighting**

Most assessors were able to board and alight without any difficulties. There was one instance where the assessor experienced an issue with the ramp; it was deployed correctly, however it did not retract after use. The rear platform was seen to improve accessibility as it enabled other passengers to exit at the rear whilst the ramp was being used.

## **Wheelchair space**

The wheelchair space was available most of the time, there were 4 occasions when the space was initially blocked, however they were able to get into the space after it was made available. The wheelchair space was felt to be suitable for their wheelchair, although it could be improved if there was space for a buggy as well. The handrails in the wheelchair area were positioned suitably, although the upright post could be positioned differently to allow more space.

## **Staff interaction**

There was a conductor present on all buses and when the assessor was able to speak to a conductor they were rated as 'Excellent' or 'Good' for helpfulness, politeness and patience. The conductor was seen to play a positive role in making the bus accessible by assisting assessors with the ramp and ensuring they were able to alight at the required stop.

## **Information**

Assessors reported that the location of the iBus display at the rear of the bus was an improvement compared to other buses.

# Recommendations

Assessors were asked what improvements would they like to see:

*"The bell was set to my left and although this may not suit everyone it means that other passengers are unlikely to press it when the wheelchair space is being used."*



## Positioning of the bell

*"The stop request button is quite easy to hit while I am manoeuvring in the required space. It could be redesigned."*

*"A buzzer on both sides so that if a person has use of one hand only they would not have a problem. (The buzzer was behind me)."*

## Positioning glass panels



## Size of the space



*"Although the space was empty when I boarded I did find the glass panels inside the middle door space restrictive. You need space to come in and then reverse into the wheelchair space. What should be one smooth single movement became an awkward three point manoeuvre."*

*"If there was more space in front of it then that would help."*

*"The upright post could be removed to add space that could be shared with a buggy."*

# Overall experiences

Overall experiences identified three areas which were seen as a positive experience to the assessors journey:

## Conductor

*"The conductor was unceasingly friendly to other passengers and promoted use of the back door which was helpful to me when getting off the bus."*

*"The conductor came out of the bus to make sure all was clear when alighting via the ramp."*

## iBus display

*"The big improvement for me was having an iBus display positioned at the rear of the bus for rear facing passengers."*

*"It is helpful to have an iBus display at the back of the bus visible to someone in the wheelchair space. It is slightly obscured by a post but is still legible."*

## Rear access

*"Use of the back door seems a helpful way for other passengers to exit quickly when the ramp is being used and to move out of the way of a wheelchair user. People do not seem used to it and the majority only respond to direction from the conductor."*

*"The open rear exit lessens problems for passengers waiting to alight while the ramp is being deployed."*

*"The main benefit of the open rear platform is that in the event of mechanical failures or disruptions to the service, passengers can just up and leave without consulting the driver."*

# Ease of boarding and alighting

The majority of assessors had no difficulties when boarding and alighting.

All buses stopped close to the kerb and most stopped close to the bus stop (28 out of 30 instances of boarding and alighting). This is consistent with the main AMTS survey, 99% in Q4 1112 for wheelchair users. In the instances where the bus did not stop close to the stop; one was due to the stop being blocked by another bus (Angel Station) and one was because the stop was a temporary stop and the bus stopped a distance away from it (Denmark Street).

All buses were lowered without the assessor requesting for it to be lowered.

**An assessor commented:**  
*"I got on the first bus easily."*

**An assessor commented:**  
*"I did not have any difficulties when alighting."*

# Ease of using the ramp

The majority of assessors found the ramp easy to use (29 out of 30 instances) and the ramp was positioned on the pavement with a gentle/moderate incline (28 out 30 instances). On the AMTS survey the results in Q4 1112 were 89% and 78% respectively.

*"The new bus is much better as the longer ramp makes it easier. The ramp is also wider and this would be alright for battery or wider wheelchairs."*

There was one instance where an assessor was able to board using the ramp, however after boarding the ramp would not retract. The assessor made the comment below:

*"On boarding the ramp was successfully deployed and I was able to board and get into place. When the driver retracted the ramp it became stuck, retracting only half way. It soon became clear that the bus was not going anywhere until the ramp was fully retracted. Other passengers began to leave the bus at the open rear door. A formal announcement came from the conductor 'this bus is no longer in service'. The ramp did go back but remained disabled and disabled the bus. In the meantime I had to stay on the bus as I could not leave without a working ramp. During all this I was assured and kept updated by the conductor and the driver. I was told an engineer from Hackney was on their way. The bus announcement repeated the same line 'fire system pressure okay' again and again. Eventually and before the engineer arrived, the driver deployed the ramp out manually with help from a tool. The doors were opened and despite the ramp not being fully deployed I was able to use it and leave the bus."*

# Wheelchair space – initially blocked and handrails

There were 4 instances when the wheelchair space was initially blocked.

**1 instance of an unfolded buggy** – The conductor approached the passenger and told them that the space was required. The passenger folded up the buggy and put it in the luggage space and held their baby

**1 instance of luggage** - Passengers moved out of the space without being asked to move

**1 instance other passengers** – The conductor was about to ask the passengers to move, however they moved out of the space quickly before the conductor had to ask

**1 instance of a zimmerframe** – The assessor was able to manoeuvre around the zimmerframe, therefore it was not necessary for it to be moved

Most assessors found that the handrails in the wheelchair space were suitably positioned (14 out of 15).

**An assessor made the below comment:**

*"The central handrail was set far back enough to enable an easy manoeuvre into the space."*

**An assessor made the below comment:**

*"One upright post reduced the space available."*



# Wheelchair space – manoeuvring

The wheelchair space was rated as 'Easy' or 'Fairly easy' to get in to; there were only 3 instances where it was rated as 'Neither easy or difficult'.

All assessors found that the wheelchair space was a suitable size for their wheelchair, below are a selection of their comments:

*"I could fit my wheelchair in it without any trouble although a buggy could not be fitted in as well."*

*"The space was big enough for my large electric wheelchair."*

*"The size was more than adequate for my wheelchair."*

*"The size was adequate and I did not feel cramped when inside."*

*"I had difficulty in turning because of the hand rail and posts. The seats next to it were too close so other passenger's feet were protruding."*

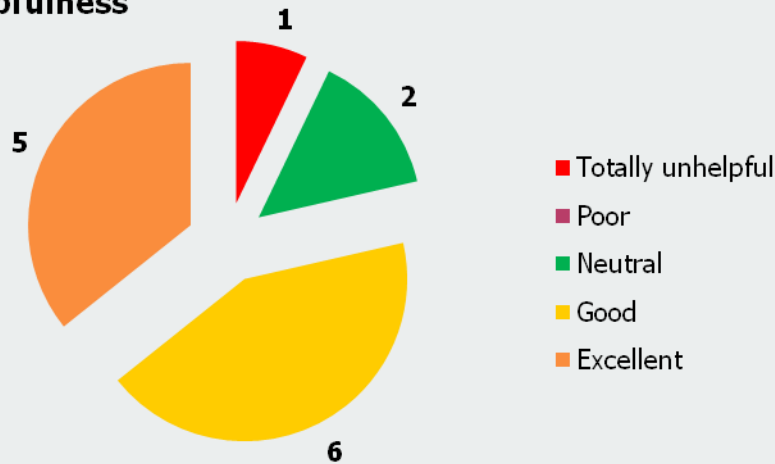
*"The central handrail was positioned further back and so allowed room to turn away from the space and back into it."*

*"It was possible to easily fit my wheelchair into the space but due to a post separating seats from the wheelchair space there would be no room for a buggy."*

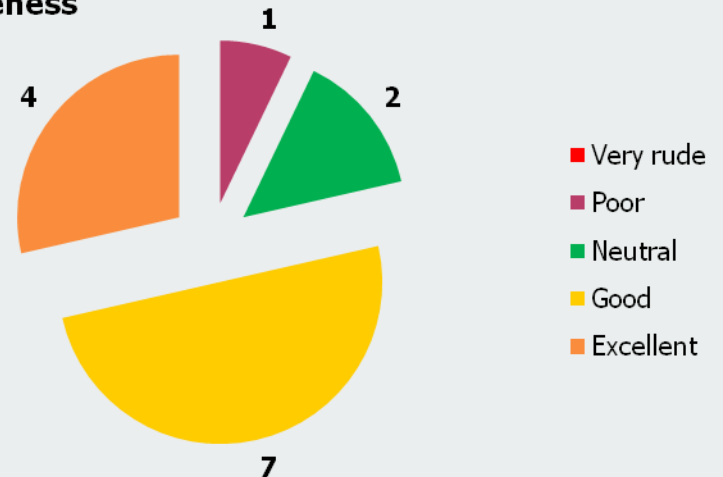
# Staff interaction – driver helpfulness and politeness

There were 14 occasions when the assessor was able to communicate with the driver. Assessors mainly asked for assistance with deploying the ramp or asking a question about their route. The driver was polite and helpful most of the time. There was one instance where the driver was rated poorly for politeness and helpfulness. This is consistent with the main AMTS survey with results in Q4 1112 at 94% and 96% for helpfulness and politeness.

**Helpfulness**



**Politeness**



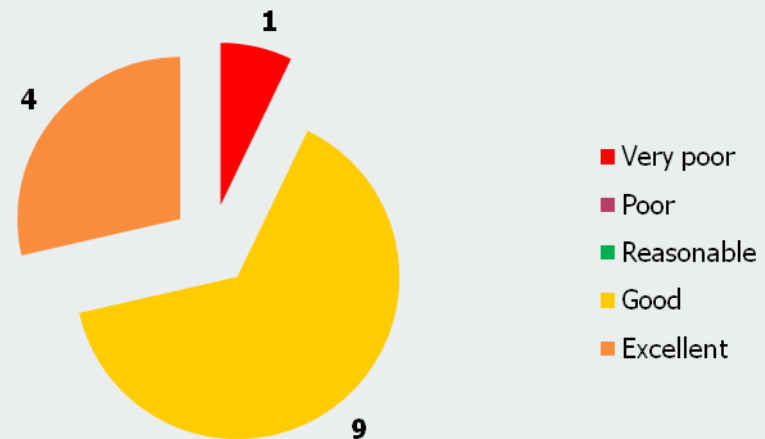
**An assessor made the below comment about the driver being unhelpful:**

*“When alighting the bus was pulling up to the stop but then moved on further than the stop, this frightened me. I asked the driver why we had not stopped and I did not get an answer.”*

# Staff interaction – driver patience

Most drivers were rated positively for patience, there was only one instance where the driver was rated as very rude. This was the same driver which was reported as unhelpful and not polite.

Patience



Here are a selection of assessor comments:

*"At this stop, which is the start and ending point of this route, the buses were queuing and were sat in line for some time. Whilst the bus was waiting to move the driver got out and approached me asking if it was this bus I wanted to board."*

**(Assessor boarded at Victoria Bus Station)**

*"The driver provided updates on the status of the mechanical failure. I did explain to the driver that, from past experiences, that if the bus was lowered enough to the kerb then I could leave (wheelchair backwards) via the front doors. The driver was adamant that they would not try this due to health and safety."*

**(In the instance where the ramp would not retract correctly)**

# Staff interaction – conductor

A conductor was present on all buses and there were 11 occasions when the assessor was able to communicate with the conductor. In all instances the conductor approached the assessor first. There were 4 occasions when the assessor did not interact with the conductor, this was due to the bus being too crowded or the assessor felt it was not appropriate.

All conductors were rated as 'Good' or 'Excellent' for politeness, helpfulness and patience. They generally provided assistance with boarding and alighting with the ramp, ensuring that the assessor was able to get into the space and ensuring that the assessor got off at the correct stop.

There were several occasions when the conductor came off the bus and assisted the assessor from the pavement.

*"Before I got on the bus the conductor approached me. They got off the bus and got back on after me."*

*"When I got off the bus the conductor got off as well and asked if I was okay."*

# Staff interaction – conductor and driver

Generally, assessors interacted more with the conductor than the driver. As a conductor was on board they were able to assist passengers easily so the driver was not required to give assistance. Below are some comments about the interaction with the conductor and the driver:

*"The conductor was much more helpful than the driver because I asked the driver only one question about the route and then I contacted the conductor. The conductor was quite close to the passengers. During the journey other people were also asking questions about the new Routemaster."*

*"The driver did not really need to interact with me, partly because of the presence of the conductor and partly because a wheelchair user was getting off where I got on."*

*"The conductor was much easier to communicate with than the driver because they were positioned in front of me"*

On one occasion when the assessor did not speak to the conductor, they felt that they could have assisted with ensuring that they were able to get into the space correctly because it was initially blocked with luggage.

*"There was eye contact between myself and the conductor, but that was all. They may have felt that I did not need any further help as the passengers blocking the way moved."*

# Information

When the iBus display could be seen, the display could be read on all occasions (14 out of 14). Assessors reported that the position of the iBus display at the rear of the bus, made it easier to see and was an improvement compared to other buses.



Compared to AMTS Q4 11/12 results, the legibility of the iBus display is also rated highly at 98%, although out of 89 assessors who said they could not read the iBus display, 87 said it was because it was behind them.

There were 14 instances where audio announcements were heard. All were rated positively for volume and 13 out of 14 were rated as clear for clarity. On the main AMTS Q4 1112 survey, the results were 96% for volume and clarity.

*"It is helpful to have an ibus display at the back of the bus visible to someone in the wheelchair space."*

*"Having the iBus display at the back of the bus is a great help."*

# Methodology and background

15 assessments were conducted by wheelchair users on the New Bus for London vehicles.

Assessments took place between the 17<sup>th</sup> May and the 4<sup>th</sup> July, excluding the period when bus interviews took place (11<sup>th</sup> June to 24<sup>th</sup> June).

Journeys started and ended at various stops along the route in both directions. A total of 7 different start locations were used along the route.

The main objective of these assessments was to understand in-service perceptions of design on board the NBFL, in particular to the wheelchair/buggy space.

# Data tables

Question	No. of positive responses	Question	No. of positive responses
<b>Ramp placement (C9 &amp; E8)</b>	28/30	<b>Politeness of driver (F3)</b>	13/14
<b>Ease of using ramp (C10 &amp; E9)</b>	29/30	<b>Helpfulness of driver (F4)</b>	13/14
<b>Closeness to the kerb (C5 &amp; E3)</b>	30/30	<b>Patience of driver (F5)</b>	13/14
<b>Closeness to the stop (C4 &amp; E4)</b>	28/30	<b>Politeness of conductor (F5e)</b>	11/11
<b>Designated space not blocked (D2)</b>	11/15	<b>Helpfulness of conductor (F5f)</b>	11/11
<b>Wheelchair space suitable size (D4a)</b>	15/15	<b>Patience of conductor (F5g)</b>	11/11
<b>Ease of manoeuvring in/out of the space (D4b)</b>	12/15	<b>Could read iBus display (D6a)</b>	14/14
<b>Clarity of announcements (D7a)</b>	14/14	<b>Smoothness of ride (D8)</b>	14/15
<b>Volume of announcements (D7b)</b>	14/14	<b>Bus stop information clear</b>	12/15
<b>Lowering the bus (C6 &amp; E5)</b>	18/18	<b>Handrails suitably positioned (D4c)</b>	14/15



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