



V/Line Accessibility Action Plan 2015-2018



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CEO introduction

Since joining V/Line in May 2013, I have been committed to improving the experience for customers. V/Line's Customer Charter promises the highest level of customer service across all areas of the business. At V/Line, we promise to provide a service that is safe and secure, reliable, clean and comfortable, friendly and helpful while providing up-to-date and accurate information.

The Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) 2015-18 is a tangible example of our Customer Charter and outlines how we will deliver accessible public transport services for all. This blueprint for the next three years builds on the successful implementation of the V/Line Accessibility Action Plan 2012-15. It also aligns with the Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2013-17, released by the Victorian Government and supports the Public Transport Victoria (PTV) Implementation Plan.



Theo Taifalos
Chief Executive Officer

Figures show that nearly one in five Australians have a disability. V/Line customers took over 15 million passenger trips last financial year, which means that almost three million of those trips were taken by a customer with a disability.

Being an accessible transport operator means much more than just disability access. This plan aims to encompass the importance of inclusion for all, with a strong focus on customer service and collaborative solutions.

V/Line recognises the importance of including our customers in the conversation and we pride ourselves on establishing customer and community consultation programs. Through our partnerships, industry relationships and the annual community accessibility forum, we are including the voice of our customers in decision making and in determining the best outcomes for customers.

I'd like to thank our customers for their contribution so far and hope to have their ongoing support into the future. The contents of this plan would not be as they are without loyal customers sacrificing their time to tell us what we need to do to improve their customer experience.

Keep safe,

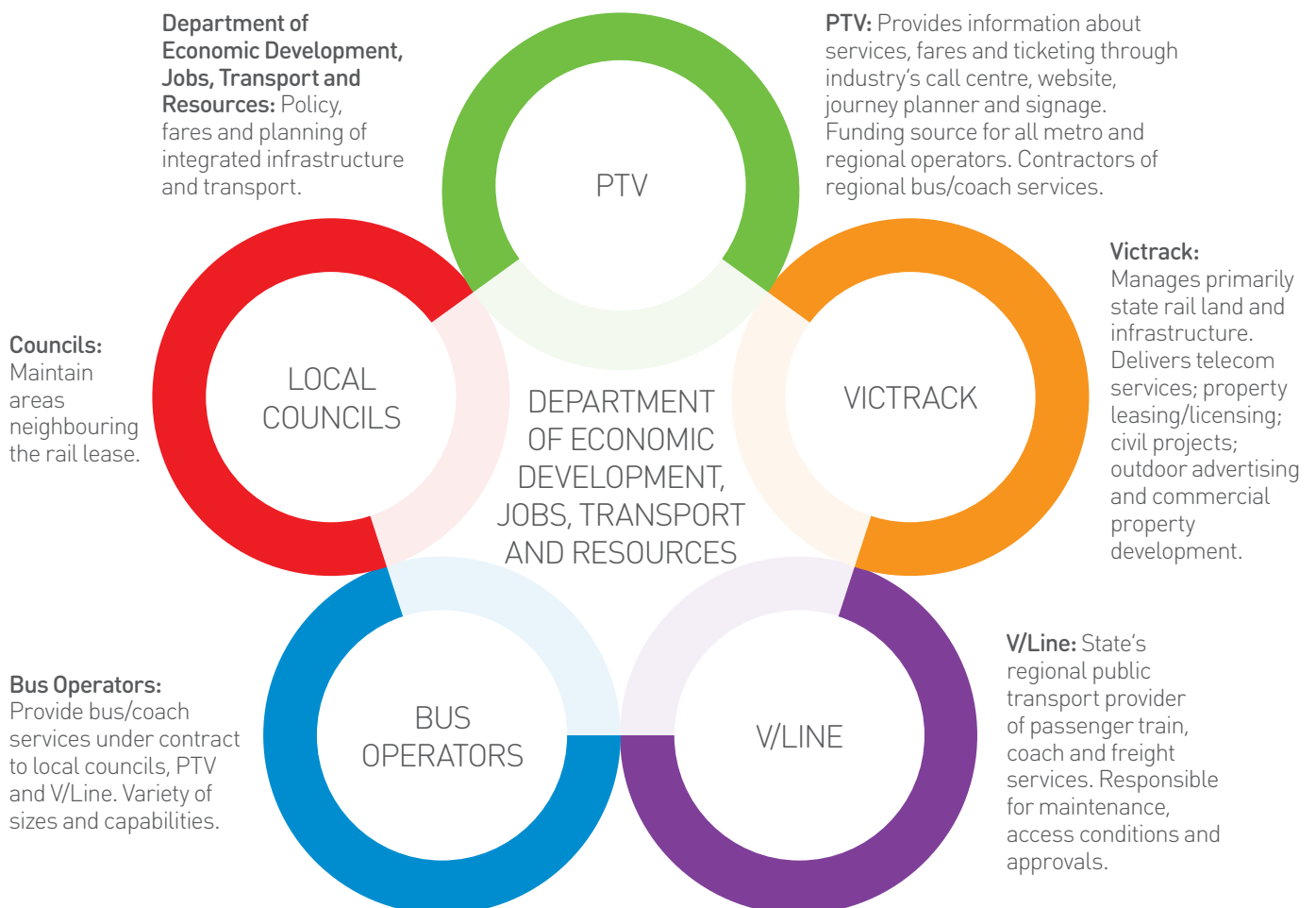
Theo

V/Line's role as a Victorian public transport operator

Public transport in Victoria involves a number of authorities. This diagram shows V/Line's relationships and responsibilities to some of the key bodies.

V/Line Corporation abides by the State Owned Enterprises Act 1992 and fulfils its contractual obligations under a service agreement with Public Transport Victoria. V/Line reports to the Victorian Minister for Public Transport and the Victorian Treasurer.

V/Line is Australia's largest regional public transport operator. Between July 2014 and June 2015 more than 15 million train and coach passenger trips were taken.



Every week, V/Line schedules more than 1400 train services between Melbourne and:

- Geelong and Warrnambool
- Ballarat, Maryborough and Ararat
- Bendigo, Swan Hill and Echuca
- Seymour, Shepparton and Albury
- Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale.

V/Line-branded coaches connect with the rail network and serve regional Victorian communities with more than 1250 services every week. Our coach routes also extend to South Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Private sector coach operators provide all V/Line coach services. In addition to being a passenger service operator, V/Line also provides access to, and maintains, 3420 kilometres of rail track used by passenger and freight rail services.

Vision

A connected and prosperous regional Victoria.

Mission

To deliver customer-focused, safe and efficient regional passenger transport and rail freight access.

Values

- Safety underpins everything we do
- Think customer
- Act with integrity
- Raise the bar
- Deliver as one V/Line

Background to this document

The AAP 2015-2018 was developed to lead the business in taking meaningful steps to improve accessibility over the next three years in support of the objectives outlined in the *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)*, the *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (DSAPT)* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

The plan involves improvements based on compliance with legislation, as well as consultation to develop customer-focused solutions based on customer needs and various rail environments.

This aligns with a shift in the Victorian Government approach from compliance to accessibility, which leads to less prescriptive outcomes and allows for more collaborative solutions for customers.

V/Line's AAP 2015-2018 aims to underpin and further develop the fundamental objectives of the *Accessible Public Transport in Victoria Action Plan 2013-17: PTV Implementation Plan* for an integrated, safe and inclusive public transport network, and more broadly encompasses the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-2016.

Principles

An accessible public transport network is a system in which our customers can easily use, engage with and participate in, enabling them a greater belonging to society.

V/Line recognises the value of an accessible public transport system in creating an inclusive society and strives to take a broad approach to accessibility outside of compliance.

V/Line commits to:

- create a safe and inclusive system
- have the customer experience front of mind
- be transparent and open to feedback
- collaborate and consult for the best outcome
- having each staff member recognise their role in creating accessible services.

AAP 2012 – 2015 achievements

It is important to reflect on the journey V/Line has taken through the implementation of the AAP 2012-15. The plan established the areas of priority V/Line could influence to improve the customer experience. The majority of outcomes came from V/Line's focus on customer service, as well as consultation and community engagement activities.

Notwithstanding the importance of the priority areas of access to buildings and vehicles, the outcomes reflect V/Line's remit and acknowledge the legacy and funding challenges associated with upgrading ageing stations and trains. V/Line will continue to work with PTV to identify opportunities to source funding for priority projects within this area.

Disability awareness training

V/Line began rolling out Scope's See the Person disability awareness training to frontline staff in 2012. This training is tailored to common issues facing customers with disabilities, using V/Line services and exposes frontline staff to the many different ways their role can have an impact on a customer's journey. Delivered face-to-face with a presenter from Scope and a co-presenter with a communication difficulty, the training allows staff to participate in different activities and touches on not only their role within V/Line, but also their responsibility under law.

Station staff and conductor announcement scripts

Script booklets were provided to staff in March 2013 to ensure consistent messaging for customers. This includes suggested language and highlights the importance of providing announcements for customers with a visual impairment.



In late 2012, V/Line began its journey to becoming the first transport provider in the world to be accredited with the Communication Access Symbol

Accessibility Guide

The Accessibility Guide was released in July 2013 after consultation with advocacy groups, disability services providers and customers. The guide has gone some way in providing customers with additional information before their journey. There are opportunities to improve this with an updated guide to be released in 2016.

Partnership with Travellers Aid

Through a corporate partnership, V/Line continues to sponsor Travellers Aid activities including the support of their volunteers, Emergency Relief and Pathways to Education programs. V/Line also sponsors the Travellers Aid quarterly newsletter and partners with Travellers Aid, to provide customers with a buggy service at Southern Cross and Seymour.

Communication Access Symbol accreditation

In late 2012, V/Line began its journey to becoming the first transport provider in the world to be accredited with the Communication Access Symbol, with the establishment of a Communication Access Advisory Group.

The group led and advised on key initiatives throughout the research and intervention development phases of the project.

Findings from the research phase informed a series of recommendations, which will assist V/Line to become communication accessible. Phase two of the project involved the prioritisation of these recommendations to develop a series of actions. The Communication Access Advisory Group was again engaged to assist with the development of the communication tools. Workshops were held with staff on the Geelong line, where the tools were piloted.

The tools, as well as improvements such as the provision of information in different formats, were piloted on the Geelong/Warrnambool line. Stations along this line were accredited with the Communication Access Symbol in June 2015.

The tools and interventions will be rolled out across the V/Line rail network as the next step towards full accreditation of the Communication Access Symbol.

Community Accessibility Forum

V/Line's first Community Accessibility Forum in December 2013 attracted more than 40 attendees. They included customers, advocacy groups, disability service providers, as well as representatives from PTV and the Public Transport Ombudsman (PTO).

The next Community Accessibility Forum was held in December 2014, with more than 60 people in attendance. The forum focused on the development of this document and was integral in identifying areas of focus for the next three years.

Permanent allocated space on coaches

All accessible coaches now have a permanent space allocated to customers, who travel with mobility aids. Customers no longer need to call ahead of their journey to request this space.

Designated waiting area on platforms

The Boarding Assistance Zone is a designated area on the platform, where customers who need assistance can wait. This allows staff to identify them and assist them accordingly. The zone was successfully trialled at Geelong and South Geelong stations in late 2014 and rolled out across the V/Line network in June 2015.

Station upgrades

More than 40 regional stations have received upgrades to improve accessibility since 2012. These upgrades include both large and small scale works, with priority focus on tactiles and surfacing, toilet facilities and improvements to access paths. These works were completed under a four-year DDA funding program provided by PTV.

Please see Appendix for progress of all actions from 2012 – 2015 (Page 26 - 27)

Development of the V/Line Accessibility Action Plan 2015-18

The V/Line AAP 2015-18 aims to build on the achievements and learnings of the AAP 2012-15. During the development process, V/Line focused on creating actions based on the input of our customers to reflect their needs and priorities.



Feedback through formal channels, as well as input from the Community Accessibility Forum in 2014, played an instrumental role in identifying key areas for improvement.

V/Line recognises the value of taking a less prescriptive approach to implementing solutions and acknowledges that appropriate engagement with customers and staff, leads to better outcomes for all. With this in mind, actions within the plan may evolve to incorporate the competing needs of different stakeholders. Many actions include investigation and consultation to resolve an identified issue.

V/Line acknowledges the ongoing challenge around the prioritisation of funding infrastructure upgrades. In 2014, PTV audited all stations on the V/Line network to identify the level of accessibility. The PTV audit data will provide crucial information to prioritise upgrades, along with V/Line patronage data, feedback analysis and localised consultation.

V/Line will report at the end of June each year on the status of the actions outlined in the plan. This annual review may change and reprioritise the actions and expected outcomes.



Priorities and actions for 2015-18

The plan has been written to focus on four key priority areas. These areas support a whole-of-business approach to improving accessibility and recognise the many different elements required to provide universal access.

Each priority is aligned with These actions will form V/Line's commitment to improvement for the next three years.

Along with each action, we have also included a tangible measure. It is important to note that those measurements listed will not be the only indication of success. Measurement will also include:

- customer satisfaction surveys
- employee engagement surveys
- stakeholder feedback from specific user groups and
- customer complaint monitoring.

A photograph showing a V/Line staff member in a dark vest and white shirt with a red scarf, assisting a customer with a white cane. The customer is wearing a white patterned shirt and a grey skirt. They are standing on a train platform next to a train door. The staff member is leaning forward, holding the customer's hand. The customer is holding a white cane and looking down at it. The background shows the interior of the train and other passengers.

Priority one

Customer service

V/Line strives to achieve a high level of customer service across the network. We recognise the significance of a seamless journey and are committed to improving the ways our frontline staff assist customers.

The successful implementation of the following actions will mean all customers can expect V/Line to communicate with them effectively, both face-to-face and through other channels,

each time they travel. Information will be available in various formats and two-way communication will be open and easy.

Become a top 5% customer service organisation against the International Customer Service Standard, to create a standardised high level of service for all customers.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
ICSS score placing V/Line in the top 5% of customer service organisations.	31 Dec 2016

Conduct research into how customers like to receive their information. The findings will help V/Line determine the most effective communication channels during planned and unplanned disruptions.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Research complete.	31 Dec 2015

Investigation into the feasibility of rolling out automated announcements for delayed services at all unstaffed stations (subject to PTV funding).

Measure of success	Milestone dates
15% reduction in complaints regarding lack of information during disruption.	31 Dec 2017

Review feedback channels to improve and encourage feedback relating to accessibility.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Working group convened with customers and communication specialist.	31 Dec 2016

V/Line railway stations and frontline staff to be accredited with the Communication Access Symbol.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
V/Line railway stations and frontline staff.	Dec 2015

Work with coach operators to investigate the feasibility of rolling out the Communication Access Symbol to the coach network.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Accreditation of Communication Access Symbol on coach network.	30 Jun 2018

Develop and introduce a refresher training tool for V/Line frontline staff to retain knowledge and understanding about disability awareness and communication tools.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Development of tool.	30 Jun 2016

Work with PTV to include the PTV call centre and PTV hubs in the accreditation of Communication Access Symbol. These customer points will also be deemed communication accessible and receive accreditation.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
PTV call centre and PTV hubs accredited.	31 Dec 2015

Monthly meetings with PTV call centre staff to identify trending issues from complaints data and opportunities to provide better information for customers regarding accessibility.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
25% reduction in call centre errors when making accessible bookings or providing accessibility information.	Ongoing

Website to be AA level of the W3C Website Content Accessibility Guidelines with accessible information experts to audit new website during the redevelopment of the V/Line website. Audit will provide recommendations on content and layouts.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Achievement of WCAG 2.0 AA compliance	31 Dec 2015

Investigate possible solutions for incidents in which customers awaiting ramps are over-carried (beyond intended destination), with the establishment of a working group.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
100% reduction in complaints around over-carrying.	31 Dec 2017

Work with coach operators to explore consistent disability awareness training.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
100% of coach drivers to receive an agreed level of disability awareness training.	30 Jun 2018

Review of accessible coach booking procedures used by contracted coach companies.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Contribute to 10% reduction in complaints relating to lack of assistance on coach journeys.	30 Jun 2016

A group of four people are engaged in a conversation outdoors. In the foreground, a man is seated in a black motorized wheelchair, facing away from the camera. He is wearing a dark blue hoodie. To his right, a woman in a blue polo shirt with a red logo on the chest is standing and looking towards him. Further right, another man in a blue polo shirt with a purple lanyard is seated in a wheelchair, looking towards the man in the foreground. On the far left, a woman in a maroon coat is partially visible, looking towards the group. The background shows a blurred outdoor setting with a building and a person sitting on a bench.

Priority two

Consultation and community engagement

V/Line is committed to the development of mutually beneficial and collaborative outcomes for customers. Consultation will seek feedback and guidance on access improvement initiatives, as well as allow for issues to be heard and addressed.

The successful implementation of the following actions will see the feedback of our customers and partners delivering improvements and

solutions through a collaborative relationship. We will attract new customers and instil a new-found confidence in the use of V/Line services.

Convene an annual Community Accessibility Forum.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
One annual forum in Melbourne with more than 50 attendees.	31 Dec each year

Hold five regional accessibility events each year to give customers and groups an opportunity to meet with V/Line staff and familiarise themselves with our fleet. This will include both trains and coach.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Five regional events per annum in different areas of the V/Line rail network.	31 Dec each year

Establish a Disability Reference Group to discuss issues identified in the AAP 2015-2018. The group will be formed through an expression of interest process, which will be advertised on the V/Line website, through social media channels, Travellers Aid newsletter, as well as directly emailed to former attendees of community accessibility forums.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Quarterly meetings	31 Dec each year

Hold monthly meetings with the V/Line internal Accessibility Working Group, with representation from different areas of the business.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Monthly meetings.	30 Jun each year

Continue to consult with PTV on ticketing issues experienced by customers with specific needs. This includes feedback on processes to receive concession passes.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
A 20% reduction in complaints relating to misinformation given by V/Line staff, in relation to ticketing and passes for customer with specific needs.	30 Jun each year

Partner with Travellers Aid through contributions to volunteer training, the Emergency Relief program, the quarterly newsletter and the Pathways to Education program.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
An increase in the number of V/Line customers using Travellers Aid services.	30 Jun each year

Continue consultation with accessibility advocacy groups, including but not limited to:

- Blind Citizens Australia
- Vision Australia
- Scope
- Yooralla
- All Aboard
- Travellers Aid
- VDAC (transport sub-committee)
- Public Transport Ombudsman
- Deafblind Victorians
- VEOHRC

Measure of success	Milestone dates
V/Line to have needs-based meetings with representatives from advocacy groups.	30 Jun each year

V/Line to participate in the PTV-convened Public Transport Operators Committee and the Australasian Railway Association Disability Policy Working Group. V/Line will use these opportunities for knowledge-sharing and seek innovative solutions on a state and national scale.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Report on actions and outcomes to the internal Accessibility Working Group.	End of each month

Partner with a specialist organisation to educate V/Line staff about mental health and intellectual disabilities. Aim to highlight the different concerns when using public transport and the ways to recognise customers, who may need assistance.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Minimum of two events or campaigns to raise awareness of mental health and intellectual disabilities.	30 Jun 2016

Design and implement a consultation framework for use during accessibility projects delivered by V/Line.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Contact with at least five local advocacy groups in relation to station upgrades each year.	31 Dec 2016 Ongoing

Continue to review and implement Customer Service Improvement Projects, which allow frontline staff to suggest initiatives to improve the customer journey.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Implement two staff initiated accessibility improvements per annum.	30 Jun each year

Participate in a *Try Before You Ride* event with other transport operators, which will see vehicles of multiple modes stabled in one location. This gives community members and customers the chance to familiarise themselves with the different vehicles, as well as ask staff any questions about operations.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Involvement in at least one <i>Try Before You Ride</i> event each year.	30 Jun each year



Priority three

Access to public transport

V/Line works with PTV and the Victorian Government to procure vehicles which meet the needs of all customers. V/Line will also collaborate with customers and experts to develop solutions to improve access to ageing trains.

The successful implementation of the following steps will ensure that access to V/Line fleet meets the needs of all.

Customers can be confident they will be able to safely and conveniently access any V/Line service.

Installation of additional priority seating on trains.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Installation completed.	31 Dec 2015

Investigate alternative ways of accessing coach vehicles for people with a mobility impairment, who find it difficult to navigate a step.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Contribute to 10% reduction in complaints around access to vehicles.	30 Jun 2017

Continue to collaborate with Travellers Aid Australia and Community AccessAbility to ensure the sustainability of the Seymour buggy service.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Continued access for V/Line customers to the Seymour buggy service.	30 Jun each year

Work with PTV to ensure new train orders are DSAPT compliant.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Compliant rolling stock.	30 Jun each year

Work with PTV to review the design of portable ramps used to access trains, to provide increased safety and ease in boarding.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
A 20% reduction in complaints relating to vehicle access, specifically ramp design and platform height gap.	30 Jun 2016

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Priority four

Access to facilities

V/Line will work with PTV and customers to identify priority areas to channel funding to improve the accessibility of stations.

The successful implementation of the following steps will lead to customers seeing improvements to stations across the network,

to create an easy journey from any point of the station to their intended service.

Work with PTV to identify accessibility improvement projects, including upgrades to toilets, tactiles, surfaces and access paths. Projects will be subject to PTV funding.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
The submission to PTV of at least four business cases per year to improve the accessibility of the V/Line network.	30 Jun each year

Develop an internal strategy for the improved compliance of station platforms with DSAPT.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Strategy endorsed by Executive General Manager Asset Management.	30 Jun 2017

Maintain PTV station accessibility database.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
100% of accessibility upgrades are included in the database.	Ongoing

Paint white lines on the edge of platforms to improve the visibility of the gap between the train and platform.

Measure of success	Milestone dates
Installed on all lines.	30 Jun 2017

Appendix

The following table outlines progress on other actions as at June 2015.

Action	Status at Jun 2015
Improve accessibility booking at the PTV call centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility tab added to 'Resolve' to create consistent booking process. • Customer Relations will now carry out a post-travel customer experience survey with customers making accessible bookings • V/Line continues to receive feedback relating to the booking process. New opportunities to address this feedback have been included in the AAP 2015-18.
V/Line website meets W3C guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in the current V/Line website refresh, to be implemented in September 2015, this action is rolled over to the AAP 2015-18.
Investigating the addition of a symbol on paper tickets to alert staff that a customer requires assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of myki has greatly changed V/Line's ticketing over the past three years. A concession myki recognised by conductors gives some indication of the need for additional assistance. Further insights are needed to create a solution, which covers both myki and paper tickets. This action is partially completed and will be included in the AAP 2015-18.
Work with PTV to develop an access map for Southern Cross Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PTV audit has identified a series of works needed to improve compliance and accessibility at Southern Cross Station. An access map will be developed following the finalisation of these works.

Action	Status at Jun 2015
Development of reminder phone app for conductors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This initiative will be rolled over to AAP 2015-18 with a full exploration of the issue and need.
Real-time information for customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passenger Information Displays (PIDs) are being installed across the Regional Fast Rail network. This includes V/Line's commuter lines with the exception of Seymour. Installation will be complete by June 2015. • A PID project for the Seymour line has recently been approved.
Regular consultation with customers and advocacy groups	<p>V/Line continues to build relationships through many channels, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Meet the Managers program (at stations and on train) • Formal feedback channels • Meetings with groups, such as Blind Citizens Australia, Victorian Disability Advisory Committee, All Aboard, Scope, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Committee, the Public Transport Ombudsman.
Quarterly meeting with coach operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly meetings with coach operators to discuss issues and develop actions.
New train order to be DDA compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an ongoing action for PTV and V/Line.
Feasibility of painting broader white line on platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This action will be considered as part of the 2015/2016 maintenance and renewal schedule.
New pedestrian bridge and overpass at Geelong Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge and overpass commissioned and opened in March 2015

Notes



2145PM Flat 3 Train
Stopping at
Footscray

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Geelong
Welcome
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Bienvenue
Willkommen
Selamat Datang
Καλώςορίστε

Priority
Access



Accessibility

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