



Assembly Members

2 October 2019

Dear Colleagues,

There have been a number of questions, concerns and misrepresentations raised about the issue of toilet provision on the Metro, so I thought it would be helpful to set out a few important points on this matter.

To achieve the step change in the connectivity and economic and social benefits that we all want to see for the south Wales valleys we are implementing a different type of transport system for the 21st Century.

Our ambition for metro covers a range of routes, modes of transport and variety of operational approaches and so, our plan has always been that Metro services will be provided by a variety of vehicle types, depending on local circumstances. This will play in to the feasibility and provision of toilet facilities

To be clear, **every** traditional heavy rail 'train' on the Wales & Borders network (including those operating in the Metro area) will be equipped with on board toilets that people of all abilities can access.

In addition, one of the new innovations we are introducing is a Light Rail vehicle, a 'Metro Vehicle', which as well as being capable of running on heavy rail lines is also capable of then running on street, within communities. At the moment our plan is for these vehicles to run on the Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil lines.

The flexibility that comes with these newer type of Metro Vehicles (Tram-trains) is that they can extend the reach of the Metro, beyond the current network, to places in the valleys, where the geography and topography is challenging, requiring more agile vehicles with quicker acceleration, deceleration and the ability turn sharper corners.

The need for these vehicles to be lighter, narrower, and more manoeuvrable than heavy rail trains and the health and safety implications associated with their operation (e.g. quicker acceleration, turning and stopping) means that it is not possible for these new Metro Vehicles to be provided with on board toilets.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We will not be unique in this as the London Underground; Edinburgh Tram; Docklands Light Railway in London; Manchester's Metrolink, and the Tyne & Wear Metro do not have toilets on their light rail vehicles. I would challenge Members to identify any such on street light rail metro systems which have PRM compliant toilets. However, to put this into context from the end of 2023, there will be a total of approximately 148 brand new units. Of these brand new units, 36 will be the new Tram-Train, which means that 112 - 76% - of the new rolling stock will have PRM compliant toilets on board.

The maximum journey time to a Universally Accessible station toilet will be 14 minutes and for 95% of journeys will be less than 10 minutes. Furthermore, every metro station will be step-free.

My officials will continue to work with TfW and disability and accessibility groups in the future to make good in the promises we have made, alongside the introduction of this new system, to improve the number and quality of toilets within stations.

As you will know, Members on all sides have called for the provision of a lighter, turn-up-and-go-system that is different to the one we currently have and that is what I intend to deliver.

For further explanation of the benefits of our approach members may wish to read Professor Mark Barry's excellent article found here:

<https://www.business-live.co.uk/opinion-analysis/not-having-toilets-tram-trains-17016488>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', with a long, sweeping flourish above the name.

Ken Skates AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport