



# **The SATA Story**

**1995 to 2015**

**Alan Rees**



# **Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA)**

**Scottish Registered Charity No SC027600**

## **Introduction**

Before SATA came on the scene there were many important events that influenced its creation and subsequent activities.

The stage was set by the 1981 International Year of Disabled People (IYDP) during which an international conference and exhibition were held in Edinburgh entitled 'Transport for Special Needs'. It was organised by the Disability Scotland's Scottish Committee on Mobility and with Scottish Executive funding. The exhibition in Charlotte Square was a forerunner to later mobility roadshows and featured a 'kneeling' low-floor 'Telebus' vehicle from Berlin, one of which later came to Glasgow.

The same year the Strathclyde Regional Council published a report '*Living in a Hostile Environment*' covering a wide range of issues including transport.

Many things ensued in the 1980s. For instance: Edinburgh Community Transport (EVT), now Lothian Community Transport Services (LCTS), pioneered a wheelchair accessible minicab service; Handicabs (Lothian) Ltd (now HcL) was established in 1982 providing a 'dial-a-ride service for the homebound'; the Scottish Community Transport Group (SCTG) started in 1983; the Transport Act deregulated bus services in 1985; the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) was established that year and in 1988 it produced a specification for bus accessibility.

Early in the next decade, LCTS started disability awareness training for taxi drivers. The first Scottish Mobility Roadshow at Ingliston (with Disability Scotland and Scottish Executive funding) was held in 1991. A second followed in 1994 and a third in 1996.

### **SATA's first 10 years: 1995 to 2005**

SATA's inaugural meeting was held in Glasgow in June 1995, the same year as the passing of the Disability Discrimination Act. A Steering Committee had been established to set up the organisation following the influential 'Transport for Independent Living' conference held at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh in 1993. This declared that there should be some central focus for concerns about transport accessibility, a means for the exchange of information and the promotion of good practice.

Many national and local voluntary and statutory organisations were behind the establishment of SATA. They included the Community Transport Association, Central Region Disability Forum, Disability Scotland, Dunfermline Forum on Disability, the Lothian Coalition of Disabled People, Handicabs (Lothian), Lothian Community Transport Services, Paisley Transport Action Group, Strathclyde Forum on Disability, Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive and the Councils of Aberdeen, Borders, Central, Fife, Highland, Lothian, Strathclyde and Tayside.

In 1997, SATA obtained a three year grant from Comic Relief for a part-time support worker and Sheila Henderson of Reid-Howie Associates was appointed. The following year she and her husband Brian were commissioned by the Scottish Executive to research the availability of accessible transport. They produce the report '*Transport Provision for Disabled People in Scotland*' and reviewed progress in 2003.

In 1998, SATA's charitable constitution was approved by the Inland Revenue and members helped to organise the 4th Scottish Mobility Roadshow at Ingliston, combined with a conference entitled 'Accessible Transport - Present Imperfect, Future Perfect'. After that, the organisation of the show was taken over by Mobility Choice which ran the Mobility Roadshow in England with funding from the Department of Transport. The Scottish show was later discontinued although it continues to run south of the Border.

The new century saw regulations under the DDA introduced, such as bus and coach accessibility regulations for new large single-deckers, and taxi accessibility regulations for new cabs and those for new double decker buses.

The Scottish Parliament had been established in 1999 and in 2002, under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) was set up to advise Scottish Ministers on transport matters affecting

disabled people. Margaret Hickish was its first Convener. As its name implies, the committee was to place a strong emphasis on promoting mobility as well as access.

SATA's annual report for 2003/4 described the background, process and outcome of its Public Petition PE 568 calling for the Scottish Parliament to "encourage and enable" increases in the number of fully accessible taxis with more and improved concession schemes. Information was gathered through a survey of local authorities but no other action was taken.

2003 was the European Year of Disabled People (IYCP) and with support from the Community Transport Association and funding from the Scottish Executive, SATA organised the Scottish Travel Access Review conference in Edinburgh and published a report.

### **The second 10 years: 2005 to 2015**

SATA's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was marked at its meeting of members in Aberdeen City Council's chamber. The following year Stanley Flett took over from Muriel Williams as chairman.

Scotland's National Transport Strategy (NTS) was produced by the Scottish Executive in 2006. Included in the strategy was a commitment to "promote improvement of the overall accessibility of the transport network for older and disabled people and those with limited mobility". The Executive said "We would like to see duties for transport authorities and providers enforced and policed through the setting of targets that are clear and can be properly monitored. Such targets need to relate to measurable outcomes of transport initiatives rather than the provision of services. Contracts with transport operators should include specific relevant performance measures."

Two years later the Scottish National Party gained a majority from the Labour Party in the Scottish Parliament and formed what was from then on called the Scottish Government. In a so-called "bonfire of quangos", it was minded to abolish MACS. It was only saved after strenuous representations from disability organisations led by SATA.

In 2009, SATA's newsletter was started and the 2005 web guide 'Place to Place' was updated.

After 6 years of operation, the Thistle Travel Card for people wanting extra

assistance on buses and other transport, was discontinued because ENABLE, which administered the scheme, was unable to obtain the funding it had requested from the Scottish Government to keep it going. The card was held by some 280,000 people across Scotland. SATA produced a briefing paper for the press and lobbied MSPs. However it was not to be revived until 2012 when the South East Scotland Regional Transport Partnership (SEStran) took up the scheme in its area. First Bus also produced 'Safe Journey' and 'Better Journey' cards for use on its busses UK-wide.

In 2010, the Equalities Act superseded the DDA 1995 and SATA joined the Community Transport Association (CTA) in Scotland in hosting CTA Scotland's annual conference in Stirling on 'Community Transport, Access and Mobility Issues'.

2012 saw the Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) face the same threat of abolition as MACS by the new Conservative-Liberal Democratic Coalition Government at Westminster, only to be similarly reprieved after strong opposition.

The first of SATA's annual Achievement Awards went to Wayne Pearson CEO of HcL/Handicabs (Lothian) and to Lothian Buses Ltd. in 2012. The following year awards were made to Peter Carrol (an Aberdeenshire taxi driver) and to Order of Malta Dial-a-Journey. A Special Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Alan Rees MBE on his retirement as SATA's Secretary. Mike Harrison took his place.

In 2013, the UK Government's Strengthening Disabled People's User-Led Organisations (DPULO) programme awarded SATA a grant for an 18 month project to try to increase its membership and improve its data collection and research. It ran from April until Sept 2014. Brian Masson was appointed as Development Worker.

In 2014, the third annual SATA Achievement Awards went to Patrick Nyamurundira, Access Officer with First ScotRail, and the Community Transport Association. The 'Place to Place' guide was further updated. An Accessible Transport Strategy and Action Plan for Scotland was drafted and widely circulated for consultation. It is hoped that the responses will inform an official government strategy and plan of action up to 2020.

## **Conclusion**

SATA has been supported by many national and local organisations and agencies over these twenty years. Some have steadfastly maintained their membership year by year. A core of individuals has likewise been members over the whole of this period. Some have played leading roles and a few more than one role. Donald Anderson and Keith Gowenlock were early chairmen. They were followed in turn by Barbara Howie, Douglas Gilroy, Muriel Williams and Stanley Flett. Douglas Gilroy did another stint and has recently handed over to Terry Robinson.

SATA has never had full-time staff and has survived on a small budget. Its core income has been derived from membership subscriptions. Unpaid executive positions as Secretary and Treasurer have at various times been held by Elma Mitchell MBE, Alan Rees MBE, Barbara Howie, Susan Cockburn and Peter Ingram-Monk. They are now held by Mike Harrison and John Ballantine respectively. Dr Sheila Henderson and Brian Masson have taken on short-term, part-time, support and development roles on a sessional fee basis and Frances Simpson is currently the Meetings Organiser/Minute Secretary.

The organisation has dealt with an enormous range of issues which have been described in its annual reports, in newsletters and on its website. It has regularly held three or four meetings a year in different parts of Scotland, providing a platform for invited speakers and information exchange between members. It has held conferences, published reports and undertaken or supported research. It has established itself as the representative voice of disabled people in Scotland on transport issues.

For further details visit the website: [www.scottshaccessibletransport.org.uk](http://www.scottshaccessibletransport.org.uk)

**Alan Rees MBE**

February 2015

## References

1. *'Living in a Hostile Environment'*. Strathclyde Regional Council. 1981
2. *'Out and About, Door to Door. A history of HcL/Handicabs (Lothian) - the first 30 years'*. Alan Rees. 2013
3. *'Scottish Community Transport Group. A Brief History'*. Alan Rees. 2014
4. *'Transport Provision for Disabled People in Scotland'* . Reid Howie Associates. 1998
5. *Scotland's National Transport Strategy (NTS)*. The Scottish Executive. 2006.
6. *'Place to Place. A Webguide.'* Alan Rees. 2014.
7. *'Accessible Transport Strategy and Action Plan for Scotland' 2014* See the SATA website:
8. SATA annual reports, newsletters and Achievement Awards. See the SATA website.
9. SATA archive publications are with the National Library for Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Central Library and the SATA Secretary.