

Temporary Exemptions Report

V/Line: DSAPT Exemption Part 2.1/2.6/2.8/6.4/8.2 and
Premises Standards H2.2

Reporting Period: 7 June 2022 to 6 June 2023

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Introduction

V/Line's Role

V/Line is an operating agency, forming part of Victoria's integrated transport portfolio, and delivering services under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP).

V/Line is:

- An accredited operator of passenger services including rail and coach;
- A freight access provider;
- A maintainer of railway infrastructure and rolling stock;
- A key contributor towards Victoria's large infrastructure projects; and
- A supporter of Tourist and Heritage rail operations.

The State Government via the DTP provides the strategy for station upgrades and the purchasing of new fleet.

About V/Line – Services Provided

V/Line, as a brand, has provides public transport services, safely connecting people across Victorian communities for almost 40 years.

V/Line is a major employer with a workforce of over 2,650 people, many who live and work in regional Victoria.

We operate passenger rail services between Melbourne and:

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

Each week, V/Line schedules more than 2,250 rail services between Melbourne and regional centres. More than 1,520 V/Line branded coach services connect with the rail network and serve regional Victorian communities. Some of V/Line's coach services also link Victoria with South Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Private sector operators provide all V/Line-branded coach services under the management of V/Line.

V/Line also maintains over 3,780 kilometres of rail track used by passenger and freight rail operators.

V/Line's Accessibility Action Plan 2022 to 2025

V/Line launched its Accessibility Action Plan 2022 to 2025 in August 2022. V/Line has continued to progress a number of the key priority areas outlined in the Plan.

Key achievements in 2022 to 2023 included:

- launching a new Travellers Aid Connection Assistance Program at Ballarat Station;
- improving communications to customers regarding the availability of accessible carriages;
- implementing the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program;
- providing frontline staff with a refresher training module on providing boarding assistance; and
- continuing to engage with V/Line's Accessibility Reference Group.

Temporary Exemptions Reporting

Exemptions Details Transport Standards 2.1 /Premises Standards H2.2

Exemptions from the Transport Standards 2.1 Access Paths Unhindered Passage and the Premises Standards H2.2 Accessways

Temporary Exemption : Existing rail premises and existing rail infrastructure

For a period of 5 years, flange gaps of up to 75mm are permitted where a level crossing forms part of an access path on existing rail premises or existing rail infrastructure, subject to the following conditions

Reporting Requirements

The ARA member concerned conducts an audit of flange gaps at existing crossings against s2.1 of the Transport Standards and cl H2.2 of the Access Code in the Premises Standards and provides a written report to the ARA and the Commission within 12 months setting out:

- (a) the findings of the audit, including identifying each station where a level crossing forms part of an access path and, for each location, the nature of the non-compliance and the mode of rail travel

V/Line undertakes surveys of its track infrastructure on an annual basis which includes measuring the flange gaps at rail pedestrian crossings.

There are 33 V/Line stations where a rail pedestrian crossing forms part of an Access Path within the station's precincts (Table 1).

Table 1: Stations with pedestrian crossing present on access paths

EASTERN REGION	NORTH EAST REGION	NORTHERN REGION	SOUTH WEST REGION	WESTERN REGION
Bunyip	Broadford	Castlemaine	Corio	Ardeer
Longwarry	Chiltern*	Clarkefield	Lara	Ballarat
Moe	Donnybrook	Eaglehawk	Little River	
Nar Nar Goon	Heathcote Jct	Epsom	North Shore	
Rosedale	Kilmore East	Gisborne		
Trafalgar	Violet Town*	Kangaroo Flat		
Yarragon	Wallan	Kyneton		
	Wandong	Macedon		
	Avenel	Malmsbury		
		Riddles Creek		
		Woodend		

* Chiltern and Violet Town are maintained by Third Party

The records from the flange gaps survey conducted in 2023 identified that all flange gaps measured at the rail pedestrian crossings within the station precincts did not exceed 75mm but were greater than 3mm.

The ARA member concerned conducts an audit of flange gaps at existing crossings against s2.1 of the Transport Standards and cl H2.2 of the Access Code in the Premises Standards and provides a written report to the ARA and the Commission within 12 months setting out:

- (b) a strategy demonstrating the proposed actions for remedy in each location identified in the audit by:
- i. eliminating the flange gaps with a suitable product
 - ii. reducing the flange gaps to a maximum horizontal width of 55mm, or
 - iii. phasing out by grade separation

To achieve compliance with the Transport Standards and Premises Standard, access path surfaces should be smooth and even with no gaps greater than 3mm.

Given that the Standards do not make any exception for rail pedestrian crossings, which by their nature must provide sufficient gaps (usually over 40mm) for train wheel flanges, only elimination of the rail level crossing can provide a fully compliant solution.

All pedestrian pathways crossing the train tracks at V/Line stations require upgrades with a grade separation structure (such as an overpass or underpass) to remove the flange gaps altogether. V/Line undertook a high-level study in 2022 to identify available solutions for the grade separations to replace the existing rail pedestrian crossings (Table 2).

Following the study, it was determined that an underpass is the preferred solution in most locations due to reasons of cost, visual amenity and ease of use, as less vertical height difference is required for an underpass. An overpass may be recommended at locations where local conditions preclude the use of an underpass. Table 2 lists stations identified for underpass and overpass solutions.

Table 2: Grade separation: Overpass/underpass solutions

GRADE SEPARATION – OVERPASS PREFERENCE			
Bunyip	Woodend	North Shore	Ballarat
Longwarry	Corio		
GRADE SEPARATION – UNDERPASS PREFERENCE			
Moe	Trafalgar	Broadford	Heathcote Junction
Nar Nar Goon	Yarragon	Chiltern	Kilmore East
Rosedale	Avenel	Donnybrook	Violet Town

Wallan	Clarkefield	Gisborne	Malmsbury
Wandong	Eaglehawk	Kyneton	Riddells Creek
Castlemaine	Epsom	Macedon	Lara
Little River	Ardeer	Kangaroo Flat	

The ARA member concerned conducts an audit of flange gaps at existing crossings against s2.1 of the Transport Standards and cl H2.2 of the Access Code in the Premises Standards and provides a written report to the ARA and the Commission within 12 months setting out:

(c) the proposed time frames for the remedy in each location, and

(d) the proposed expenditure to remedy each location,

As part of a study completed by V/Line in 2022, it is estimated that an approximate indicative budget of \$12M to \$20M per site would be required to upgrade the existing rail pedestrian crossing within the station precincts.

Additional investigations will be required to determine the feasibility of the proposed solutions which may impact the initial approximate cost.

Grade separation works may also form part of more general upgrade works at stations. These general upgrades might include accessibility improvements, signals, tracks, platform and staff amenities, and are not included in the indicative budget identified above.

Typically, the construction of an underpass/overpass structure would require 30 months from the project development phase to construction completion. This timeframe can be largely affected by local constraints including heritage requirements, environmental restrictions, geotechnical considerations, among other things.

The ARA member concerned takes prompt and reasonable steps to implement the strategy at each of the locations identified in the audit

V/Line will continue to actively work with DTP on the removal of pedestrian level crossings.

The Australian and Victorian governments have invested more than \$4 billion in the Regional Rail Revival program, which includes significant station upgrades on the regional network.

This program has already seen the construction of overpass pedestrian structures to eliminate the existing level rail pedestrian crossings at the following stations:

- Bacchus Marsh
- Ballan
- Wendouree
- Cobblebank
- Rockbank

The new elevated Deer Park Station also includes an overpass structure replacing the old rail pedestrian crossing at Mt Derrimut Road.

The ARA member makes these reports available on its website throughout the exemption period.

V/Line will provide an update on its progress via its exemption report, which is to be updated on an annual basis.

The report will be available on V/Line's website: <https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/Accessibility>

Exemptions Details Transport Standards 2.6

Exemptions from the Transport Standards 2.6 Access Paths Conveyances

Temporary Exemption : Existing rail conveyances

For a period of 5 years, an access path is only required at a single door of existing rail conveyances, subject to the following conditions:
Equivalent access is provided at an alternative door of the rail conveyance in the following circumstances:

- a) if an allocated space is not available
- b) to ensure access to unique facilities, including an accessible bathroom (where provided), or
- c) to ensure a passenger can both board and alight the rail conveyance.

Reporting Requirements

Within 12 months of the grant of this exemption, the ARA member utilising this exemption installs signage in close proximity to the primary boarding point to notify passengers with mobility disability how access can be achieved through an alternative entry point, with staff assistance if required

The ARA member utilising this exemption reports to the Commission within 12 months of the exemption confirming the completion of the installation of the signage.

Platforms at V/Line stations have a boarding assistance zone (BAZ) identified by a decal on the ground (Photo 1).

Customers with accessibility needs are able to wait in the BAZ for the train conductor. Conductors, present on all V/Line services, will assist passengers waiting in the BAZ to board the train and provide other relevant boarding information such as alternative entry points. The conductor will also be responsible for deploying a boarding ramp if required or requested by the customer.

The boarding assistance decal has been installed on all V/Line station platforms.



Photo 1: Boarding Assistance signage at Mooroopna

The ARA member utilising this exemption provides a written strategy to the ARA and the Commission within 12 months of this exemption to demonstrate how the member intends to provide access paths between the entrance of a conveyance and the allocated spaces and other essential facilities for passengers with disabilities, including the relevant mode of rail travel, its proposed time frames for actioning this strategy, and proposed expenditure for that action so that the member may achieve compliance with the Transport Standards by the end of the exemption period.

Each V/Line service offers a minimum of one (1) accessible carriage on each train set.

The accessible carriages have direct access paths between the designated accessible doors and the allocated spaces. An accessible bathroom is also directly accessible from the allocated spaces.

All V/Line accessible carriages have a boarding ramp stored on-board next to the accessible doors which the conductor can deploy as required to assist passengers with a mobility aid or accessibility requirement in order to board/alight the carriage.

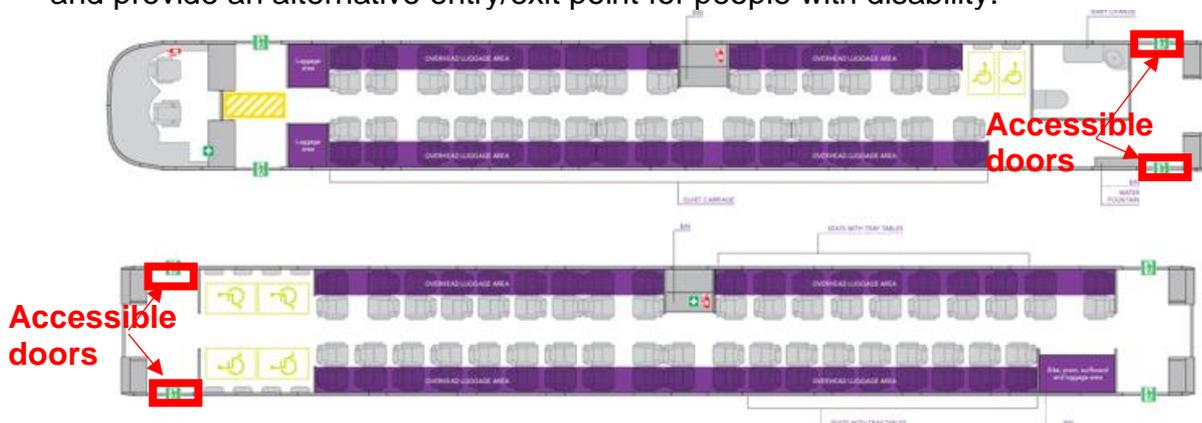
Customers with disabilities can board or alight the train from any doors on V/Line trains even if the door is not designated with an accessible symbol, however, customers with mobility devices are limited to boarding from the accessible doors only so that they can reach the allocated spaces on-board.

V/Line typically runs its services using the following rolling stock:

FLEET TYPE	NUMBER IN SERVICE (2023)
VLocity - 3car set	106
N-set (with 1 accessible carriage)	7
N-set (with 2 accessible carriages)	4
H-set (with 1 accessible carriage)	3
H-set (with 2 accessible carriages)	6
Sprinter	21

VLocity Fleet

VLocity trains, representing around 72% of total V/Line fleet, provide a minimum of six (6) accessible spaces which can be accessed from two separate accessible doors on each side of the train. Both doors are accessible from each allocated space and provide an alternative entry/exit point for people with disability.



Classic Fleet

Sprinters and some of the H-set and N-set fleet (referred to as Classic Fleet) have a minimum of two accessible carriages with one (1) or two (2) allocated spaces on each service. The accessible carriages have one (1) designated accessible door. On these services, customers have access to an alternative door when boarding the train (i.e. alternative accessible carriage) but once on-board, they can only alight from one (1) single door as it is not possible for customers with mobility devices to

travel through the carriage due to the limited access path width between the standard seats.

10 classic fleet set (H-set and N-set) have a configuration that provides one (1) accessible carriage with an accessible door available to board and alight the service.

Strategy to provide alternative boarding point/accessible doors

V/Line is regularly introducing new, reliable and accessible VLocity trains onto the network.

There are already more than 100 VLocity trains in service and the Victorian Government committed \$601 million in the 2023-24 State Budget to deliver a further 23 new VLocity trains.

This comes on top of \$250 million committed in the 2022-23 State Budget for an additional 12 new three-car VLocity units.

Each VLocity train has six accessible spaces per three-carriage set and this investment will ensure V/Line can continue to progressively replace classic fleet trains with VLocity trains across the regional network.

While we work to progressively roll out increasingly more VLocity trains, we've also delivered a considerable program of upgrades on our classic fleet trains.

These upgrades have significantly improved the availability of accessible carriages on long-distance services, and also improved amenities for passengers with mobility aids travelling on our Sprinter trains which run to commuter locations.

2 out of the 6 doors on each VLocity set are currently accessible and provide access to the accessible features (allocated space and accessible bathroom). For all doors to be accessible with a continuous access path between them, a completely new rolling stock will need to be designed and constructed to replace all existing fleet.

The ARA member utilising this exemption provides reports to the Commission every 12 months from the date of this exemption setting out the member's progress toward providing access paths between the entrance of a conveyance and all allocated spaces and facilities for passengers with disabilities, including:

- a) **the number of conveyances over which this exemption is claimed and the relevant mode of rail travel.**
- b) **the actual expenditure incurred in implementing the strategy in the previous 12 months, expressed as a dollar figure and as a percentage of total budget, and**
- c) **the safety procedures and staff training in place to ensure the safe and timely evacuation of people with disability from conveyances in the event that evacuation is required, including in the event of an emergency, and**

the ARA member utilising this exemption makes these plans and reports available on its website throughout the exemption period.

During the current reporting period, the temporary exemption to board from a single door is claimed for the following rail conveyances:

- N-Set: 11
- H-Set: 9
- Sprinters: 21
- VLocity: 106

VLocity trains currently provide customers with accessibility needs a minimum of two (2) accessible doors to board and alight from at any time.

Seven (7) VLocity trains were added to the fleet between June 2022 and June 2023.

Safety Procedures

V/Line procedures clearly identify that the train conductors have a duty to assist customers with accessibility needs throughout their journey. The conductors' duties also includes assisting customers with accessibility needs during the following:

- Evacuation when train is at the station
- Evacuation when train is in-between station (detraining procedure)
- Duties during delay and disruption

Emergency response plans have been developed for each corridor to identify all relevant personnel and specific procedure applicable at each station.

Staff training

All V/Line train conductors undergo specialised training at commencement of their employment during a five (5) week course, which includes the following modules:

- General customer service training;
- Disability awareness;
- Communication access training including a face-to-face session with personnel from external training provider, SCOPE; and
- Incident response procedure.

Train conductors are specifically briefed during their training period on the procedures for the following situations:

- *'Assisting Customers with Accessibility Needs'*
- *'Assist Conductor and Conductor Handovers'*
- *'Conductor and Customer Service Manager Duties During a Delay or Disruption'*
- *'Evacuating Customers from a Train when not at a Platform'*
- *'Emergency Evacuation of Customers from a Train – Conductor Incapacitated'*
- *'Deployment of the boarding ramp'*

The train conductors also receive two (2) weeks on-the-job training with senior conductors where they are mentored through various duties.

Refresher training courses are run for conductors annually. V/Line staff can view accessibility training material videos at any time from the V/Line server.

Train conductors and frontline staff receive special disability awareness and communication access training. V/Line is accredited with the Communication Access Symbol, meaning that staff can communicate successfully with customers, and communication tools are available to help staff communicate and understand customers with communication requirements.

Exemptions Details: Transports Standards 2.8

Exemptions from the Transport Standards 2.8 Extent of Path

Temporary Exemption : Existing rail conveyances

For a period of 5 years, an access path is only required at a single door of existing rail conveyances, subject to the following conditions:

Reporting Requirement:

Same conditions as Clause 2.6

Please refer to V/Line response to Part 2.6 Access paths – Conveyances

Exemptions Details Transport Standards 6.4

Exemptions from the Transport Standards 6.4 Slope of external boarding ramps

Temporary Exemption : Existing rail conveyances

For a period of 5 years, for existing rail conveyances, where the relationship between the platform and rail carriage means that an external board ramp can only be provided at a gradient greater than 1 in 8 and less than 1 in 4, ARA members are not required to provide staff assistance in ascending or descending the ramp, subject to the following conditions

Reporting Requirements

Within 12 months of the exemption, the ARA member utilising this exemption undertake data mapping of all stations and stops state-wide to identify the relevant locations where an external board ramp can only be provided at a gradient greater than 1 in 8 and less than 1 in 4 and provide to the Commission:

- a) a report setting out its findings from the data mapping, including identifying the locations at which an external board ramp can only be provided at a gradient greater than 1 in 8 and less than 1 in 4 and the relevant mode of rail travel.**
- b) a written strategy on how platforms can be improved at nominated boarding points on a case-by-case basis, including time frames for action and planned expenditure for the improvements, and**
- c) a safety management plan addressing the safety procedures and staff training in place to ensure the safe and timely evacuation of people with disability from conveyances at these locations in the event that evacuation is required, including during an emergency.**

V/Line has carried out platform surveys and recorded platform height at 10m interval on all platforms. This data provided the basis for a study prepared by V/Line to develop solutions to improve the boarding gradient.

Resulting gradient on the boarding ramp could be calculated from the platform level data and the train floor level.

The actual boarding location for customers with mobility devices on a given platform (i.e. the position of the accessible doors) will vary depending on several factors, including:

- rolling stock type;
- train configuration – i.e. position of the accessible carriage within the set;
- number of sets forming the train (i.e. whether it is a 3-car or 6-car consist); and
- train stopping position.

The lowest level recorded on each platform was used to calculate the gradient to alleviate the variance in the train accessible door position and find the steepest possible gradient on each given platform (i.e. worst case scenario). Table 3 classifies each V/Line platform within the DSAPT definition of assisted/unassisted access.

Table 3: Boarding ramp gradient / station platform

BOARDING RAMP GRADIENT	STATIONS [PLATFORM NO.]
Up to gradient 1:8 for unassisted access	Kerang[1]; Avenel[2]; Wodonga[1]; Deer Park [1,2]; Violet Town[2]; Garfield[2]; Little River[2]
Gradient steeper than 1:8 for assisted access	<p>Clarkefield [1,2]; Riddells Creek [1,2]; Gisborne [1,2]; Macedon [1]; Woodend [1,2]; Kyneton [1,2]; Malmsbury [1,2]; Castlemaine [2]; Kangaroo Flat [1]; Bendigo [1,2]; Epsom [1]; Huntly [1]; Goornong [1]; Elmore [1]; Rochester [1]; Echuca [1]; Raywood [1]; Dingee[1];Pyramid Hill [1]; Swan Hill [1]; Avenel [1]; Euroa [1]; Violet Town [1]; Benalla [1,2]; Wangaratta [1,2]; Springhurst [1,2]; Chiltern [1,2]; Donnybrook [1,2]; Wallan [1]; Heathcote junction [2]; Wandong [1,2]; Kilmore East [1]; Broadford [1]; Seymour [1,3]; Nagambie [1]; Murchison East [1]; Nar Nar Goon [1,2]; Garfield [1]; Bunyip [1,2]; Longwarry [1,2]; Drouin [1,2]; Warragul [1,2]; Yarragon [1,2]; Trafalgar [1,2]; Moe [1]; Morwell [1,2]; Traralgon [1,2]; Rosedale [1]; Sale [1]; Stratford [1]; Bairnsdale [1]; Tarnet [1,2]; Wyndham Vale [1,2]; Little River [1]; Lara [1,2]; North Shore [1]; North Geelong [1,2]; Geelong [1,2,3]; Marshall [1]; Waurin Ponds [1,2]; Winchelsea [1]; Birregurra [1]; Colac [1]; Camperdown [1]; Terang [1]; Sherwood Park [1]; Ardeer [1]; Caroline Springs [1,2]; Rockbank [1,2]; Cobblebank [1,2]; Melton [2]; Bacchus Marsh [2]; Ballan [1,2]; Ballarat [1]; Wendouree [1,2]; Ararat [1]; Creswick [1]; Clunes [1]; Talbot [1]</p> <p>Castlemaine [1]; Eaglehawk [1]; Wallan [1]; Heathcote Junction [1]; Tallarook [1,2]; Tynong [1,2]; Drouin [1]; Corio [1]; Winchelsea [1]; Colac [1]; Warrnambool [1]; Melton [1]; Shepparton[1]; Bacchus Marsh [1]; Ballarat [2]; Beaufort [1]; Maryborough [1]; Macedon [2]; Kangaroo Flat[2]; Euroa[2]; Kilmore East [2]; Broadford [2]; Seymour[2]; Corio [1,2]; North Shore[2]; Ardeer[2]</p>

It has been established that platforms heights are required to be adjusted to 1200mm to meet the 'unassisted access' boarding gradient (i.e max slope 1:8) for all train types.

The following solutions are being investigated in order to achieve the required height:

- Platform reconstruction and raising
- Track lowering

- Installation of short-raised boarding pads at selected locations on the platform.

There is no universal solution that can be adopted across the network as each station and platform will have its own constraints. The preferred solution is for the entire platform to have a constant level of 1200mm to permit unassisted boarding throughout all accessible doors on the train. This would involve either track lowering or platform raising.

Most V/Line platforms are not suitable for track lowering due to the resulting additional loads on the platform. Track lowering is only possible for platforms built recently with a design compatible with track lowering such as the platforms part of the Regional Rail Revival and Regional Rail Link programs.

V/Line has commenced upgrading platforms at stations with particularly steep boarding gradients. For example, works have commenced at Little River where platform 2 has been raised to 1200mm, providing a compliant gradient for unassisted boarding.

Table 4 shows stations where a track lowering option would be suitable and Table 5 shows the stations where platform raising would be the preferred option.

Table 4: Station with track lowering option

STATIONS WITH LIKELY TRACK LOWERING OPTIONS				
Birregurra	Dingee	South Geelong	Tarneit	Wyndham Vale
Clunes	Elmore	Rochester	Warragul	Pyramid Hill
Creswick	Marshall	Talbot	Winchelsea	
STATIONS DESIGNED TO ACCOMMODATE TRACK LOWERING				
Waurm Ponds	Wendouree	Melton	Cobblebank	Bacchus Marsh
Ballan	Rockbank	Caroline Springs		

Table 5 : Station with platform raising option

STATIONS FOR PLATFORM RAISING / RECONSTRUCTION				
Ararat	Ardeer	Avenel	Bairnsdale	Ballan
Ballarat	Beaufort	Benalla	Bendigo	Broadford
Benalla	Bendigo	Bunyip	Camperdown	Castlemaine
Chiltern	Clarkefield	Colac	Corio	Donnybrook
Drouin	Eaglehawk	Echuca	Epsom	Euroa

Garfield	Geelong	Gisborne	Heathcote Jct	Kangaroo Flat
Kilmore East	Kyneton	Lara	Little River	Longwarry
Macedon	Malmsbury	Maryborough	Melton	Moe
Mooroopna	Morwell	Murchinson East	Nagambie	Nar Nar Goon
North Geelong	North Shore	Riddells Creek	Rockbank	Rosedale
Sale	Seymour	Shepparton	Sherwood Park	Springhurst
Strafford	Swan Hill	Tallarook	Terang	Trafalgar
Traralgon	Tynong	Violet Town	Wallan	Wandong
Wangaratta	Warragul	Warrnambool	Woodend	Yarragon

Whilst the optimal solution is to raise the entire platform to a consistent level, local constraints (including heritage requirements, structural constraints, buildings, cost etc.) present difficulties.

In the interim, V/Line has considered the installation of localised raised boarding areas on the platform. This option also has limitations as the raised pads will create uneven surfaces with additional ramps on the platform which might create trip hazards. Determination of the exact location and length of the pad can be complex due to multiple train configurations and fleet types stopping at a given station.

It should also be noted that the installation of localised raised boarding pads is not considered a long-term solution to the unassisted boarding issue as this would not permit unassisted access to every accessible door on the train.

Based on the initial assumptions for the track lowering and platform raising options it was estimated an average indicative budget \$0.8M per site would be required to adjust platform heights across the corridor. These are indicative direct cost estimates only and exclude items such as surveys, services relocation, heritage approvals, agency overheads, risks and contingencies etc.

Further investigations will be required to determine the feasibility of the proposed solutions.

V/Line will continue to actively work with DTP to review the options and timeframes to adjust the platform heights across the network.

Safety Procedures

V/Line procedures clearly identify that the train conductors have a duty to assist customers with accessibility needs throughout their journey. The conductor's duties also include assisting the customers with accessibility needs during:

- Evacuation when train is at the station;
- Evacuation when train is in-between station (detraining procedure); and
- Duties during delay and disruption.

Emergency response plans have been developed for each corridor to identify all relevant personnel and specific procedure applicable at each station.

Staff training

All V/Line train conductors undergo specialized training at the commencement of their employment during a five (5) week course including the following modules:

- General customer service training;
- Disability awareness;
- Communication Access Training including a face-to-face session with personnel from external training provider, SCOPE; and
- Incident response procedure.

Train conductors are specifically briefed during their training period on the procedures for the following situations:

- *'Assisting Customers with Accessibility Needs'*
- *'Assist Conductor and Conductor Handovers'*
- *'Conductor and Customer Service Manager Duties During a Delay or Disruption'*
- *'Evacuating Customers from a Train when not at a Platform'*
- *'Emergency Evacuation of Customers from a Train – Conductor Incapacitated'*
- *'Deployment of the boarding ramp'*

The train conductors also receive two (2) weeks on the job training with senior conductors when they are mentored through various duties.

Refresher training courses are run for conductors annually. V/Line staff can view at any time accessibility training material on the V/Line server.

Train conductors and frontline staff receive special disability awareness and communication access training. V/Line is accredited with the Communication Access Symbol meaning that staff are able to communicate successfully with customers, and communication tools are available to help staff communicate and understand customer with communication disabilities.

The ARA member utilising this exemption ensures that service users can obtain information about restricted access at any particular rail station or infrastructure:

- a) at the location of the restriction**
- b) via the ARA members' websites and downloadable fact sheets**
- c) in person at Travel Centres, where they exist.**
- d) via a telephone call to the Customer Contact Centre, where available, and**
- e) via any other forms of communication provided by the ARA member (such as a mobile application)**

Customers will be informed directly by the conductor on site of possible steep gradient on the boarding ramp when they deploy the boarding ramp. If a customer using mobility device is unable to ascend the boarding ramp due to the gradient, the conductor will organize an alternative accessible taxi service as per V/Line procedures.

V/Line frontline staff, when present at the station, are also able to inform customers about the boarding procedure and potential gradient issues.

Customers can also contact the PTV call centre to discuss their requirements if they are using mobility aid devices.

Customers can find further information about the boarding ramp on the V/Line website accessibility page in the *Wheelchair and mobility aid access* section:
<https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/Accessibility>

The ARA member utilising this exemption makes these reports available on its website throughout the exemption period

This report and subsequent reports will be available on the V/Line website:

<https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/Accessibility>

Any ARA member utilising this exemption provides free travel for any assistant accompanying a person with disability who requires assistance to use the ramps between 1 in 8 and 1 in 4 and publicises the free travel arrangements:

- a) at the location of the restriction
- b) on the ARA members' websites and downloadable fact sheets
- c) at Travel Centres, where they exist.
- d) to enquirers calling the Customer Contact Centre concerning access, where relevant, and
- e) via any other forms of communication provided by the ARA member (such as a mobile application).

V/Line accepts the Companion Card on all of its services and provides free travel for customers companions and carers with a Companion Card.

Information is provided on the V/Line website accessibility page which links to the Victorian Government Companion Card webpage where customers can apply for the card and find information on how to use it (Figure 1).

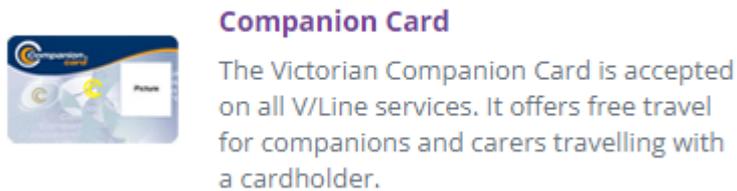


Figure 1: Link to Companion Card - <https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/Accessibility>

Conductors are fully aware of the Companion Card requirements and will provide advice to the customers and their companion and/or carer when meeting the customers on the platform.

Exemptions Details : Transport Standards 8.2

Exemptions from the Transport Standards 8.2 When boarding devices must be provided.

Temporary Exemption : Existing rail conveyances

For a period of 5 years, an access path is only required at a single door of existing rail conveyances, subject to the following conditions:

Equivalent access is provided at an alternative door of the rail conveyance, including clear communication of the method for signalling for staff assistance if required at the equivalent access location, in the following circumstances:

- a) if an allocated space is not available
- b) to ensure access to unique facilities, including an accessible bathroom (where provided), or
- c) to ensure a passenger can both board and alight the rail conveyance

Reporting Requirements

Any ARA member utilising the exemption ensures that service users can obtain information about specified boarding points at any particular rail station or infrastructure, including information about the way passengers can signal for assistance from staff if required at any equivalent access location:

- a) **at any platform at which there is a specified boarding point, including at any equivalent access location.**
- b) **via the ARA members' websites and downloadable fact sheets**
- c) **in person at Travel Centres, where they exist.**
- d) **via a telephone call to the Customer Contact Centre, where available, and**
- e) **via any other forms of communication provided by the ARA member (such as a mobile application)**

V/Line customers can find information about how they can receive assistance for their journey on-site and through various information channels.

Boarding Assistance Zone

Customers with accessibility needs can wait at the demarcated Boarding Assistance Zone (BAZ) at each V/Line platform where they will be approached by the train conductor who will provide them with direct assistance and escort them to the accessible door near the available allocated spaces. Conductors can also provide

information regarding boarding points and how to signal for assistance. All V/Line operated platforms have signage present on the platform to indicate the location of the BAZ.



Image 1: Boarding Assistance signage at Mooroopna

V/Line website

The accessibility page on V/Line website (<https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/Accessibility>) provides customers with accessibility needs relevant information about the accessibility features available to them, and explains the direct assistance procedure. Customers can also take virtual 3D tours of specific stations.

Select your line:

- Geelong & Warrnambool >
- Ballarat, Ararat & Maryborough >
- Bendigo, Echuca & Swan Hill >
- Seymour, Shepparton & Albury >
- Gippsland & Bairnsdale >

Geelong & Warrnambool lines



Warrnambool Station



Marshall Station



South Geelong Station

Image 2: V/Line station virtual 3D tour - <https://www.vline.com.au/virtual-station-tours>

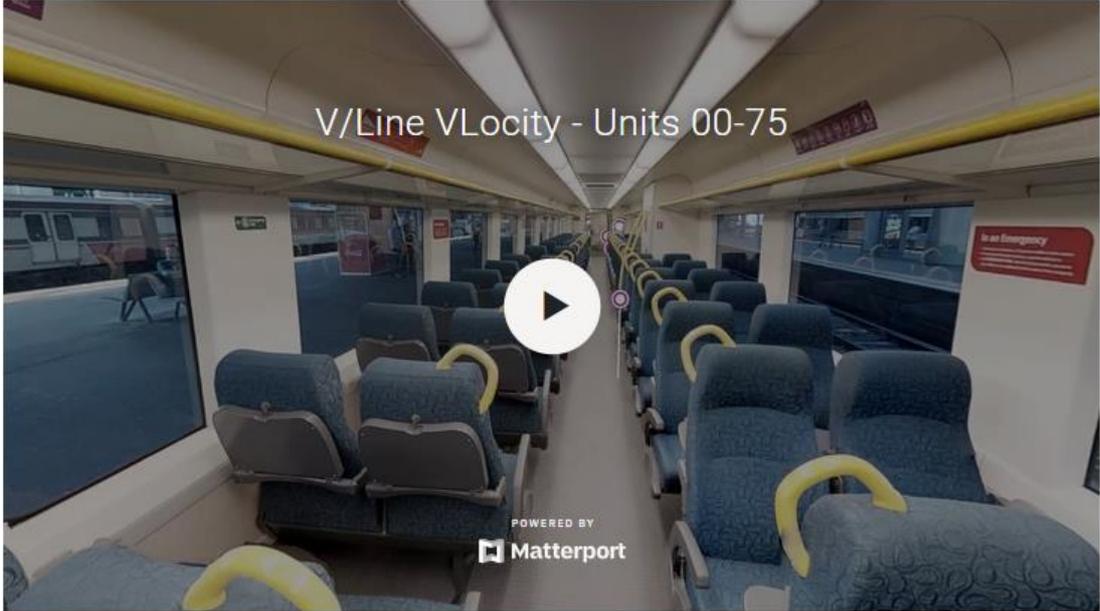
Customers can familiarise themselves with the layout of the accessible carriages on their booked service by viewing the map diagram and taking a virtual 3D tour on the 'on-board' web page: <https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/On-board>.

VLocity

VLocity - Units 00-75

85% of V/Line's VLocity fleet is made up of the fleet design below. This design features 222 seats with six accessible spaces and storage for up to six bicycles. Take a virtual tour of the VLocity below.

VLocitys will either run as a three car set, or coupled with another VLocity to form a six car set.



V/Line VLocity - Units 00-75

POWERED BY Matterport

Download VLocity 00-75 map (PDF - 561KB)

Image 3: Fleet virtual tour - <https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/On-board>

Customer information desks

At staffed stations, customers can receive assistance and education from V/Line staff at the Customer Information Desk. Assistance may include directing customers to the BAZ so that the Conductor on-board can provide additional boarding assistance support or organise alternative transport if and when required.

Customer call centre

Customers with accessibility needs can call the PTV call centre on 1800 800 007 to ask any questions about the service or discuss their specific needs.

Any ARA member utilising this exemption ensures that assistance is provided at each station at all times that the station is operating in deploying the assisted boarding device for passengers who require assistance boarding and alighting a rail conveyance without the requirement for passengers to book or make prior arrangements for assistance

Customers with accessibility needs can approach station staff during operating hours to discuss their accessibility requirements.

At stations with no customer service desk, customers with accessibility needs can wait for the train to arrive and receive direct assistance from the conductor on-board the train. All V/Line rail services have conductors on-board to provide such assistance.

Customers do not need to pre-book to receive direct assistance but they can do so online or through the customer center if they wish to.

Any ARA member utilising the exemption provides a report to the Commission and the ARA within 12 months of the grant of this exemption on:

- a) **the number of conveyances over which this exemption is claimed, including the relevant mode of rail travel.**
- b) **the number of stations where an assisted boarding device is provided only at a single door of any conveyance consistent with this exemption.**
- c) **the measures taken to ensure that staff and passengers are adequately informed of:**
 - i. **the doors of rail conveyances at which boarding devices are available, and**
 - ii. **the equivalent access measures available, including how passengers can signal for assistance from staff at the equivalent access location.**
- d) **the safety procedures and staff training in place for the safe and timely evacuation of people with disability from conveyances at locations where an assisted boarding device is only provided at a single door of a conveyance in the event of a need to evacuate, including an emergency, and**
- e) **measures taken to ensure that assistance is provided to passengers at each station at all times the railway is operating, whether by the driver of the conveyance or by ensuring sufficient staff are available at stations to assist passengers through the deployment of the assisted boarding device, the number of staff at each station and the roles in which they are employed, and the planned and actual expenditure incurred in implementing these measures, expressed as a dollar figure and as a percentage of total budget**

The report be updated every 12 months

The ARA member utilising this exemption makes the report available on its website throughout the exemption period,

Reporting period : June 2022- June 2023

During the current reporting period, the temporary exemption is claimed for the following V/Line rail conveyances:

- N-Set: 11
- H-Set: 9
- Sprinters : 21
- VLocity: 106

VLocity trains currently provide customers with accessibility needs a minimum of two (2) accessible doors to board and alight from at any time.

Please refer to DSAPT exemption 2.6 in this report for further details on the fleet type and configuration.

During the current reporting period, the temporary exemption is claimed for all the V/Line stations.

Measures taken to inform staff and customers of location of accessible doors

The international accessible symbol has been installed on all accessible doors of the V/Line fleet (Image 4).



Image 4: International accessibility sign on VLocity train door

The train conductor, present on each V/Line service, will come and meet customers with accessibility needs on the platform (at the boarding assistance zone) and escort them to the relevant accessible doors.

Customers with accessibility needs can also approach any staff identifiable by the V/Line uniform at staffed station and ask for assistance.

Customers can notify their boarding ramp requirement at the booking stage on the V/Line website which will then be conveyed to the conductor on the scheduled service.

Customers can check the type of rolling stock used for their journey through the online booking page or on the V/Line App, in order to determine their accessibility requirements.

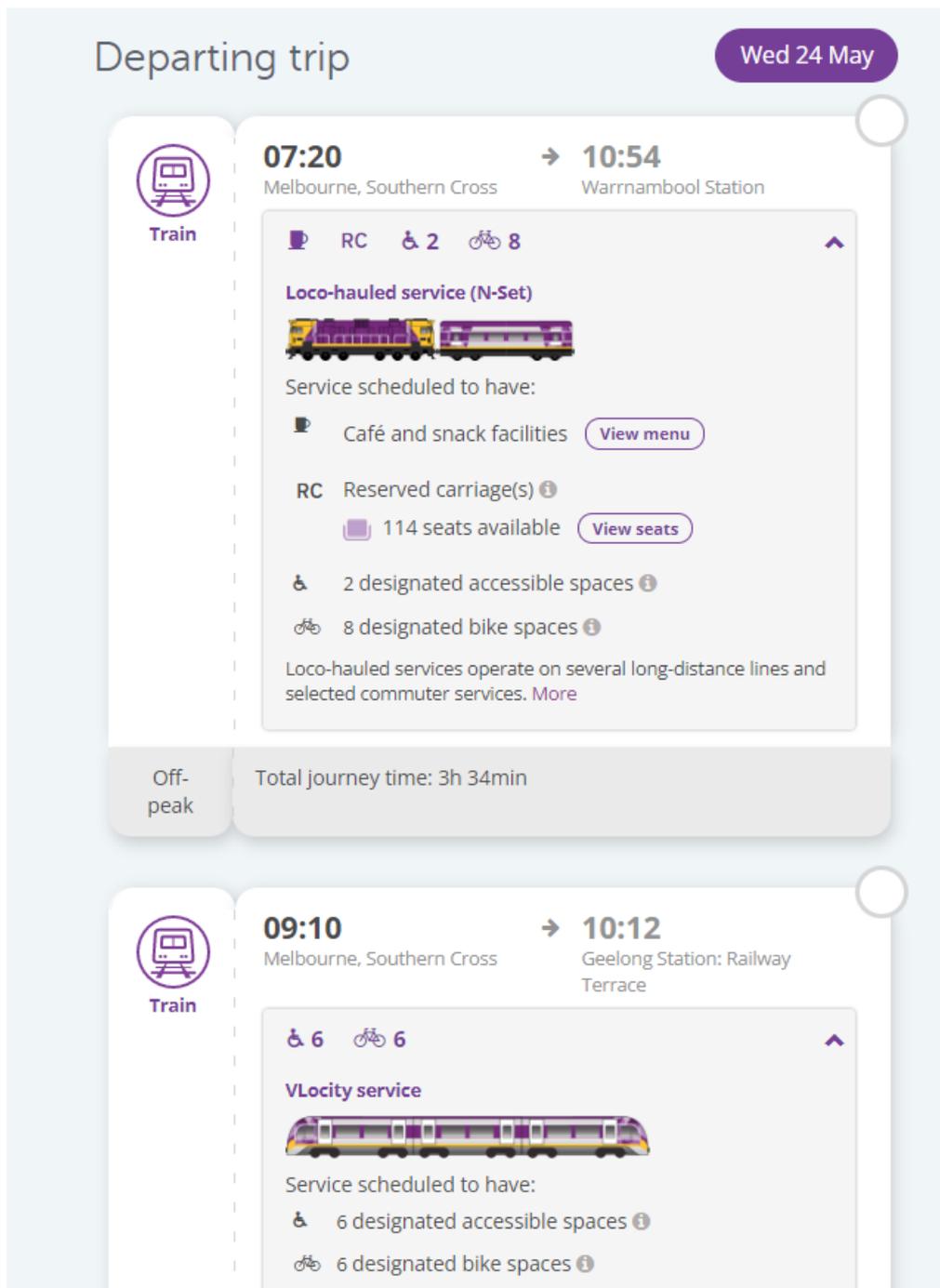


Figure 2: V/Line booking page showing rolling stock type and accessible features

Customers can also find more information about the layout and location of the allocated spaces in the specified train type from the 'on-board page' <https://www.vline.com.au/Fares-general-info/On-board>.

They can view overall train layout and location of the allocated space and other accessible features on a map diagram as well as take 3D virtual tour of each fleet type.

Safety procedure and staff training

V/Line direct assistance procedure is supported by multiple internal procedures, including:

- *'Assisting Customers with Accessibility Needs'*
- *'Assist Conductor and Conductor Handovers'*
- *'Conductor and Customer Service Manager Duties During a Delay or Disruption'*
- *'Evacuating Customers from a Train when not at a Platform'*
- *'Emergency Evacuation of Customers from a Train – Conductor Incapacitated'*
- *'Deployment of the boarding ramp'*

These procedures cover normal and emergency procedures, and provide the specific protocols for staff to provide assistance to customers with accessibility requirements during the respective operations.

Train conductors undergo specialized training during a five-week course at the start of their employment which covers emergency situations and incident response procedures. A special module also focuses on how to deploy the boarding ramp safely for customers. The train conductors will have opportunities to practice the boarding ramp procedure during their two (2) week on-the-job training following the initial five (5) week course.

Measures taken to ensure that assistance is provided to customers at each station at all times the railway is operating

All V/Line services have at least one (1) train conductor on-board who has a duty to provide direct assistance to customers.

The train conductor provides assistance in line with the following protocols:

- approach customers waiting in the Boarding Assistance Zone on the platforms;
- discuss directly with them their requirements for their journey and support required from V/Line;
- escort customers to the available allocated spaces / priority seats on the train where required;
- deploy the boarding ramp where required;
- show customers the location of assistance call button on the train in case they require further assistance during the journey;
- log on Tally App destination station which will provide the conductor with a timely reminder that a customer requires assistance to alight at the next station;
- assist customers with accessibility needs to alight the train and deploy boarding ramp if required; and
- provide any additional information when required.

V/Line employs 311 conductors (as at 2023) across the various V/Line corridors to ensure each train has a minimum of one (1) conductor present to assist customers waiting on the platforms for the service or on-board the train.

The current V/Line procedure, therefore, ensures assistance is provided to customers at each station.

the ARA member utilising this exemption provides de-identified reports to the Commission on any complaints made to it or an external agency (of which the ARA member is aware) alleging a failure in the provision of access, including equivalent access. The report should identify the station that was the subject of the complaint

Reports relevant to this exemption conditions are provided to the Commission separately to this report.