



NCPD

National Council of & for
Persons with Disabilities

Accessibility and the Built Environment

Inclusive infrastructure, transport and public services

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Why Universal Access Matters

1

Dignity & Equality

Universal design supports dignity, equality and participation for all

2

Access to Opportunity

Accessible infrastructure enables access to work, education, healthcare and much more

3

Addressing Inequality

In South Africa, universal access is essential for addressing historical inequality and exclusion

Context in South Africa

Accessible Infrastructure Includes:

- Schools
- Higher learning institutions
- Public buildings
- Transport systems
- Public services

Bloemfontein: Hauweng IPTN Bus Service

- The Hauweng service, is part of the Mangaung Integrated Public Transport Network in Bloemfontein
- It connects key destinations including the University of the Free State, Bloemgate and Tempe
- The service presents an important opportunity to improve inclusive urban mobility
- Reported features include ramps and designated wheelchair space on buses



Similar Bus Services Across South Africa

Rea Vaya

Johannesburg

Promotes universal access in its system

A Re Yeng

Tshwane

Integrated public transport network serving the capital

MyCiTi

Cape Town

Accessible bus rapid transit across the metro

George Go!

George

Demonstrates BRT viability in smaller cities

These services show that accessible, scheduled bus systems are possible in South African cities

Progress and Gaps

Formal bus systems can provide:

- Predictable routes
- Safer boarding
- Better information systems
- Improved access to education and employment

However, challenges remain:

Rollout remains uneven across municipalities, and many schools and universities lack accessible infrastructure

Public service offices often remain inaccessible, and inclusion gains in major corridors do not reach all communities

High-platform stations and new low-floor buses create boarding mismatches — wheelchair users and passengers with reduced mobility face dangerous gaps between vehicle and platform

Rea Vaya is now auditing accessibility gaps across BRT stations, vehicles, signage and digital platforms

Lack of Access to Minibus Taxis

Minibus taxis remain one of the most widely used public transport modes in South Africa, yet they are often not accessible for persons with disabilities, especially wheelchair users.

Research highlights barriers including:

- Limited space inside vehicles
- Poor vehicle design
- Extra costs for wheelchairs and carers
- Negative attitudes
- Inaccessible surrounding infrastructure such as sidewalks and roads

Why This Matters

Transport exclusion becomes education exclusion and economic exclusion

Without accessible taxis, many persons with disabilities are excluded from:

- Schools
- Higher learning institutions
- Health services
- Work opportunities
- Community participation



Universal Access to Schools and Higher Learning

URGENT

Learners and students with disabilities need:

- Accessible transport
- Accessible campus routes
- Accessible classrooms and lecture venues
- Disability support services
- Inclusive teaching and learning environments

A Call to Action

Universal access must be built into:

1

Transport Planning

Mandate accessible vehicles, routes and stops in all public transport systems

2

School Infrastructure

Require universal access, accessible toilets, and assistive technology in every school

3

University Design

Ensure universal accessible lecture venues, campus routes, and disability support services

4

Municipal Service Delivery

Make all public service offices and civic facilities fully accessible

The time for incremental progress is over — government, operators, institutions and civil society must act now
Accessibility is a constitutional right — not a courtesy, but a commitment to dignity and full participation

The Way Forward

- Bloemfontein's Hauweng IPTN proves accessible public transport is achievable when inclusion is a design principle, not an afterthought
- Scaling these solutions nationally demands political will, sustained funding, and accountability at every level of government
- The continued inaccessibility of minibus taxis, schools, universities, and public services denies millions their constitutional rights
- Universal access is not optional — it is the foundation of a just and inclusive South Africa

When persons with disabilities are excluded from the spaces and systems that shape daily life, our democracy falls short of its promise. The time to act is now.



THANK YOU!



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