

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Day of General Discussion - “The Right to Accessibility”

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Disability Parking Permit schemes around the world – helping people with a mobility handicap achieve mobility and access

The FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile)

The FIA is a federation of 221 motoring and touring clubs in 132 countries around the world. Representing over 114 millions members and their families, *Mobility for all* is a key pillar of FIA activities promoting the access and mobility needs of people with a mobility handicap.

Case study showing a challenge in implementing the Right to Accessibility

Background

Earlier this year, the FIA Brussels Bureau collaborated with disability consultant, Bert Morris to undertake a world survey of disability parking card schemes, with the output being the *FIA Guide for the disabled traveller*, to be published shortly. The project was funded by a grant from the FIA Foundation.

The most comprehensive and informative guide on parking permit schemes around the world, the FIA Guide:

- Explains the parking privileges on roads and in car parks granted to the holders of a parking permit
- Informs visitors to another country or federal state whether or not the parking privileges of that country or state are available to them

Parking permit schemes facilitate mobility and access for people with a mobility handicap. This memorandum explains how schemes work, how people with a mobility handicap benefit, and how greater standardisation of the parking permit together with reciprocity between countries would facilitate the movement of disabled people from country to country.

Parking permits schemes and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Parking permit schemes and the *FIA Guide for the disabled traveller* contribute significantly to three articles of the UN Convention:

- **Article 9 – Accessibility:**
 - Requires states to ensure that the built environment and public facilities are accessible for all members of the community

- A parking permit helps overcome the access barriers at the end destination of a journey with reserved and privileged parking available for people with a mobility handicap
- **Article 20 - *Personal mobility***
 - Requires that effective measures are taken so people with a disability have the greatest possible personal mobility and independence
 - A car is usually the first choice mode for people with a mobility handicap and the award of a parking permit to a driver or a passenger enhances their personal mobility opportunities by car
- **Article 21 - *Access to information***
 - Requires that public information is provided in accessible formats, via appropriate technologies
 - People with a mobility handicap require information on mobility and access available to them and the *FIA Guide for the disabled traveler* will be the primary source of the information they need wherever they travel around the world

Parking permit schemes - facilitating access

Many countries around the world with high levels of car ownership have introduced disability parking permit schemes that:

- Identify the holder as someone with a mobility handicap who is unable to walk unaided, or who has very limited independent mobility
- Allows the permit holder to park in parking places reserved exclusively for disabled people, and / or to park on roads where it is prohibited or restricted to everyone else

The purpose is to ensure that someone with a mobility handicap can achieve access at the end of the journey i.e. it removes access barriers by facilitating parking at or very close to the final destination.

The Parking permit is issued to the driver of a car, or to a passenger; the sole criteria are the inability to walk, the inability to walk unaided, or the ability to walk only a very short distance independently.

Parking card schemes around the world

Parking card schemes operate around the world in countries where travel by car is dominant i.e., for example all European (EU and EEA) member states, all the states / territories/ provinces of the USA, Canada and Australia / New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, and so on,

The medical / physical criteria for the award of a parking permit, the parking privileges it ensures, and reciprocity for disabled visitors vary between countries, and within countries. For example:

- Europe (EU and EEA) have adopted a standardised model parking permit (card) that most member states issue, but the medical and physical criteria for its award, the parking privileges it grants, and the rights of visitors to reciprocity are

matters for individual member states. Most recognise the parking permit of someone visiting from another EU / EEA member state, others do not; many recognise the permit of someone visiting from outside the EU / EEA, but others do not

- In the USA, there is a standardised model parking permit (placard) and the federal government has issued guidelines on how schemes should operate, but it is a matter for individual states to decide the medial criteria, the parking privileges and reciprocity for visitors
- Australian and Canadian states / provinces / territories issue there own individual parking permits, and decide the eligibility criteria and parking privileges, but both countries offer reciprocity to visitors from abroad

Reciprocity

There are two international non-binding recommendations promoting parking permit reciprocity between countries:

- The member states of the International Transport Forum (ITF): EU and EEA, along with USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea, have agreed in principle to reciprocity for each others disabled citizens: *“To provide people with reduced mobility with a document (Parking Permit) _ _ _ and to give the same parking facilities to holders of this document coming from another member or associated member country as they do to their own nationals”* (ECMT (now ITF) Resolution 97/4). However, while some signatory countries (and their federal states) offer reciprocity, others do not
- The member states of the EU and EEA are recommended to give reciprocity to disabled visitors from another EU / EEA member state who have the standardised EU model Parking Card so that: *“Parking card holders may benefit from the associated parking facilities available in the Member State in which they happen to be”* (EU Council Recommendations 98/376/EC and 2008/205/EC). Most EU / EEA member states offer reciprocity to a parking permit (card) of a visitor from another member state, but others do not. Some also do not offer reciprocity to visitors from outside the EU / EEA

Conclusion and recommendation

Parking card schemes are already well established in many countries around the world where the car is the dominant mode of travel, and the one most suited to a person with a mobility handicap. They play a significant role in helping people with a mobility handicap achieve mobility, and they help overcome access barriers.

With increasing global travel, and people with a mobility handicap having the right to travel the world, encouraging countries to offer reciprocity to visiting disability parking permit holders would enhance their mobility and access wherever they travel.

The FIA recommends:

- More countries should be encouraged to adopt disability parking permit schemes, particularly as car ownership and use grows

- Countries and federal states should be encouraged to offer reciprocity to visiting parking permit holders
- There should be a movement towards greater standardisation of parking permits to facilitate the free movement of people with a mobility handicap wherever in the world they choose to travel
- The UN takes an active role in supporting these objectives

The FIA with its network of motoring and touring clubs will play its part in supporting these objectives.

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Bert Morris and the FIA are grateful to the FIA Foundation for supporting the research and development of the *FIA Guide for the disabled traveller* on which this Memorandum is based