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I am taking this opportunity to respond to your consultation on the provision of audible and visual information on board bus services in Great Britain under the Bus Services Act 2017.

The Scottish Government welcomes the proposals to require the provision of audible and visible information on buses in order to improve the accessibility of services. As your consultation acknowledges, a lack of information provision on the bus can act as a barrier for disabled passengers in using bus services. Given the importance of ensuring that clear and consistent information is available to all bus users we support the intention to use a legislative solution to address this issue.

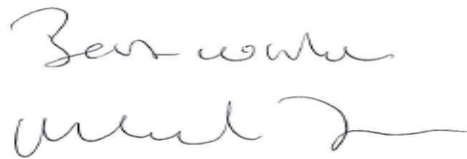
During the period of your consultation my officials and colleagues from DfT have been engaging directly with Scottish stakeholders to gain an understanding of their views. I understand that, in general, there is support for your broad approach but that concerns were raised at the two events about the implementation of the requirements on rural services and on coaches, focused on the fact that some rural journeys registered as local services are undertaken by coaches.

The cost of meeting the regulations has also been highlighted, particularly in terms of the impact on small bus operators. As this is a reserved issue, I welcome DfT's confirmation that £2 million funding will be made available which Scottish operators will be eligible to apply for. I understand that Transport Scotland and DfT officials are working on the detail of this fund, which would see smaller bus firms in Scotland able to apply for around 10% of the available total.

Given the approach that has been outlined in your consultation, the Scottish Government agrees that a separate implementation approach is not required for Scotland at this time, providing those issues raised by stakeholders which may be more important in a Scottish context are accounted for in the regulations.

On that basis I would expect any changes to the proposals described in the consultation, as well as the draft Accessible Information Regulations and guidance, to be fully set out and discussed in advance with my officials in Transport Scotland. I would also ask that you share the draft regulations resulting from this consultation with the Scottish Government prior to publication.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Matheson" on the top line and "Michael Matheson" on the bottom line, though the bottom line is more stylized and less legible.

MICHAEL MATHESON