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## PRESS RELEASE

### Commission Welcomes New Rights for People with Disabilities

The Equality Commission welcomes the introduction by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister of new protection for people with disabilities using transport services.

Chief Executive Evelyn Collins said today, “The Commission gets more calls about disability discrimination than anything else – almost 31% of calls to our enquiry line last year.



“We’re very pleased to see the new Regulations coming into effect as they strengthen legal protection for people with disabilities. We are running a major advertising campaign, starting on Monday, to advise people of these rights and to make transport operators aware of the guidance available to help them comply with the law. Our advertising campaign should remind everyone of the equal rights of people with disabilities.”

The Disability Transport Regulations come into force on 25 January 2010 and cover trains, buses and coaches, taxis, vehicle rental and breakdown services. They make it unlawful to treat a disabled person less favourably than someone without a disability, for example by offering them a lower standard of service.

The Equality Commission has produced six leaflets covering the different transport groups for service users and transport operators. It is also producing a Code of Practice

for transport operators which is currently with OFMDFM for approval. Commission staff have completed training sessions for transport providers during January and are happy to offer additional training on request, subject to numbers and feasibility.

Ms Collins added, "One of the Commission's duties is to promote equal opportunities for disabled people. We believe the Disability Transport Regulations will make a positive and practical contribution to enabling disabled people to realise new opportunities for work and leisure that may not have been open to them before."

### **Notes to editors**

1. The picture shows MLAs Francie Molloy, Danny Kennedy, Trevor Lunn and Jim Shannon; Susan Curry, The Omnibus Partnership; Gordon Milligan, Human Resources and Organisational Director, Translink; Joe Burke, The Omnibus Partnership; Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive, Equality Commission and Terry Butler, Access Manager, Translink. Betty McAllister, with her dog Libby and John Masterson, with his dog Thomas, are both members of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Seated in powerchairs, David McDonald and Vivien Blakely, chairperson and vice-chairperson of The Omnibus Partnership.
2. The Commission's leaflets on the new Disability Transport Regulations are on the website at [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org) or ring 028 90 890 890 to get copies sent out by post. More information on the training for transport service providers is available by ringing 028 90 890 890 or 028 90500599.