

Audio description guide – Great Northern Class 717 trains



This audio guide is provided by Govia Thameslink Railway, primarily for our blind and partially sighted customers in order to provide an audio description of our Class 717 Great Northern (GN) trains.

These trains operate the routes between Moorgate and Stevenage and Moorgate and Welwyn Garden City.

We want everyone to be able to confidently use our services and station colleagues are ready to provide assistance boarding and alighting our trains, including offering sighted guide assistance.

General description of Class 717 trains

These modern electric trains are formed of six carriages. There is no first-class accommodation or toilets on these trains and they are driver only operated. Staff known as revenue protection officers may be on board to check people are travelling with the correct ticket.

Carriage three (when heading North) or four (when heading South) is designed with accessibility in mind. For ease of identification of the accessible carriage for sighted customers, the door (from the outside) is denoted with large blue diagonal markings with a white wheelchair symbol.

Boarding

Wherever you are boarding, our well-trained station staff are there to assist you, so please ask our staff if you need any help.

The external door button is located on the side of the train, at arm's length to the right of the sliding door. As the doors open, they slide into a 'pocket' within the carriage unlike some of our trains where they slide against the exterior of the train.

At most of our stations you will need to step up from the platform onto the train. There is a metal door runner at all doors that jut out slightly past the side of the train. As you step into the train (the vestibule), the floor is a darker blue colour here, you will also find two handrails at both sides of the door opening. There is also a vertical floor to ceiling grab pole located in the centre of the carriage between the two sets of doors.

Within the vestibule, on the right side of the external doors (from within the train), you'll find door open and close panels. These are at waist height and the buttons are positioned vertically with the open button (indicated by tactile arrows facing outwards or similar to a diamond shape or hole) at the top and close button (indicated by tactile arrows facing inwards, similar to a cross or an X) at the bottom. All door buttons have braille on the top of the blue surround that reads 'Open' and 'Close'.

You'll find the emergency door release (on the right of the door if standing on the train) and the alarm to speak to the driver (on the left of the door). Note, the emergency door release and alarm are only available on one side of the train doors, alternating which side throughout the train. More info regarding these and how to operate them can be found near the end of this guide.

When the train is ready to leave, the doors are closed by the driver, and you will hear a fast beeping alarm type sound also known as a 'hustle alarm' as they start closing. This alarm sounds at each stop.

Note: If you are assisted onto the train and decide to move to another part of the train during your journey, please return to the original carriage so staff at the destination station can easily find you to assist you off the train.

Internal layout

The general seating layout of these trains is four seats across (two seats on either side of the carriage) with a small number of side facing tip up seats in all carriages (some of which are priority seats). Other priority seating is available next to the vestibule areas. Signage on the wall above the seat is visible but not tactile. The text reads 'Priority seat' and has an image of a pregnant person and someone with a walking stick. Some seats are in a bay or booth style, where two sets of seats face each other, and the others are airline style seats. There are plug sockets located underneath the cushion of the seat, in between the two seats. They are a single socket style plug with no USB point.

These spacious trains feature wide corridors with open access between each carriage. Moving through the carriages are accordion sleeves (similar to a bendy bus), there is a slight rise over these sections, and they have a short non-slip metal plate up to each of these sections. There are overhead racks for luggage throughout the carriages.

Blue handrails (with good colour contrast, in the vestibule area) are provided at the doors (as we mentioned earlier) as well as smaller handrails located at the top corner of the headrest of each of the aisle seats, throughout the train. The colour contrast of these is not as contrasting due to the colour of the blue seating. The handrails are a lighter blue colour than the seating.

Audio/visual announcements

Automated audio information is available throughout the train. You will hear automated announcements regarding the stops the train is making such as the next station, end destination of the train and when the train is being held at a red signal. The driver may also make manual announcements to keep everyone informed during the journey, particularly if there are unexpected delays. The announcements do not state what side the door will open on, but a two-tone sound plays on the side the doors will open.

For sighted customers, display screens with good colour contrast are available above each vestibule. These displays scroll through information such as the next station stop (and if there is a short platform), upcoming stations and what carriage you are located in.

Litter bins

There are litter bins situated throughout the train. They can be found to the right of the carriage doors (when on the train facing the door). Note, these are only available on one side of the train doors, alternating which side throughout the train.

Accessible area layout

The accessible area is in carriage 3 (heading North) or 4 (heading South). This area provides ample space for our disabled customers including wheelchair and mobility scooter users, with adjacent tip up seats.

Alarms to speak to the driver

Alarms for contacting the driver are available at chest height to the left of one of the pair of doors along the carriage. There are green stickers (above the yellow alarm, which also features braille and tactile lettering which reads 'SOS') with raised and braille lettering indicating how to activate the alarm. To raise the alarm, you break the glass in front of the alarm and press the big red button. Above the alarm and to the right side are two small, vertically positioned buttons; the top orange button is to make the 'driver aware' and the below green button is to 'speak to driver'. Note: These buttons are quite small.

Low level alarms are available within the accessible area, at knee height, by the tip up seats on either side of the carriage, one on one side between two of the three tip up seats and the other next to the wheelchair space on the opposite side. Note, the alarm is the same as the main alarm, other than it doesn't have a glass panel over the front which needs breaking to press the button.

Emergency Door release

The emergency door release is at shoulder height to the right of one of the pair of doors along the carriage (above the open/close buttons). Green stickers indicate the four steps to open the door. The sign is not tactile and does not have braille on it. The text reads:

'Emergency door release

1. Lift flap
2. Pull lever down and wait for train to stop
3. Pull lever down fully again
4. Pull doors open

Penalty for improper use. This door is alarmed.'

We hope you have found this Class 717 guide useful, and we look forward to welcoming you on board.