DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE TO ADDRESS THE MOBILITY OF BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE OF SRI LANKA

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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university to the best of my knowledge and belief and it does not contain any material previously published written or orally communicated by another person or myself except where due reference is made in the text. I also hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for interlibrary loans, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organizations.

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To the best of my knowledge, the above particulars are correct

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Signature of the Supervisor Date

ACKNOLEDGEMENT

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Abstract

Sight loss can affect a person's independence more than any disability. Unsurprisingly many people who lose their sight never go out unaccompanied after facing difficulties they encounter by going to various places by themselves. These difficulties are very often magnified in the absence of facilities for such community in the society. By introducing facilities on road infrastructure and public transport can substantially transform the livelihoods of blind and visually impaired people and their families. Lack of Accessibility and mobility will discourage this sector of society in finding employment, gain access to education and health services and also will limit their social and recreational activities. Therefore these people should be able to travel independently within their locality or in urban and suburban areas at least for their urgent needs using public transport. Though Sri Lanka has developed specifications for road infrastructure and public transport, they have not adequately addressed the requirements of blind and visually impaired people. The number of blind and visually impaired people has considerably increased due to thirty years of civil war.

Therefore study of the need of blind and visually impaired people is an urgent requirement. Once the requirements of blind and visually impaired people are identified it is necessary to provide solutions for them. My research will confine to the provision of such facilities for road infrastructure and public transport. The development of tactile paving guideline and road infrastructure development guidelines will address these issues.

Mainly four different methodologies were used for this research. Initially literature was reviewed by visiting standard guidelines of developed countries, laws and regulations in our country, previous research papers, websites related to this and relevant publications. This was followed by case study on the tactile guide way to identify the practical issues of existing tactile guide way developed and implemented by Colombo Municipal Council on Galle Road and to study response by blind and visually impaired people. An opinion survey was done for sample of blind and visually impaired people to identify their issues and get their feedback and suggestions and clarify issues noticed during the case study. On the outcome of opinion survey solution options were developed for questionnaire in order to identify their preferential option. Finally a mobility expert trainer was interviewed by me.

Based on decisions made by all these methodologies our own guidelines and specifications were developed for road infrastructure and bus transport. Guidelines developed under this project will create barrier free environment and help blind and visually impaired people to be more independent.

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