

# Public transit hard work for people with disabilities

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For most commuters, traveling around Jakarta by zipping around on public transportation is relatively simple. But for people with disabilities, it's a whole different beast altogether.

On Saturday morning, the Jakarta Barrier Free Tourism (JBFT) invited members of the public to see for themselves the challenges people with disabilities face using public transportation.

Meeting up on the sidewalk near Palmerah Station, West Jakarta, a diverse community gathered along with their caretakers, ranging from wheelchair users to vision-impaired individuals.

Cucu Saidah, one of the initiators of JBFT, said that the organization, which started as a vessel to campaign for disability rights, wanted to focus on public access.

"All of us, from children to adults, want to go about our day like any other people. We want to meet friends, go to school, work, shop, and many other things using various forms of transportation," said Cucu, who is also a wheelchair user.

As well as educating the public on the needs of people with dis-

**Train station, crossing bridge not equipped with elevators or wheelchair ramps**

**Gap between platform, train car makes it hard to board**

abilities, Cucu said the event was also a chance for people with disabilities to learn to navigate the obstacles along their routes.

Soon after the crowd set off in groups, they were immediately confronted with their first obstacle, before even setting foot in the train station.

The crossing bridge connecting the sidewalk to Palmerah Station is not equipped with elevators or wheelchair ramps, meaning wheelchair users needed to be hoisted up one step at a time by their caretakers, volunteers and Public Order Agency (Satpol PP) officers.

As the groups steadily made their way into the station, they were also hindered by the turnstiles, which trapped a stroller at one point, necessitating the help of security guards in the station.

Once on the platform, wheelchair users were again confound-

ed as the gap between the platform and the train was uneven, making embarking and disembarking a hassle.

The obstacles did not end there, as the path between the station building and the sidewalk was not equipped with guiding blocks for the benefit of vision-impaired individuals.

Difficulties like these have turned off many people with disabilities, with some saying they avoid public transportation altogether.

Rahajeng, a retired businesswoman, said that the disability-unfriendly infrastructure, coupled with the rush hour crush, had made her wary of taking public transportation.

"If my perfectly healthy grandchildren say that commuting is uncomfortable for them, imagine what it would be like for a 57-year-old wheelchair-bound woman on her own," said Rahajeng with a wry smile.

Instead, Ajeng prefers to travel around in her minivan, equipped with amenities such as power sliding doors, complete with driver, who accompanies her on such outings.

"I'm blessed to be able to af-

ford all of this, but the government must also think about the needs of those who don't, because disability-friendly facilities shouldn't only be for the well-off."

Previously on Friday, Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan, who welcomed the group and walked with them to the National Library, said that the administration must cater to people with disabilities, who have varying needs.

"Every facility under the Jakarta administration must be disability-friendly, as well as catering to people with special needs such as pregnant mothers and the elderly. We are currently working on a gubernatorial decree, which we will announce as soon as it is finished."

The Social Affairs Ministry's people with disabilities division director Nahar told *The Jakarta Post* that most developers and policymakers were not aware of the need to provide accessibility, which is stipulated under Law 28/2002 on buildings.

"If they knew about the law, we wouldn't have things like this [referring to the ramp-less stairs to the Palmerah crossing bridge]. It's better if the existing ones are modified instead of building new ones to save costs," said Nahar.