

Local Transport Act 2008 Governance Review

We would very much welcome a decision to proceed with a review of current transport arrangements in the West of England.

We consider that there is now an opportunity for the West of England Partnership to engage with the powerful PTEG group of existing transport authorities. Taking on new bus and rail powers will improve our public transport, reduce pollution, congestion and improve the health of the travelling public with substantial time savings to the local economy.

Whilst the setting up of an Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) will take at least two years, this period could not only be used as a Review of Governance under the LTA(2008) but also to take action in the following areas to improve public transport:

- The setting up of a joint bus unit of officers from the four councils who would supervise the review of the bus network and future bus needs, investigate ways of introducing smartcard and cash free systems of payment across all operators, advise on the impact of pooling bus subsidy across the West of England and open discussions with bus operators on acquiring new bus powers.
- Prioritising of already funded schemes such as the Greater Bristol Bus Network, reopening of the Portishead line and the Greater Bristol Metro together to ensure their integration with walking improvements, Cycling City infrastructure and local rail services.
- A further review of Bus Rapid Transit to ascertain its likely running and maintenance costs including choice of vehicle, its proposed modal share, how an operator will be chosen to run it and the conditions to be set for fare levels and punctuality.
- Engagement with ITAs and other local authorities with a record of success in achieving lower bus fares, increasing bus patronage, introducing cross ticketing and off bus ticketing
- Consultation with the public and stakeholders
- Reviewing all bus routes and bus powers with all operators.

We consider that buses will not be taken up as an attractive transport option until

- a) the fares are lower than the running costs of a car and
- b) congestion is removed, allowing buses speedier movement – bus lanes need to be supplemented with more car and parking restriction.

Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance (TfGB) - Bus Strategy

To achieve improvements in Public Transport, buses will continue to go where trams and trains cannot go economically - in other words bus routes will be the thread that connects every residence to the tramways and rail networks and this makes the planning of transport interchanges a priority for Greater Bristol. All networks need to be easily accessible to pedestrians and cyclists with bus stops within 400 metres of every residence and with sheltered seating, refreshments and cycle parking at interchanges. First Group and Bristol City Council are in favour of setting up an ITA in order to achieve improved bus/train patronage which can only come with a quality public transport system and fares at a level which persuades people out of their cars. Bus patronage which is currently falling needs to be increased to give reductions in traffic congestion and reduce carbon emissions.

Integrated Transport Authority - The setting up of an ITA between the four councils that comprise the West of England Partnership is considered to be the next step. It is **imperative that a 'review' under the provisions of the Local Transport Act 2008 is prepared by the WEP**. An ITA will take up to three years to be up and running with government approval and needs to have a 'quality contract' in order to achieve proper control of buses and their links with trains. Highway powers are also available under the LTA.

Passengers Charter - In view of cuts in bus service routes, increases in fares and declining passenger numbers we cannot afford to wait for the delivery of the powers of an ITA, especially as the WEP have yet to make that decision, and there are very necessary improvements which can be pursued in the interim.

Fares - Greater Bristol bus fares are some of the highest in the country and it is still cheaper to travel by car if we ignore the fixed costs and compare the running costs of using a car with the bus fares for the same journey.

- We need to lobby national government, supported by local government, to obtain subsidies on a par with those given by other European governments to their bus industry.
- We need to establish a lower fare structure with exact fares, cashless options through availability at ticket outlets of advance ticket purchase
- School pupils ,young workers and students should have concessionary bus passes

Ticketing - Off-bus ticketing should be provided, including stand-alone ticket machines at busiest locations and possibly bus stops. Reduction in dwell time as a result of pre-purchased tickets would offset costs of installation and maintenance of the machines. Information on ticket options and costs needs to be accessible on the bus, at bus stops, internet, mobile phones or travel information points

- Discounted 10 journey, day travel, weekly travel, monthly and year travel tickets are currently available and should be promoted
- The introduction of smartcards would speed boarding times, save the fuel wasted at bus stops collecting fares, reduce pollution and take stress off the driver and improve journey times. Patronage would automatically increase.
- Inter modal tickets and tickets which are interchangeable on routes and between bus operators would give the bus passenger a sense of greater access to public transport

Routes - Bus route and interchange information should be on board all buses and more visible at bus stops, interchanges and travel information centres

- Transport Interchanges like the one proposed for Temple Meads/Plot 6 are needed around the centre in two or three locations interconnected by a circular bus route or even better a tramway which should be free and would justify removing all cars from the centre. The proposed Bristol Metro could also be linked to these interchanges
- More pedestrianisation of the Old City with access restrictions for cars, but allowing buses taxis and blue badge holders
- Park and Ride locations need to be coupled with transport interchanges. Radial dedicated bus lanes or rapid transit from these orbital interchanges would bring passengers to a central interchange and cut out the need for cross city routes
- Dedicated bus routes with proper enforcement and automatic penalties by civil enforcement officers and traffic police. Fixed as well as mobile cameras, including those on buses which can be used to capture all offences immediately.
- Rapid transit routes have a history of increased patronage and where possible should be low carbon vehicles, whether tram, light rail or bus.

Travel Plans –These should be submitted by large employers to their local council and reviews of alternatives to car use encouraged whether by walking, cycling or public transport.

- Workplace car parking can be subject to a local tax paid by employers with the revenue dedicated to funding public transport. Incentives to employees could include discounted bus passes with travel plan awards to employers who convert car parking facilities to bicycle parking facilities.
- Residential parking schemes would prevent free parking for commuters and shoppers.
- Travel schemes operated in conjunction with First Group, whereby the employer runs a salary sacrifice scheme which means the employee gains as the deduction from salary is made before tax is paid and the employer avoids NI payments on the same amount, have received very little uptake and could be encouraged

These options are preferable to the unpopular congestion charging proposals which if applied currently would increase the cost of travel to the public at a time when progressive authorities are introducing free transport for all.

Bus Operators – Contracts should only be issued to operators who have a union recognition agreement with their employees. Statistics confirm that health and safety issues and employees training are to a higher standard generally where such agreements exist with consequential benefit to passengers.

Facilities –Passenger comfort should be easily improved by driver training to Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) which includes statutory required periodic training/refreshment.

- The provision of free Wi-Fi on board as done elsewhere, would allow access to the internet.
- Frequency and reliability must be a key feature of all timetables.

TfGB www.tfgb.org.uk

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