

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

DATE: 21 SEPTEMBER 2007

AGENDA ITEM NO: **15**

SUBJECT: BOXING DAY AND NEW YEAR'S DAY SERVICES

Report of the Passenger Transport Executive

1. **MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 1.1. This report seeks the Authority's approval to pilot the operation of shopping services on Boxing Day and New Year's Day 2007/08.

2. **INFORMATION**

- 2.1. Provision has been made in the approved budget for 2007/08 for supplementary funding of £500,000 to provide additional tendered bus services. Initiatives would be trialled on a 'use it or lose it' basis to assess their value in meeting PTA policies and Local Transport Plan objectives.
- 2.2. An appraisal process for potential new services was approved by the Tendered Services Working Group at its June meeting. This assesses the extent to which any new initiatives help in meeting Local Transport Plan targets. Network principles have been adopted which seek to ensure that the proposed service is complementary to the current bus network together with a performance review methodology to determine whether the service should be provided beyond the initial trial period.
- 2.3. In recent years Metro has received complaints that the current arrangements, whereby virtually no bus services operate on Boxing Day and New Year's Day, are inappropriate given the increasing shopping activity on these days. The provision of such services would fully meet the criteria approved by the TSWG.
- 2.4. The issue has been raised with bus operators who are uncertain as to the extent of the demand and unwilling to take a financial risk given the higher operating cost of running buses on days when the workforce is traditionally on leave. The operators are clearly influenced by the high average cost per passenger in the mid 90's when Metro last funded such services. These were significant at over £7 per passenger trip.
- 2.5. Whilst Centro had experienced similar past issues the matter was addressed in the West Midlands in 2002 when the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority funded the operation of Boxing Day and

New Year's Day services to the major city centres in Birmingham and Coventry. Initial 'pump priming' by the WYPTA/E resulted in significant passenger use and, once demand had been established, a significant proportion of the network (over 75% of the Birmingham network) has subsequently been operated on a commercial basis.

- 2.6. It is possible to trial the operation of Boxing Day and New Year's Day services in West Yorkshire in 2007/08 from the approved supplementary fund. A basic half hourly daytime service on high frequency corridors into Leeds and Huddersfield is planned as bank holiday shopping currently attracts significant numbers of shoppers in these centres. Such a network would also provide good accessibility to the major hospitals and allow connectivity to most parts of the areas served.
- 2.7. Discussions would be held with the current operators to identify whether they are able to operate on this basis and to establish the cost of operation. Alternative bids would also be sought from other operators in the area in order to ensure that value for money was achieved. The gross costs of operation are likely to be significant as operational costs will need to take account of premium wages for the day and other overheads associated with the opening of depots. If the experience of Centro is replicated in West Yorkshire then the fares revenue on the day will significantly reduce the cost of the trial.
- 2.8. A marketing package will be developed to support the network of services to be provided. These costs will be met from the approved supplementary budget with third party contributions to be sought from retailers in the local areas served.
- 2.9. Subject to the Authority's approval of the pilot scheme it is proposed that the detailed arrangements are administered by the Tendered Services Working Group.

3. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. A total of £500,000 has been set aside to provide supplementary tendered bus services. The cost of the proposed trial can only be determined following the definition of the networks to be provided and the invitation of prices from operators.

4. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no staffing implications contained within this report.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The proposed services will provide for effective local bus transport on days when other services would not normally be provided.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. That the Passenger Transport Authority approve the approach to the operation of trial services on Boxing Day and New Year's Day 2007/08.

**Director General
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive**