

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

DATE: 23 JUNE 2006

AGENDA ITEM NO: **21**

SUBJECT: LEEDS FREE CITY BUS

Report of the Passenger Transport Executive

1 MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

1.1 The Leeds 'Free City Bus'

2. INFORMATION

Update on Service Performance

2.1 The performance to date of the Leeds 'Free City Bus', which was launched in Leeds on 30 January 2006, was reported to the meeting of the Tendered Services Working Group on 30 May 2006.

2.2 The public response to the service has been extremely positive. The service is well used with current average weekly loadings of over 29,000, which are continuing to grow.

2.3 First have operated the service well with a high degree of reliability and punctuality (which is assisted by there being no fare collection).

2.4 Metro has also received many compliments about the service and constructive suggestions for extension to other areas of the City.

2.5 Metro commissioned independent market research into Free City Bus. The key findings are as follows:

- 62% of users are women;
- 46% are aged between 20 and 39;
- 86% live in West Yorkshire;
- 22% have a MetroCard;
- 18% have an operator extended travel ticket;
- 7% have a rail season ticket;
- 16% have a concessionary permit;
- 5% might have used their car for all or part of the journey (equivalent to 1,450 less car journeys per week);

- 3% would have abandoned the whole journey altogether (equivalent to 870 additional journeys into Leeds per week that would not have been made);
 - One third of trips are made with an encumbrance of some kind (parcels, pram, children etc) and 16% of passengers are mobility impaired.
- 2.6 The service is making the expanding city centre more accessible and seems to be particularly valued by people with mobility problems (due to impairment, luggage or accompanying young people) and during inclement weather.
- 2.7 It is concluded that the service has therefore achieved the objectives discussed set by the Tendered Services Working Group. In particular, the service has been successful in improving accessibility for particularly mobility impaired, modal shift and reductions in car traffic.

Service Continuation

- 2.8 Leeds City Council have accepted in principle that the cost of providing the service be shared (50:50 net of other contributions).
- 2.9 It is proposed that Metro continue to fund the service during the current financial year, with Leeds providing funding from 2006/07 onwards to achieve the agreed split over a five year period.
- 2.10 It is proposed that the contract be initially extended only until 31 March 2007 in order to maximise the opportunity for negotiating third party contributions.
- 2.11 The negotiations need further time in order to address private sector views that contributions made for the cancelled Leeds Supertram project should now be used for the Free City Bus. Investigation of the Leeds Supertram developer contributions confirm that they may only be used for infrastructure works and therefore cannot be used for revenue support for the Free City Bus.
- 2.12 In addition, the Department for Transport is consulting on major scheme funding and are proposing a 10% local contribution for all major schemes. It would therefore seem prudent to retain the Supertram contributions for the replacement bus alternatives and other schemes that are currently being developed.
- 2.13 The success of the scheme to date now enables further discussions to be held with city centre organisations, train operating companies to explore the potential of future developer contributions. It also allows opportunities for service sponsorship (rather than advertising which would detract from the visibility and image of the service without generating much income) to be explored.
- 2.14 The Tendered Service Working Group are recommending that the service be extended until 31 March 2007 to allow these further

negotiations with third parties to be concluded and reported back to the Authority.

Similar Services in Other Centres

- 2.15 There is interest in similar services being introduced in other major centres in West Yorkshire. It is recommended that Metro adopt the principle of joint funding, value for money appraisal and monitoring and evaluation against success criteria in any future discussions.

3. FINANCIAL AND EC PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The cost of extending the service until 31 March 2007 would be £252,000. This can be met from the approved tendered services budget and would be achieved through a further de-minimis award.
- 3.2 The discussions set out above with Leeds City Council would mean that their contributions would start in 2007/08 and joint funding would be achieved over a five year period (or a shorter period should the service no longer continue to meet objectives or provide value for money).

4. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None as a result of this report.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Free City Bus service meets equal opportunity objectives.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Authority endorse the continuation of the service on the basis set out in this report.
- 6.2 That the Authority adopt the principle of joint funding, value for money appraisal and monitoring and evaluation against success criteria in any future discussions regarding similar services in other district centres of West Yorkshire.

Director General
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive