

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY
AT A MEETING OF THE CALDERDALE PASSENGER CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE TOWN HALL, HALIFAX
ON TUESDAY 15 JULY 2008

PRESENT: Councillor G Wainwright (Chair)

PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES

V Duke	P Stocks
N Hull	J Sykes
P Melling	J Whiteley
N Ricketts	E Wood

Also in attendance:

C Hanson	-	First
N Walsh	-	Halifax Bus Company
D Haley	-	Northern
S Kelly	-	Halifax Evening Courier

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Watson and public representative Hannah Dobson.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2008 be approved.

3. MEMBER FEEDBACK

The Committee considered a report advising members of the feedback received at the meeting of the Committee held on 8 April 2008 and to report on action taken.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

4. INFORMATION REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on information regarding current developments and issues affecting the Calderdale District.

Halifax Rail Station

Members were advised that the programme of restoration works for the footbridge and canopy at Halifax Rail Station and the replacement of passenger information screens were scheduled to commence in May 2009. It was noted that Halifax was included in the National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP) which was a ring-fenced fund for station improvements funded by the Department for Transport. Network Rail were developing a scope of works for the station and, subject to the funding approval, it was expected that the further work would be carried out once the restoration work was complete.

The Committee discussed the access to the station and comment was made that the pedestrian access to the station could be improved by moving the walkway to the opposite side of the car park. The problems of access to the station encountered by buses and coaches had previously been raised and members were advised that Calderdale MBC had considered plans for the provision of lay-bys near the station. These could provide a safer environment for passengers to board and alight and Calderdale MBC was currently reviewing its decision not to proceed with the project.

Calderdale Line Services Pattern

Members were advised that Northern had proposed some significant changes to their rail services serving West Yorkshire, mainly affecting the Calderdale line.

The changes took into account a number of issues and members discussed the benefits and dis-benefits of the proposals which were highlighted in the submitted report. It was reported that there had been a public meeting at Mytholmroyd where strong concerns had been expressed regarding the proposed reductions in service. It was noted that discussions continued to mitigate any reduction in service and additional stops had been added to the initial plans but further changes would be hard to achieve.

The Committee considered that despite the reduction in frequency at a small number of stations, the overall impact of Northern's proposals was positive and offered greater journey opportunities for the Calder Valley as a whole. The proposals offered a semi-fast service between Bradford – Manchester, benefits to the Huddersfield line local service and a better service for Brighouse.

July Bus Service Changes

Members were advised that the next major timetable change would take place on the weekend of 27/28 July 2008 and concern was expressed regarding the reduction of services to Shelf. Details of the changes were set out in a copy of Metro's Changing Times leaflet which was circulated at the meeting.

Bus Station Real Time Displays

It was noted that bus station displays at Batley, Cleckheaton and Ossett were connected to the YourNextBus real time system. Subject to the satisfactory testing of a software enhancement for the older displays, it was planned to roll out the provision of real time information to other main bus stations, including Halifax, by the end of the year.

'Kids for a Quid' Offer

Members were advised that Metro were developing a Young People's Strategy and, as part of it, operators had agreed to implement a 'Kids for a Quid' promotion throughout August. The offer would be available to children under 11 years old accompanied by an adult, or any child of 11 and over in possession of a half fare pass. The operators commented that there were some concerns regarding possible anti-social behaviour by unaccompanied children on evening services. This would be monitored during the offer period.

TaxiBus Services

The Committee were advised that Ryburn Taxibus Ltd had ceased the operation of the Calderdale taxibus service with no prior notice to Metro. The service had been operating on an experimental basis with funding from the Rural Bus Challenge. The service performance had been poor and, had the operator not withdrawn the service, it would have ceased operation at the end of the funding period in July 2008. No steps were therefore being taken to replace the withdrawn services.

MetroCard Prices

It was reported that the Metro range of prepaid tickets would increase by approximately 8% from 20 July 2008 and details of the new prices were attached at Appendix A to the submitted report. Members were advised that whilst the MetroCard scheme was administered by Metro, the prices were set by the bus and train operators.

City Region MetroCard (Zone 6)

It was noted that there was a high level of commitment amongst the City Region Leaders and Metro to introduce a new MetroCard which would cover the City Region area. Proposals were being developed to introduce a new ticket that would extend MetroCard validity across the City Region area and several options were being developed, including a trial covering a limited geographic area including Skipton and Harrogate. The new product was being developed on the basis that it would be revenue neutral to operators, Metro and other City Region Local Authorities.

Bus Services to Eaves, Hebden Bridge

Members were advised the following the recent withdrawal of bus services from the Eaves area, Metro was working with First and Calderdale Council to find a suitable location for a turning facility.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. CONSULTATION ITEMS -

- (a) Access to Hospitals**
- (b) Cross Boundary Bus Services**
- (c) Realtime Displays – Demonstration**
- (d) Fuel Prices and Transport**

Access to Hospitals

The Committee were given a short presentation on the access to hospitals and health services project which had been identified as a priority for action in the Local Transport Plan Accessibility Strategy.

It was reported that Metro had employed two students on summer work placement to undertake an audit of hospital sites in each district. The aim of the audits was to gather information on public transport and physical accessibility issues to inform shared actions for delivery by the hospitals, Metro and districts.

Members' feedback on access to hospitals was sought. It was noted that Service 530 had been provided in Halifax on a 'use it or lose it' basis and the importance of it being well used in order for it to continue was stressed. Additional stops had been provided on the route to reduce passengers' walking time to enable easy access to the hospital for people with mobility impairment and the vehicle was low floor accessible. It was suggested that the service should be publicised further to increase awareness and it was hoped that the £1 flat fare would encourage non-concessionary pass users to use the service. Comment was made that the livery should be distinguishable so that passengers would recognise it as a hospital service.

It was noted that all people would prefer direct links from their home to health services. However, because of the changes to health care provision in the Calderdale area, Halifax residents now had to travel to appointments in Huddersfield which often required 3 separate bus journeys. Apart from the additional costs incurred, this was also inconvenient and time consuming for people visiting patients in Huddersfield Royal Infirmary. There were also problems for people who were being sent to private hospitals for NHS treatment as in many cases these were located in remote areas and not always accessible by public transport.

Cross Boundary Bus Services

It was reported that PCC members had requested a discussion on cross-boundary bus services and destinations served and not-so-well served. Comment was made that people wanted to travel cross boundary with one ticket. It was reported that Metro had joint ticketing arrangements with South Yorkshire and discussions were being held with bus and rail operators regarding the extension of MetroCard to out of county areas.

Realtime Displays - Demonstration

The Committee were advised that Metro was developing a new form of realtime display which combined the information from a number of individual stops on one screen. The screens could be used in the foyers of shopping centres, hospitals and other large, well used buildings to provide information on services which were leaving from the vicinity of that location. Members were given a short presentation and their views were sought on where the new service could be rolled out. It was suggested that the screens could be used at universities and consideration should be given to producing an outdoor version which could be sited at busy city centre locations such as Boar Lane in Leeds.

Fuel Prices and Transport

It was recognised that fuel prices had increased significantly over the last year and that this could have significant short and long term implications on transport supply and demand.

Members' views were sought on public reaction to this situation and how people could be encouraged to make more use of public transport, cycling and walking.

The Committee identified that other areas of industry eg construction and farming, were able to run their vehicles with low tax 'red' diesel and this could be extended to bus services. It was also considered unfair that airlines did not pay tax on fuel. Comment was made that whilst bus services continued to be reduced and withdrawn and the lack of evening services, car drivers would not be encouraged to use public transport.

Members were thanked for their suggestions to all the consultation items and asked to forward any further ideas or comments on the questionnaire provided at the meeting.

RESOLVED – That PCC members' comments and views be noted.