

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

DATE: 22 JUNE 2007

AGENDA ITEM NO: **24**

SUBJECT: MYLITTLEBUS/METROLOCAL PROJECT

Report of the Passenger Transport Executive

1. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 1.1 To seek approval to expenditure on a pilot project to extend the Yellow Bus concept and complement AccessBus provision.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1. The Authority's Bus Working Group and Tendered Services Working Group have overseen the development of an innovative approach to providing Yellow Bus type services for home to school travel for children with special educational needs and use the vehicle between school trips to provide additional local bus services to address social inclusion issues.
- 2.2 As a result of the effective cost control of the MyBus major scheme capital budget, there is funding available within the Department for Transport scheme to extend MyBus service to SEN pupils. The Department has approved this approach. Following discussions with local partners, external funding is available to fund the revenue costs of a pilot using five buses in Kirklees (Huddersfield and Spen Valley).
- 2.3 The MyBus capital funding would be used to procure small buses (similar to AccessBus vehicles) at a total cost of £460,000 for the five vehicles. Vehicle procurement would be through a S56 grant to the service operator, as for MetroConnect Services.
- 2.4 The project plan assumes a progressive implementation based upon the following programme:
 - Autumn 2007 (Phase 1) – introduction of the new buses to provide home-to-school transport for SEN children (MyLittleBus) and the introduction of new locality based flexibility routed registered bus services;
 - September 2008 (Phase 2) – Integration of the new locality based services within AccessBus provision in the area.

This would include the registration of the AccessBus service as a local service to attract Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) to further reduce operator costs. A flat fare would nominally be charged to all users, almost all of whom would continue to travel free through current concessionary fare arrangements.

- September 2009 (Phase 3) – wider utilisation of buses to replace existing tendered weekend/evening tendered services, with a more flexible and cost effective alternative, thereby reducing current tender costs.
- 2.5 It is estimated that the total additional operational revenue costs over 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 would be £280,000. Discussions with Kirklees Council and agencies in Kirklees have resulted in funding commitments to cover these costs over the period of the proposed pilot until September 2009. The objective of Phase 3 would be to make the scheme financially sustainable beyond the pilot through the tender savings resulting from the use of the buses to provide evening/weekend services.
- 2.6 The pilot project would involve providing new journey opportunities for passengers entitled to concessionary travel and would increase expenditure on concessionary travel by an estimated £40,000 per annum.
- 2.7 The scope of the flexibly routed services have been discussed at the Authority Working Groups (Bus and Tendered Services) and has been the subject of initial consultation with local communities. The detailed design of services and the award of contract would be considered by the Authority's Tendered Services Working Group.
- 2.8 The monitoring and evaluation of the pilot would also be reported to the Authority's Tendered Services Working Group, with information also provided to the Bus Working Group and the relevant Liaison Groups.
- 2.9 The pilot nature of the project involves some risks and these, and mitigation measures, would be monitored by the Authority's Working Groups. The conditions of contract would allow buses to be re-allocated for use on other tendered services should the pilot prove unsuccessful.

3. FINANCIAL AND EC PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 It is proposed that the capital expenditure of £460,000 be funded by the remaining Department for Transport major scheme allocation for the Yellow Bus project.
- 3.2 The additional service operating costs in 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 are estimated to be £280,000. These costs would be funded through external funding from Kirklees Council and local agencies in the pilot service areas.
- 3.3 The estimated additional costs assume savings from the registration of AccessBus service in order to attract BSOG.
- 3.4 The selection of Optare Solo vehicles as replacement buses for AccessBus has been reported previously to the Bus Working Group. These buses are suitable for the pilot services and it is proposed to specify this vehicle as a condition of the Section 56 grants.

4. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None as a result of this report.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The proposals set out in this report would enhance travel opportunities for persons with impaired mobility and/or special educational needs.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. The Authority approve the proposed pilot scheme and associated capital and revenue expenditure as set out in this report.

6.2. That the Authority approve the use of S56 grant to secure five Optare Solos and ancillary equipment at a cost of £460,000.

6.3 That the award of contract be reported to Tendered Services Working Group.

6.4 That monitoring and evaluation of the pilot scheme be reported to the relevant Working and Liaison Groups of the Authority.

Director General
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive