

### Consultation On Bus Service Changes – Good Practice Guide

This document sets out the process which Metro, bus operators and District Councils will endeavour to follow changes are proposed to local bus services.

Most bus services are provided on a commercial basis where bus operators are free to make changes which meet their business requirements. It is good practice to consult prior to changing services. However, bus operators operate in a competitive market and there may be situations where the early publication of service change intentions are not in the company's interests.

All changes to bus services must be registered with the Traffic Commissioners 8 weeks prior to the service changing. This is the point at which details of the changes are made public. Best practice recommends that the views of passengers and their representatives are obtained prior to formal registration.

Some bus services are publicly funded by Metro; these are known as “tendered bus services”. In these cases, elected members of the Passenger Transport Authority will approve changes to the route and /or frequency of tendered bus services involving local ward representatives.

In order to maintain good passenger relations, the bus operators participating in the West Yorkshire Operator Group have agreed to follow this Best Practice Guide.

#### There Are Six Forms Of Bus Service Change

- **New Service** – the introduction of a new bus service which is not accompanied by a withdrawal or amendment of an existing service
- **Withdrawn Service** – the complete withdrawal of a service or the withdrawal of a service at certain times of the day/ week. A service is not considered as withdrawn where a bus service number is changed but the substantive service to the passenger is unaffected.
- **Timetable Change** – where the times of operation of a service alter but the frequency of service is unaffected
- **Frequency Change** – where the frequency of a service (i.e. the number of bus departures per hour) increases or decreases.
- **Route Change** – where the destinations and/or roads served by a service (or group of services) is altered
- **Changes To School Bus Services** – changes to services which operate solely for the carriage of school pupils. Changes to regular services can often have particular implications for school travel

## When Consultation Should Take Place

- **New Service** – there is no requirement to consult when a new service is planned. Metro and bus operators may however involve stakeholders and local representatives in the design of a new service.
- **Withdrawn Service** – there is a requirement to consult where a service is proposed to be withdrawn
- **Timetable Change** – there is no requirement to consult when timetable changes are proposed however bus operators will give consideration to the implications for passengers on concessionary fares if departures are brought earlier than 9:30 and for school pupils where these form a significant number of passengers on the service.
- **Frequency Change** – there is a requirement to consult on all occasions when service frequency is reduced to less than half hourly between 0700 and 1900 Monday to Friday and less than hourly at all other times
- **Route Change** – there is a requirement to consult on all occasions when, as a result of the change, one or more of the following situations would arise;
  - more than 10 households which currently lie within 400 metres of the service find themselves in excess of 400 metres from a bus service.
  - a community served by one or more bus stops lose direct access to their nearest town or city centre or to a major hospital
  - the route change will result in a reduction of service frequency below half hourly to a community served by one or more bus stops

There is no requirement to consult on proposed changes to roads and stops served in town or city centres provided that liaison takes place with Metro and the appropriate District Council Highway teams.

- **Operation On Roads Not Previously Served By Buses** – where the revised route involves operation on a road or section of road not currently served by buses, the operator shall establish that the road is suitable for the safe passage of buses seeking advice from the highway authority where necessary. Metro and the bus operator will identify safe and appropriate locations for new bus stops, consulting those directly affected by the location of the stop.
- **Changes To School Bus Services** – there is a requirement to advise schools (and, through schools, pupils and parents) of the implications changes to services which operate solely for the carriage of school pupils.

## Fixed Dates For Bus Service Changes

It is recognised that passenger confidence can be undermined when there are frequent changes to bus services. Passengers also benefit from early notification of service changes. To address this, bus operators and Metro agree and advertise the fixed dates throughout the year when bus services may change.

## Consultation Process

The following details the best practice process for advising and consulting upon bus service changes. Longer timescales will be necessary for more extensive network changes.

<b>At least 16 weeks before the service change</b>	Bus operator advises Metro of proposals
	Bus operator and Metro undertake a risk assessment of the proposed changes and agree a briefing note describing the changes and the implications for passengers
<b>The proposals remain confidential until this stage – the bus operator will give agreement at this point to sharing them on a wider basis</b>	
<b>At least 15 weeks before the service change</b>	A briefing note issued to District Council representative, the PTA District Spokesperson. Local MP's office and the ward members affected. If the changes significantly affect travel to school, the briefing note will be circulated to the relevant headteacher(s) .
	Metro and the bus operator (in consultation with the District Council) will agree whether consultation meetings are required and agree the format of the meetings
<b>At least 12 weeks before the service change</b>	Where appropriate, consultation meetings will be jointly attended by Bus Operator, Metro and, if appropriate, officers of the District Council officers.
<b>At least 9 weeks before the service change</b>	Bus operator advises Metro of its intentions. Metro advises District Council, PTA District Spokesperson and ward members affected of the outcome of the consultation.
<b>8 weeks before the service change</b>	Formal service registration

## Tendered Bus Service Changes

Tendered bus services are subject to a periodic value for money review usually prior to inviting tenders. This review is reported to the Passenger Transport Authority following which the District Council representative will be advised of any significant service withdrawal or amendment at least 16 weeks before the service change.

### **Appraisal of the withdrawal of a service (or part of a service)**

Where a commercial service is proposed to be wholly or partly withdrawn, the operator will supply patronage and revenue data to Metro who will appraise the performance of the service. Patronage information will be advised to members of the Passenger Transport Authority and may be issued as part of the briefing note to explain the reasons for the withdrawal.

## Information Process

This process applies to all bus service changes

<b>8 weeks before the service change</b>	Formal service registration
	Service details are submitted to Metro for entry into passenger information databases
	Electronic data is supplied for loading into the real time information system
<b>At least 6 weeks before the service change</b>	Details of all forthcoming service changes issued on a summary note issued electronically to District Council representatives and those elected members subscribing to this service
	Any minor amendments to the services must be resolved in this period
<b>At least 3 weeks before the service change</b>	Changing Times leaflet published and timetables begin to become available on Metro's website
	Bus operator and Metro publicise forthcoming changes including briefing bus drivers to give clear and positive message to passengers and distribution of Changing Times on buses
<b>At least 10 days before the service change</b>	Metro publishes timetable booklets – available at Travel Centres and other notified outlets
<b>3-1 days before the service change</b>	Bus stop displays amended

## School Bus Service Changes

Where it is proposed to withdraw all or part of a service which operates solely for the carriage of school pupils, bus operators should give at least a full term's notice to Metro of the intended withdrawal.

The bus operator, in liaison with Metro and the District Council, must notify all schools affected by the change in writing immediately following submission of the service registration.

The schools in liaison with Metro and the District Council, with distribute information to parents and pupils about the service change together advice on alternative arrangements where appropriate. Metro will include information on its Generation M website.