

# WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

DATE: 30 MARCH 2007

AGENDA ITEM NO: 17

**SUBJECT: NATIONAL POLICY INITIATIVES**

## **Report of the Passenger Transport Executive**

### **1. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 1.1. National policy initiatives relating to buses, governance, light rail, land use planning, local government and concessionary travel arrangements from April 2008.

### **2. INFORMATION**

#### Buses and Governance

- 2.1. The publication of the Local Government White Paper and the review of bus services ('Putting the Passenger First') has been discussed at previous meetings of the Authority. The implications for bus services will be considered in detail at the Bus Working Group, with key issues being reported to future meetings of the Authority.
- 2.2. The Department for Transport had advised that, following some initial local workshops, the next step would be the publication of a draft Road Transport Bill that would cover reforms to the bus industry and governance arrangements for local transport and changes to the legislation for the introduction of local road pricing schemes.
- 2.3. At its meeting on 31 July, the Authority endorsed an approach which suggested that the legislation should be enabling and that it should provide for each Metropolitan area, both PTA and Districts to identify the powers and governance arrangements 'most appropriate to their particular circumstances'.
- 2.4. A meeting of the PTA Special Interest Group (SIG) took place on 6 February, 2007. The emerging view was that the SIG would take a similar approach as West Yorkshire. The PTA Chairs met with the Secretary of State, Douglas Alexander on 19 March and an update will be provided by the Chairman of the Authority.
- 2.5. It is now understood that the publication of the draft Road Transport Bill has been delayed until May. The draft Bill will be the subject of consultation and discussion, and further reports will be prepared for consideration by the Authority.

## Consultation on Light Rail Schemes

- 2.6. The Department for Transport has published draft guidance for Local Authority promoters considering a light rail scheme, and requested consultee's views. Metro provided views on the guidance, through pteg, which were collated as a wider industry response under the umbrella of UK Tram (thereby also including views of the Confederation of Passenger Transport, The Light Rapid Transit Forum and London Trams).
- 2.7. The collective response was felt necessary since the consensus view of the various groups was that there were serious concerns with the draft Guidance in relation to its general tone, which appears to be very strongly against light rail development, and in relation to funding and appraisal aspects. The view was held that the Guidance (as stands) will preclude the taking forward of light rail schemes (or similar, such as tram-train) by Promoters in the future.
- 2.8. With specific reference to how the Guidance affects the development of West Yorkshire/Leeds City Region transport projects, there are a few key points where the response has a bearing on the development of projects as included in the Leeds City Region Transport Vision. These include:
  - Concerns at the over-riding focus on congestion, whilst ignoring regeneration opportunities – proposals such as those for Aire Valley Leeds would be affected by this position;
  - Simplistic and unproven assumptions (based largely on the Atkins work undertaken for Department for Transport in relation to the Leeds Supertram proposals) such as most of the LRT benefits can be obtained from bus schemes at significantly less cost;
  - Lack of clarity on the means by which LRT and bus networks can co-exist and be fully integrated – examples were cited where Competition Law is not operating in the public interest;
  - Concerns over the way in which scheme costs are capped at an early stage of project development, with promoter's potentially bearing risks that are outwith their control.
  - A proposal that the LRT industry should be invited to work closely with the Department to revise the guidance by Summer 2007 so that it can become a document that is of practical benefit to scheme promoters and to the Department for Transport.

### Consultation on Planning Gain

- 2.9. There is an important relationship between land-use and transport planning. For example, developer contributions were identified as an important funding source contributing towards the delivery of the City Region Transport Vision.
- 2.10. Metro's approach to securing funding towards public transport from developers has been reported to the External Funding Working Group and Highways and Transport Planning Liaison Group. Metro has been involved in consultations on the Regional Spatial Strategy, Local Development Frameworks and Area Action Plans.
- 2.11. It is essential that the public transport implications of developments are properly considered as part of the development control process. Metro seeks early involvement in major development proposals and contributes as a consultee on other applications as appropriate.
- 2.12. The Government have been considering changes to the process of determining planning applications, and in particular have consulted on new methods of ensuring a consistent approach to planning consents which will oblige developments to pay a 'Planning Gain Supplement' (in addition to dealing with the site specific traffic impacts).
- 2.13. This supplement would be levied in the form of a 'per unit' charge, with differential rates for each land use activity, but based on a national figure. The consultation document proposes that 30% of the funds from the Planning Gain Supplement would accrue to the Treasury and the remaining 70% would be directed to fund transport investment at a regional or sub regional level.
- 2.14. Metro through 'pteg' has submitted a response on the draft proposals, covering the following issues:
  - Planning Gain Supplement should be additional, not a replacement for site specific mitigation;
  - The majority, if not all, of Planning Gain Supplement should be locally directed at significant transport projects, such as supporting those in the City Region Transport Vision;
  - Consideration should be given towards strengthening the role of PTA/Es in the planning process, by making developers engage with PTEs earlier in the process and ensuring that, where appropriate, PTEs can be the recipient of Planning Gain Supplement for the delivery of major transport schemes;

- A move towards consistency, transparency and simplicity is welcomed, so long as experience gained in securing benefits from developers is maintained; and
- Any review of planning processes should consider transport objectives, with a much clearer requirement to develop and encourage sustainable travel habits, rather than simply mitigating the impact of traffic.

### Barker Review Of Land Use Planning

- 2.15. Following her report into the supply of housing, Kate Barker was asked by the Government to conduct an independent review of the land use planning system in England. The terms of reference asked her to consider how, building on recent reforms, the planning system could better support economic growth in the context of delivering its wider sustainable development goals.
- 2.16. The report, which was published on 5 December 2006 is available at [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk). The report recommendations include:
- more consideration being given to the economic benefits of planning;
  - a Planning Gain Supplement;
  - an Independent Panel for determining applications for projects of national importance (e.g. energy, transport, waste and strategic reservoirs);
  - encouragement to local authorities to work together in drawing up joint development plan documents and determining planning applications where there are significant impacts extending beyond the boundary of one authority;
  - a review Green belt policies with the aim of ensuring planned development takes place in the most sustainable locations;
  - better integration between the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).
  - streamlining Plan making, with the main recommendation being to remove the statutory consultation requirement at issues and options stage of LDF documents;
  - the removal of the requirement to demonstrate need for major retail developments (need in the sense of there being spending power in the area to support the scale of additional retailing) but retain the sequential test;
  - a presumption in favour of development where Development Plan provisions are indeterminate or not up to date;

- 'community good will payments';
  - more pre-application discussions.
- 2.17. There are some aspects of the Barker report that could lead to greater dispersion of land-uses and developments taking place in less accessible locations (in terms of public transport provision). The government will produce consultation documents on the implementation of the recommendations in the review. It is proposed that these be reported as appropriate to the Authority's Highways and Transport Planning Liaison Group.

#### Lyons Inquiry into Local Government

- 2.18. In July 2004, Sir Michael Lyons was asked by the Deputy Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer to look at changes to the local government system - in particular to make recommendations on council tax reform, to assess the case for giving local authorities more powers to charge for services and other options enabling authorities to raise supplementary revenue. His remit was extended in September 2005 to cover local government's role and function, and in December 2006 to consider the implications of the Barker, Eddington and Leitch reports.
- 2.19. The final report was published on 21 March 2007. The report is available at [www.lyonsinquiry.org](http://www.lyonsinquiry.org). The overarching conclusions are that local government is an essential part of the overall government system (with essential 'place-shaping' and wellbeing roles) and that local and central need to work more closely together with greater clarity about who is responsible for what. The report also suggests that there is no 'golden key' to reform with some urgent short-term measures paving the way for longer term reforms.
- 2.20. The report supports Kate Barker's conclusions that Government should pursue devolution and clarification in the planning system. Lyons also proposes powers for a supplement on the national business rate which would be retained locally.
- 2.21. In terms of the links to the Eddington Study, the report strongly supports proposals for new local powers on the regulation of bus provision. It also makes a number of proposals in relation to sub-regional economic decision making. Specific recommendations include:
- Decision-making arrangements for economic development issues like transport, planning and skills need to reflect actual patterns of economic activity - but this must not undermine the place-shaping role of local authorities, and must be flexible enough to respond to complex and changing patterns of economic activity.
  - Local authorities should develop arrangements between themselves to take strategic decisions on these issues.

- Central government should test those arrangements to ensure that they are robust, sensible and capable of taking hard choices.
- Responsibilities and funding for transport, skills and economic development, currently administered at national or regional level, should be devolved to sub-regional arrangements which met those requirements.

#### National Concessionary Travel from April 2008

- 2.22. The planned introduction of the 'national' free concessionary travel scheme (for senior citizens and disabled persons) from 1 April 2008 has been reported to the Concessionary Travel Working Group and to the Authority.
- 2.23. The new arrangements would allow, for example, a West Yorkshire senior Concessionary Pass holder to travel on any local bus within England at no fare at most times (primarily weekends, bank holidays and weekdays after 0930). Similarly, pass holders from elsewhere in England would be able to travel for free in West Yorkshire.
- 2.24. Metro is contributing to discussions with the Department for Transport on how the new arrangements can be introduced within such a short timescale. Metro is also contributing, through pteg, to other considerations, such as the crucial question of funding and the distribution of funding.
- 2.25. Previous reports to the Authority have highlighted the advantages of the use of smartcards for the new concessionary travel arrangements because of the improved quality of data on usage, the audit trail, the avoidance of some aspects of fraud and the opportunities for developing other ticketing products once buses were equipped with smartcard readers.
- 2.26. ITSO, a membership organisation of PTEs, local authorities, operators and suppliers, has developed a specification for inter-operable smartcards and for the associated security environment. The work of ITSO allows schemes to procure equipment from different suppliers in the confidence that the components will work together and the cards can, potentially, be used in other parts of the country. This means that an ITSO compliant smartcard issued in West Yorkshire could be used to verify entitlement to concessionary travel on any bus in England. The same smartcard could be used to pay for rail travel on rail services, such as those included in the Yorcard pilot in Sheffield.
- 2.27. It is understood that smartcards are likely, subject to further cost appraisal and Ministerial approval, to be mandated by the Department for Transport. The Department have issued an OJEU notice for the provision and issuing of smartcards and for a back-office.

2.28. The new arrangements from April 2008 will require Metro to re-issue 370,000 Senior and Disabled passes. A Ministerial decision is expected about a requirement to issue on ITSO smartcards, plastic card or paper. Plans are being prepared for informing existing pass holders, amending the arrangements for new applicants and collecting and storing the required data, including digital photographs, for subsequent card issue.

2.29. It is proposed to report the plans for re-issuing permits to the Concessionary Travel Working Group.

### **3. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1. The cost implications of changes to the arrangement for concessionary travel will be reported to future meetings of the Authority. Some provision for permit re-issue has been included in the budget for 2007/08.

### **4. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

4.1. None as a result of this report.

### **5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. None as a result of this report.

### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1. That the report be noted.

Director General  
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive