

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

**AT A MEETING OF THE WAKEFIELD PASSENGER CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, WAKEFIELD
ON THURSDAY 11 OCTOBER 2007**

PRESENT: Councillor G Phelps (Chair)

WYPTA

K Rhodes
M Walker

PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES

Pauline Blackburn
Christine Carter
John Churms
Michael Dalton

Brenda Fruish
Dennis Pattinson
Keith Watson

WAKEFIELD MDC

L Harrison
D Hopkins

Also in attendance:-

G Cooper - Arriva Yorkshire
D Haley - Northern

1. WELCOME

Councillor Phelps welcomed both new and old members to the committee and said that he hoped they would find the meetings of interest. Furthermore, he assured members that their input into the work of the committee was valued and that their comments were listened to and acted upon.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Halliday (WMDC) and public representatives B Darlison and D Farren.

3. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

Two nominations were received for the position of Deputy Chair.

RESOLVED - That Mr K Watson be elected as Deputy Chair of the Committee.

4. MINUTES

Councillor Hopkins requested an update on progress made regarding an issue raised under minute 20 concerning Arriva buses failing to observe a stop near to the travellers' site on Doncaster Road, Heath Common, Wakefield. It was reported that Metro had approached Arriva about this matter who had reiterated to their drivers the necessity to call at the stop. Since that time no further complaints had been received.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2007 be approved.

5. FEEDBACK REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive advising members of the feedback received at the meeting of the Committee held on 29 March 2007.

Members were also advised of the feedback received on a wide range of consultation items which had been discussed at the PCC meetings over the previous two years. Appendix A to the submitted report detailed the main points raised by members and action taken.

Councillor Hopkins raised the issue of signage within Arriva's Wakefield bus station and commented that the changes which had been made had not significantly improved the problem, particularly for partially sighted customers.

Concern was expressed at the reliability and punctuality of bus services and personal experiences of unreliability were highlighted by members of the committee. It was reported that official figures confirmed that overall reliability and punctuality had continued to improve. Realtime data allowed operators to identify where problems were occurring and take corrective action. Members were informed that their comments had been taken on board and that Metro staff would investigate the reliability of the services which had been highlighted by them with a view to identifying and addressing any problems.

In response to a question about realtime information being provided in Wakefield bus station, it was reported that this was scheduled to take place within the next 18 months.

Concern was expressed about the inaccessibility of hospitals and health centres to patients travelling by public transport and the priority attached to accessibility by architects/planners when building new facilities. It was reported that Metro had begun to work closely with the NHS, including Primary Care Trusts, to encourage them to give careful consideration to patient travel plans when building new hospitals and health centres and when relocating existing facilities. With regard to accessibility to hospitals, members asked that consideration be given to the FreeCityBus calling at Pinderfields hospital.

Members were reminded that individual detailed matters could be raised with Metro staff at the end of the meeting and were urged to take up matters as and when they arose rather than waiting to raise them at the next meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

6. **INFORMATION REPORT**

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

Service Change Dates

It was reported that Metro and the bus operators had agreed a programme of dates when service changes would occur during 2008. The programme also included dates for timetable only changes which would allow operators to make scheduled changes that would improve punctuality. A copy of the latest 'Changing Times' leaflet was circulated at the meeting.

National Concessionary Travel Scheme 2008

It was reported that free bus travel arrangements for seniors and people with disabilities would be extended nationwide from April 2008. Members were advised that the scheme would allow for off-peak bus travel between 0930 and 2300 hours Monday to Friday and all day Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays.

Members were advised that approximately 350,000 new smartcard type passes would need to be issued and 170,000 applications had been received to date. The cards would be processed and sent out in March 2008 prior to the commencement of the scheme.

FreeCityBus

It was reported that patronage of the service continued to grow with in excess of 8,000 passenger journeys being made on a weekly basis.

Mr Dalton expressed his support for the FreeCityBus and suggested that it would be extremely useful if the service was better advertised on the platforms at Kirkgate rail station.

Members reiterated their earlier request that consideration be given to amending the timetable of the service to incorporate a stop at Pinderfields Hospital.

Castleford Interchange

It was reported that detailed design work on the proposed £14½ million scheme would be completed by the end of the year with a view to

commencing work on site during late summer 2008. It was, however, noted that there had been delays relating to the necessary land acquisition for the site and these issues were being pursued by Wakefield MDC prior to Metro obtaining full approval for the scheme.

December 2007 Rail Timetable

The Committee were informed that the new national timetable would commence on 9 December 2007 and operate until 17 May 2008.

Christmas and New Year Bus Services

The Committee noted the arrangements for bus service provision over the Christmas and New Year holiday period. It was reported that consideration was being given to operating a pilot scheme on the core bus routes in Leeds and Huddersfield on Boxing Day and, possibly, New Year's Day and further details would be provided to members when available.

Christmas and New Year Local Rail Services

Members were advised of the arrangements for local rail services during the Committee and New Year period and noted that details would be published in due course.

The Rail White Paper and High Level Output Specification

The Committee were informed that the Department for Transport (DfT) had been developing its future investment proposals for the railways, specifically for the period 2009 to 2014 and in July had published a Rail White Paper 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway'. This provided strategic direction for the rail industry and sought to build confidence in the performance of the railway and respond to growth in demand.

It was reported that the Government would be investing £10bn in the rail network for the period 2009 to 2014. £150m of this would be spent on modernising 150 medium sized stations across the country and providing 1,300 new carriages to deal with overcrowding. The DfT had recently indicated that 60 to 90 of the additional carriages would be utilised in the Leeds area and the investment would be accompanied by a programme of schemes for platform lengthening, power upgrades and additional depot facilities.

New Rail Franchises

Members were advised of the awards of contracts to run the InterCity East Coast, CrossCountry and East Midlands franchises.

Wakefield Kirkgate Rail Station

Members were advised that Network Rail was proposing to refurbish its existing depot at Wakefield Kirkgate station and replace redundant facilities with new, fit for purpose ones. Network Rail were liaising with Wakefield MDC

on the details of their proposals and a progress report would be prepared for a future meeting of the committee.

Wakefield Westgate Rail Station

It was reported that Metro had submitted to the Department for Transport a major scheme bid for Wakefield Westgate station of approximately £7m. The proposals contained in the bid would improve rail performance on the line between Doncaster and Leeds, provide additional station capacity to accommodate future growth in services and improve accessibility to the station. Questions raised by the DfT on the overall appraisal were being addressed and the committee would be kept informed of progress.

Local Transport Bill

It was reported that the draft Local Transport Bill had been published in Spring 2007 for consultation. Metro welcomed the provisions in the draft Bill which sought to improve the quality of local bus services through enhanced partnership as well as making Bus Quality contracts a more viable option and enabling the PTA/Es and local authorities to determine the governance arrangements that best suited their circumstances.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

7. CONSULTATION ITEMS -

- (a) Consultation Strategy**
- (b) Feedback on Market Research**
- (c) Concessionary Permit Issue for 2008**

Consultation Strategy

Members were given a presentation on Metro's Consultation Strategy which was in the process of being updated. It was reported that the review offered the opportunity to include new methods of consultation, for instance via the website and by e-mail. Members were asked for their suggestions on what they felt could be included in the review and were asked for feedback on the key approaches and activities included in it. The following suggestions were made:

- That feedback be provided to people who had taken part in consultations.
- That when a bus service is amended/withdrawn, the wider travelling public be informed of when and why to enable greater understanding of the reason behind such changes.
- That parish and town councils be consulted more widely
- That Metro publish a clearly understandable set of standards/criteria in respect of the provision of bus services, stops, shelters etc.

Members were asked to forward any further comments and suggestions to Metro.

Feedback on Market Research

It was reported that market research tracker surveys were undertaken by Metro on an annual basis. The information gathered was used to measure customer satisfaction levels with services provided and to inform future priorities and marketing plans.

Members were given a short presentation on the results of the latest market research tracker survey which indicated that public transport use and satisfaction levels had increased.

The survey had highlighted several areas for improvement which included:

- safety at rail stations
- the cost, frequency and seating availability on rail
- the provision of realtime (not timetable) information at bus stations
- bus service frequency, reliability and driving style
- weather protection/realtime information at bus stops

The views of members were sought on the results of the market research tracker surveys.

A PCC member considered that toilet facilities should be provided at all rail stations and on board trains wherever possible.

The suggestion was made that market research should not only be aimed at public transport users generally, but also at specific user groups such as mothers travelling with pushchairs.

With particular regard to the issue of bus stop information, a PCC member commented that passengers had been experiencing problems since the bus stop plate information was changed and service numbers were removed. It was suggested that the views of passengers should be sought on the level of information now provided at bus stops.

Members were asked to forward any further suggestions to Metro on the questionnaire provided.

Concessionary Permit Issue for 2008

The Committee were given a presentation on the marketing strategy used to advise people of the need to apply for new concessionary permits prior to the introduction of the English National Concessionary Permit Scheme on 1 April 2008.

Members were advised that approximately 170,000 applications had been received to date and were asked for feedback on the marketing approach adopted and for ideas on future promotion of the scheme.

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