

AGENDA ITEM NO: 12

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY/ DISTRICT COUNCILS

AT A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION LIAISON GROUP HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON TUESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2006

PRESENT:	Councillor D Blackburn	-	(Chair)
	Councillor D Congreve	-	WYPTA
	Councillor C Greaves	-	WYPTA
	Councillor S Khan	-	WYPTA
	Councillor M Walker	-	WYPTA
	Councillor M McCabe	-	Bradford MDC
	Councillor J Holmes	-	Wakefield MDC
Officers in Attendance:	N Parker	-	Education Bradford
	M Carroll	-	Education Bradford
	P Oldroyd	-	Calderdale MBC
	C Perkin	-	Education Leeds
	A Hudson	-	Education Leeds
	R Smith	-	Wakefield MDC
	J Price	-	Wakefield MDC
	A Pilling	-	Metro
	S Wainwright	-	Metro
	T Newton	-	Metro
	R Chaplin	-	WYPTA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Swift (Calderdale).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no personal or prejudicial interests declared by members at the meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2006 be approved.

4. MYBUS UPDATE

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on progress of the MyBus project.

Members noted progress regarding the implementation of the second phase of the project. It was reported that 66 new low floor vehicles had been procured and all would be in operation by January 2007. Initial feedback from customers and operators had been very positive and a monitoring report would be submitted to the DfT in Autumn 2006.

It was reported that two of the three batches for Phase 3 services had been awarded and details of the schools to be served by the 41 buses awarded to date were appended to the report. The remaining 19 buses for Phase 3 would be tendered as one batch later in the Autumn and the schools to be served in the remaining batch would be identified according to the criteria outlined in the report.

The Liaison Group were advised that there was funding available in the capital major scheme budget which could, subject to DfT approval, be used to fund approximately 10 smaller vehicles. If successful, there would be an opportunity to develop a "My Little Bus" trial scheme to transport children with Special Educational Needs (who would normally be carried by taxi) and for pupils who lived in rural areas. The vehicles could be used for other related requirements inter peak to ensure more efficient vehicle usage.

It was suggested that the Phase 2 monitoring address issues around revenue implications and schools admissions policies. It was noted that not all services had primary school linked trips but members were advised that this was expected to be addressed as schools required notice to change the timing of the school day.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

5. THE SAFEMARK AWARDS SCHEME PROGRESS REPORT

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on progress on the development of the SAFEMark Awards Scheme in West Yorkshire.

Members noted the progress of the schools currently participating in the scheme. It was reported that a further 20 schools would be invited to begin working on the SAFEMark award during the first half of the new academic year and would include secondary schools due to be included in the Phase 3 of the Yellow Bus project.

The Liaison Group were advised that the SAFEMark criteria had been evaluated and updated to enhance the impact the scheme had on schools and brought together a number of key areas that had been developed through the project over the last year. The changes included integrating SAFEMark with School Travel Planning and improving the uptake of the Young Persons PhotoCard scheme.

The progress with Junior SAFEMark was noted. It was reported that a teaching resource had been developed and positive feedback received from schools that had used the resource. It was reported that workshops had been held during the summer term in all districts and were attended by 1375 children from 38 schools. School Travel Advisors, Road Safety Officers and

bus operator School Liaison Officers had also attended a joint training event and the teaching resource, 'Step Up' had been promoted to schools through a variety of methods. It was noted that a further 100 resources had been ordered by schools and feedback was being sought to assess its effectiveness.

Members were advised that 5 schools had been involved in a trial to become agents to issue Young Person's PhotoCards which were currently only available from Post Offices and Metro Travel Centres. Verbal feedback from the schools had indicated that they all supported the idea and were keen for it to be successful. However the main problem to its success was the initial financial outlay required to purchase the first batch of the PhotoCards (to sell on to the pupils) and as a result only one of the schools had taken up the initiative. It was therefore proposed that the initial batch of PhotoCards would be supplied free of charge to those schools who became agents and would be closely monitored to see if more schools could be encouraged to participate in the initiative.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

6. CHANGES TO THE TIMING OF THE SCHOOL DAY

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the results of requests received for changes to the timing of the school day at various schools throughout West Yorkshire.

It was reported that Metro had secured the co-operation of LEAs in advising schools of the need for early consultations in order to minimise the difficulties experienced by late requests for amendments to the timing of the school day.

Members were reminded that the timing of the school day would play a significant role in facilitating the successful implementation of Metro's MyBus Yellow Bus scheme. It was hoped that LEAs would continue to use their influence to secure changes where it would provide for the implementation of or improvements to MyBus schemes.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the LEAs continue to work with Metro to secure changes to the timing of the school day at schools where this would facilitate the implementation of the MyBus Yellow Bus schemes.

7. SCHOOL BUS TENDER RESULTS 2005

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the results of tenders sought for 'big bus' schools transport services in West Yorkshire for the 2006 -2007 school year.

It was noted that the level of competition had been high with 21 operators bidding for work and a total of 71 bids being received for the 19 available

tenders. Contracts were awarded to 7 existing operators and one new schools service operator. A number of tenders for within school hours had been withdrawn following an exercise to assess the comparative cost of Batch 403 tenders and a MyBus yellow bus 'private hire' arrangement demonstrated that lower costs could be achieved if some services utilised the MyBus vehicles. The comparative cost for previous academic year represented a decrease in costs of 6.1%.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

8. SCHOOLCARD PRICING 2006

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the arrangements for the pricing of SchoolCard for the 2006/2007 academic year.

It was reported that following negotiations, the operators had agreed to increase the price of a notional countywide average card cost by 5.8%. This would therefore result in the full year price increasing by £21 to £384 for 2006/2007.

It was noted that whilst tender costs had decreased, the cost of SchoolCard had increased, and that this situation would be closely monitored.

RESOLVED - That the increase in the price of SchoolCard as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report be noted.

9. EDUCATION TRANSPORT MONITORING – PROGRESS REPORT

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive updating members on progress made with the development and implementation of Metro's school bus and taxi monitoring regime. The report also sought support for a proposed contribution from the Agency District Local Education Authorities towards the ongoing cost of the monitoring regime.

Members noted the progress regarding the development of partnerships, the establishment of databases to hold driver, vehicle and operator information and the development and introduction of procedures to carry out on vehicle, school site and depot checks. Further developments had also taken place regarding the vetting of PCV drivers and in addition to MyBus drivers, all drivers involved in the operation of taxi and minibus transport for children with special educational needs required clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). It was noted that an agreement had also been reached in principle with West Yorkshire operators for all PCV drivers to be vetted. Procedures were being developed and the next stage would be the procurement of the services of an 'umbrella body' to process and advise on CRB disclosures.

The Liaison Group discussed the funding implications for the monitoring team. Metro asked the four Agency District Local Education Authorities to consider contributing 50% of the residual costs. It was proposed that the proportion each LEA contributed would be based on the volume of tendered services

procured and managed by Metro and would be subject to the necessary agreements. It was suggested that Metro enter into separate discussions with each Agency LEA on the format and delivery of service level agreements relating to contract monitoring and compliance.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the success of the monitoring programme be noted.
- (b) That the Agency LEAs be encouraged to contribute to the monitoring activities on the basis set out in the report.

10. EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS BILL

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the transport implications contained in the Education and Inspections Bill being considered by Parliament and the new duties and potential opportunities arising from it.

Members noted the overall aim of the Bill and that it was due for enactment before the end of 2006. It was reported that there were three major areas to be considered as a result of the legislation –

- (a) how the duty on each of the LEAs to produce a school travel strategy integrates with the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan;
- (b) how the extension of the right to free travel for low income families would impact on LEAs and Metro;
- (c) how the 5 local authorities and Metro could respond to the request for Pathfinder Authorities.

With regard to the request for Pathfinder Authorities, it was believed that applications from West Yorkshire would be welcomed because of the unique partnership arrangements in the county and the innovative approach to school travel. Members were advised that Pathfinder Authorities could seek up to £200,000 pump-priming funding and this would be increased for joint bids.

The Liaison Group noted a number of suggestions for a joint application which included addressing ticketing and service provision, measures to promote independent travel by SEN pupils and extending key features of MyBus to all subsidised school bus provision. It was recommended that more detailed work on the potential risks and benefits of pursuing Pathfinder status be undertaken.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That more detailed work on the potential risks and benefits of pursuing Pathfinder status be undertaken.