

AGENDA ITEM NO: 10

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY/DISTRICT COUNCILS

AT A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION LIAISON GROUP HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON TUESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2007

PRESENT: Councillor B Jennings (Chair)

Councillors M Harkin	-	WYPTA
S Khan	-	WYPTA
T Leadley	-	WYPTA
T Swift	-	WYPTA
D Coombs	-	Calderdale MC
A Denham	-	Kirklees MC
P Garbutt	-	Wakefield MDC

Officers in Attendance:

P Oldroyd	-	Calderdale MBC
Z Taylor	-	Calderdale MBC
R Smith	-	Wakefield MDC
M Patel	-	Wakefield MDC
N Holt	-	Metro
J Bennett	-	Metro
R Chaplin	-	WYPTA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Bentley (Leeds) and D Swift (Calderdale) and Cheryl Hobson (Wakefield)

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 6 March 2007 be approved.

4. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on plans for the development of school bus service provision during the school academic year 2007/08.

New Initiatives 2006/07

The Liaison Group were given a short presentation on the new website which had been launched during the summer for young people – www.generationM.co.uk.

It was noted that the site included school timetables, tickets and passes information together with competitions and other features aimed to attract young people between 11 and 18 years to the site. Members welcomed the site and suggested that it should contain items to encourage younger age groups too and be accessible via “Google” search. They were asked to provide any further comments or feedback to Metro.

Members were advised that the site had been promoted through flyers which had been included when sending out new school bus passes and recorded messages on the call centre telephone system. Metro were producing credit card style information and asked if it would be possible for LEAs to include these and other promotional literature within their internal schools mailing arrangements.

Mybus Major Scheme

It was noted that the DfT funding for the scheme ends in April 2008. In the remaining months of the project an exercise would be undertaken to review the effectiveness of the network and to establish if any further efficiencies could be made and/or additional linked trips provided.

Education and Inspections Act

It was reported that the impact of the Act would put additional demands on Metro in relation to more complex tendering in order to accommodate additional pupils entitled to free travel, additional pass allocation and production and an increase in customer enquiries as a result of the changes.

Pathfinder Status

The Liaison Group were advised that Faber Maunsell, consultants, had been appointed to carry out market research to investigate the transport barriers to school choice. Members noted the two options proposed for further development which focussed on delivering benefits to current or potential bus users. A meeting had been held with the DfES lead officer on the Education and Inspections Act and Pathfinder and an Expression of Interest had been made. The five Local Authorities were to consider the options in advance of a bid submission which was required by the end of November 2007.

RESOLVED - That the report and presentation be noted.

5. SCHOOLCARD PRICING 2007

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the arrangements for the pricing of SchoolCard for the 2007/2008 academic year.

It was reported that following negotiations, the operators had agreed to increase the price of a notional countywide average card cost by 5.5%. This would therefore result in the full year price increasing by £21 to £405 for 2007/2008.

RESOLVED - That the increase in the price of SchoolCard as detailed in paragraph 3 of 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 generally received early notification from schools requesting amendments to timings of the school day which had been of great assistance. Members were reminded that the timing of the school day was crucial to the further development of Mybus schemes already in operation and LEAs were asked to continue to use their influence to secure changes where it would provide for 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 support the further development of Mybus Yellow Bus schemes.

7. 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 Project in West Yorkshire.

Members noted the progress of the schools currently participating in the scheme. It was reported that since the last meeting of the Group, 2 schools had achieved the award, 3 schools had developed action plans and 2 schools commenced the survey stage. A further 16 schools had been visited to encourage them to start working towards it.

It was reported that progress in further developing the Award process had been slow and support from the LEAs in promoting the benefits of the scheme would be welcomed.

With regard to the Junior SAFEMark Award, members were advised that a programme of workshops had been held during the summer term and had been well attended by over 1800 pupils, an increase of 33% from the previous year. In addition, it was reported that partner agency workshops had been held for year 6 pupils and over 200 step up resource packs issued to enable teachers to deliver the Junior SAFEMark message. It was noted that research into whether the resource had been used in the schools and its effectiveness would be undertaken.

The Liaison Group were advised that the West Yorkshire School Travel Advisors and the Mybus Steering Groups had been merged to form a new School Travel Group. It was anticipated that the new Group would integrate the SAFEMark Awards scheme and School Travel Plans in order to maximise the use of districts and Metro resources.

It was reported that DfT and DfES funding for district School Travel Advisors and Metro's SAFEMark team would continue until March 2010.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

8. MYBUS UPDATE

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

It was noted that 12 new Mybuses had been launched at the start of the Autumn term and full details of the services, together with new additional primary linked trip services, were attached at Appendix A to the submitted report. The remaining 5 Mybuses would be introduced during October 2007 and details of the final position with regard to the entire fleet were attached at Appendix B.

The effectiveness and value for money of all Mybus services were reviewed regularly and 5 primary school services had been identified with low patronage. These would be monitored with a view to their withdrawal from the October half term should patronage levels not improve.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

9. SCHOOL BUS TENDER RESULTS 2007

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 2007 -2008 school year.

Members were advised of the tender awards for Batch 420 and details were attached at Appendix 1 to the submitted report. It was noted that the level of competition had been good with 14 operators bidding for work and a total of 113 bids being received for the 53 available tenders. In addition to submitting bids for the specified services, operators were encouraged to submit 'alternative bids' offering to supply 'Mybus' style quality and safety features in accordance with Metro's Vision for Schools Transport and its aspiration to further expand improvements in the quality and safety of transport for children beyond the 150 Mybus services. It was reported that although the award to First Calderline had not been the cheapest option, it was considered to offer the best value for money as it included the conversion of 13 services to the Mybus specification. Calderdale LEA had agreed to meet their share of the additional costs.

It was reported that the tenders for within-school hours services in Wakefield District were withdrawn following an exercise to assess the comparative cost of Batch 420 tenders and a Mybus Yellow Bus 'private hire' arrangement which demonstrated that lower costs could be achieved if services were secured utilising the Mybus vehicles.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.