

Select Committee 18th September 2006

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment to the Select Committee on Environment

Addressing The Decline In Bus Patronage And Use Of Concessionary Passes

Purpose of Report

1. To receive a presentation from Centro in respect of declining bus patronage and the take up of concessionary passes.

Background

2. Following consideration by this Committee on the issue of declining bus patronage and the use of concessionary bus passes it was resolved that the Director of the Urban Environment invite representatives of Centro, West Midlands passenger transport Authority and from the bus users federation to make presentations and inform the debate as a first step in the Committees investigation of the issue.
3. Stephen Rhodes Assistant Director of Bus Services and Clive Whatling (Head of Bus Network) from Centro will make a presentation entitled "Backing the Bus" that considers Bus Strategy, details of loss in patronage, how services can be improved, issues to be considered, improved information/marketing, infrastructure improvements, safer travel police team, partnership working.
4. Gary Clarke, Chair of The West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, and Phil Tonks, Assistant Officer (England) Bus Users UK, will also be attending.
5. Concessionary fares are administered by Centro and following Government direction to extend concessionary fares to the over 60's on buses the PTA elected to continue its previous policy of providing free travel on all modes within the metropolitan area for senior citizens and blind or disabled persons and half fare travel for children.
6. The costs are as follows:

	Budget 2005/6	Actual 2005/6
Bus	£52m	£56.8m
Rail	£2.4m	£1.9m
Metro	£1.4m	£1.6m

Total paid to operators	£55.8m	£60.3m
Admin	£2.3m	£1.9m
Survey & Data	£2.9m	£2.5m
Total reported to PTA 26/6	£61m	£64.7m

7. The Government has recently announced that from 2008 the free travel scheme will be extended to cover bus services – but not other modes – throughout England. The cost of this measure may have ramifications for the West Midlands scheme and will be considered by the PTA as part of the budget setting process.

Finance

8. In 2006/7 The Passenger Transport Authority is to levy the constituent West Midland Authorities £128.1m per annum of which Dudley contribution is £15.122m. The figures for 2005/6 amount to £124.977m and £14.773 respectively.
9. This report does not have any impact on the Council's finances.

Law

10. The Transport Act 1985 deregulated bus services thereby giving operators freedom to run buses when and where they want.
11. The Transport Act 2000 introduced the provision for legally binding partnership agreements and other contractual arrangements between operators and local authorities but left deregulation essentially unchanged.
12. Section 57 of the 1985 Act gives Centro the duty to secure such services as are required to meet the Passenger Transport Authority's policies where the services in question would not be provided without subsidy, and Sections 89 to 92 of the Act require that such services must generally be secured by competitive tender.
13. The 1985 Act gave the PTA the power to establish a Travel Concession Scheme for Senior Citizens, persons aged sixteen years or younger, and blind and disabled persons.
14. The 2000 Act introduced a statutory requirement to provide a minimum half fare concession to the elderly and disabled within their local area, which was amended to free travel from April 2006, although neither of these changes affected the Centro scheme which provided superior benefits.
15. The PTA is a levying body under the Transport Levying Bodies Regulations 1992

Equality Impact

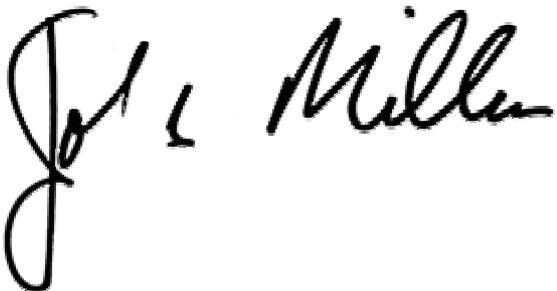
16. The provision of public transport seeks to ensure equality of access to services for all and the Bus Strategy sets out how this is to be achieved.

17. The school run whereby people take children to school by car is unsustainable and any public transport proposals need to take on board provision of services to meet the journey to school.
18. The Safer Routes to School Initiative includes looking at Public Transport and discussing with children their views on provision of bus services this being done in conjunction with Centro.
19. As part of the post 16 Independent Travel Initiative young people are encouraged to look at using Public Transport as an alternative to other less sustainable modes.
20. The Road Safety Unit is well placed to take forward the Public Transport Agenda with schools and will provide a focus for future consultation proposals

Recommendation

21. It is recommended that :-

- The presentation of Mr Steven Rhodes concerning bus patronage and concessionary fares be noted.
- The Council continue to support Centro in its role of promoting the use of bus services as part of its wider transport objectives



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List of Background Papers

WM Bus Strategy
LTP delivery report.
Various reports to CEPOG & P&T Sub committee
Reversing the decline in bus patronage workshop 14th June