

# Equality of Opportunity Committee

EOC(3)-16-10 : Paper 3

## **Inquiry into the impact of Welsh Government policy on the accessibility of transport services for disabled people in Wales – Evidence from the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) Cymru**

### **Introduction**

The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers Cymru (ATCO Cymru) is represented by the Transport Co-ordinating Officers from the 22 local authorities in Wales.

Officers that represent ATCO have assisted with the preparation of the Regional Transport Plan across Wales which sets out long term objectives, a regional strategy and a five year programme of interventions to improve transport and access into, within and beyond their respective regions. The Regional Transport Plans complement the Wales National Transport Plan which sets out the Assembly Government policy on transport and proposals for investment in the Trunk Road and rail networks as well as a range of other intervention.

### **ATCO response:**

ATCO is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to part B of this inquiry, that which is directed towards commissioners, providers and managers of services rather than user. Responses to the issues raised are set out below. ATCO would be pleased to provide any clarification or further information to the Committee or its support Officer which is needed in relation to this inquiry.

### **What action has your organisation taken to make transport services accessible to disabled people? Please highlight any initiatives that you consider to be examples of good practice.**

ATCO Cymru has an overarching strategic view which includes a vision, long term strategy, component strategies and policies. Practical examples of services are which ATCO members have been involved with are:

- Community Transport services/Dial a Ride/accessible vehicles/ Bwcabus and other non conventional transport solutions in Wales
- Bus stop/interchange accessibility improvements
- Worked in partnership with stakeholders for example on vehicle improvements

- Walking/cycling schemes developed to enhance non vehicular access
- Car sharing system to match up drivers and passengers
- Park and Ride sites and services
- Park and Share service in Swansea
- RTP projects such as Rural Interchanges, & Bus Corridor work where one of the priorities is infrastructure to improve disabled access
- Sustainable Travel Centres work which is underway at present

**What actions has your organisation taken to publicise your services to disabled people?**

- Consultation in the development of the RTP including workshops and a formal draft RTP
- Access groups
- Newsletters/Council bulletins/Local newspapers
- Websites
- Adverts in timetable booklets
- Surgeries/hospitals and working to train contact centres for health care appointments etc
- Sharing best practise with ATCO members across Wales and the rest of the UK

**How has your organisation worked with others to ensure transport services are well integrated?**

- Working with stakeholders such as transport providers, user groups and bringing them together through a workshop format to discuss key issues and concerns
- Consultation responses to RTP and reacting to those relating to access
- Working directly with local Authority access groups
- Planning decisions on location of facilities/services or access to them

**What are the biggest challenges for your organisation in this area? For example are there any actions that you could take to improve the accessibility of transport services but cannot for some reason?**

- Competition law (fares etc)
- Collusive trading clauses in contracts prevents some service integration
- Costs - sufficient funding to ensure excellent integration, this is particularly true of revenue expenditure which is critical to consistent high quality public transport provision
- Planning/Land issues i.e. shared use paths
- Land use planning and the location of key services
- De-regulated and privatised industry (bus and rail) e.g. changes to services provided (bus registrations)
- Vehicle construction and use - set outside Wales and timescales for fully accessible vehicles/ carriages etc set outside Wales

**What changes in Policy or law could help your organisation to make a greater contribution to making transport services more accessible to disabled people?**

- Provision of co-ordinated networks
- Competition law to allow through ticketing
- Changes over bus service registrations limited to twice yearly
- Public sector facilities/services legally obliged to have PT access and to use Accession (or similar) planning

**What impact has the Welsh Assembly Government's National Transport Plan had on the accessibility of the transport services you are involved with?**

- At this early stage, there appears to be no obvious impact thus far
- The big challenges are difficult to address although ticket inter availability could be affected by the Welsh Entitlement Card if it is practical and affordable – access to vehicles/regulation of services – however, there are some good proposals set out such as “removing high steps between platforms and trains by 2011”, and many others

**What impact has the guidance issued by the Welsh Assembly Government on the development of the RTPs had on the accessibility of the transport services you are involved with?**

- The guidance was issued in 2007 and only subsequently were EIAs required
- The guidance did refer to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the need to ensure proposals and plans were synergistic with the legal requirements of the DDA
- The guidance did set the bar but there is no mechanism to address whether or not consortia met or exceeded what was expected of them as no scoring of the RTPs has ever been published they were all just “accepted” by the Assembly.