

## **SOUTH EAST WALES REGIONAL COMMITTEE**

### **INTEGRATED TRANSPORT: NOTE BY THE CONFEDERATION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT WALES**

#### **The Confederation of Passenger Transport and existing transport within the region**

1. The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) is the United Kingdom wide Trade Association that represents the bus, coach and light rail industry, both in providing member services such as technical and legal advice and with all levels of government in matters relating to the operation of buses, coaches and light rail vehicles. CPT Wales represents the interests of operators within the Principality, and is pro active in its dealings with the Assembly (and, prior to that, the Welsh Office), local government and local pressure groups. In addition to a variety of operators involved in coach hire, schools transport, excursions and holiday tours, CPT Wales represents most of the major operators of local bus services within Wales, and in that respect is well placed to assist central government, and the Assembly, in delivering integrated transport within the Principality.

2. Within the Region, a number of unitary authorities deal with two major towns and cities, and so the Regional approach is the key to this integration, and additionally integration must take place at the authority level between public and schools transport and highway provision. CPT Wales believes that these, and other, issues need to be addressed to speed public transport integration, and it is these issues that are discussed in this paper.

#### **Traffic congestion**

3. Traffic congestion is already a problem along many of the Principality's roads, yet traffic on Wales' trunk roads is likely to increase by between 16% and 35% from 1996 until 2010. (Source: The Transport Legacy in Wales, March 1999). In order to ensure the reliability that bus and coach services must achieve so as to attract people from their car, they must be removed from the effects of traffic congestion that impedes their progress more and more, both within and between urban areas. If this were achieved then a "virtuous circle" would be established, with motorists transferring to bus services that are both quicker and more reliable than journeys by car, and, as a consequence, reducing the number of cars on the road, with equally beneficial effects on congestion and pollution. Indeed, as an example, congestion is such that, even during a normal peak period, bus services between Cardiff City Centre and Culverhouse Cross can take twice as long as they would do at off peak times. (Source: Cardiff Bus).

4. The use of bus priority measures must be extended to all key bus and coach routes, allowing the bus or coach to make unimpeded progress on its journey, and CPT Wales sees this as a key role for unitary authorities. Bus priority measures may be by means of simply allocating space on an existing highway (which can also be used by taxis and cyclists), or, on busy corridors, providing completely dedicated roadways along which the bus or coach can even be guided, so as to provide the speed and benefits of a

light rail system at only a fraction of the cost. CPT Wales sees these bus priority measures as a key feature of Quality Partnerships, and it is these Partnerships that are discussed below.

### **Quality Partnerships**

5. Bus operators within CPT Wales are keen to discuss with unitary authorities how best Quality Partnerships between them can be implemented so as to achieve integrated public transport. A Quality Partnership is one where both the authorities and the operators bring improvements to the network, the sum of the benefits of those improvements providing benefits greater than those that would flow from piecemeal improvements.

6. A prerequisite to any Quality Partnership are, as suggested, bus and coach priority measures, and these can only be provided by local authorities. In addition, authorities can enhance priority road space by the addition of bus priority at junctions (such as bus activated traffic lights), bus only access and streets (allowing the bus to perhaps "cut through" a complicated one way traffic scheme, or to access pedestrian only areas), bus boarders (allowing a bus to align with the kerb so that its entrance platform is level with the kerb for easy access by wheelchair users, parents with buggies and the elderly or infirm), enhanced parking controls (to prevent illegally parked cars from impeding the buses progress or access to its stopping place), and enhanced facilities at the stop (shelters, seating space, and improved information, perhaps even in real time). Bus operators are keen to play their part, investing in new low floor fully accessible buses, driven by drivers trained in customer care and powered by environmentally friendly engines, and are willing to re-invest any savings made by the reduced journey times in increased frequency of operation, which, of itself, will make services more attractive. These partnerships between pro-active local authorities and market aware bus companies will, and have been shown to, grow the market. Adaptations of Quality Partnerships can also be applied in interurban or rural areas with a benefit for integrated transport, but wherever they are applied due consideration must be given to the attitude of the competition authorities.

### **Integrated information, services and ticketing**

7. CPT Wales' bus operators are well aware of the benefits that may be achieved by making all public transport information easy to access and, along with CPT nationally, has responded to the Deputy Prime Minister's challenge to have public transport information available through one single telephone number by the year 2000. For some months now, the All Wales Passenger Transport Information Steering Group, established and chaired by CPT Wales, has been meeting to ensure that an all Wales public transport information system is available: in co-operation with, and with financial assistance from, the National Assembly, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Welsh Development Agency and local bus operators, and with assistance from the DETR and consumer groups, this system is on target to go live from April 2000.

8. At the micro level, commercial bus operators are alive to the opportunities that may exist to grow the market by integrating their services with those of other operators and of rail operators, but are keen to ensure that meeting the integration objective does not destroy the primary market by introducing additional journey times or delays. Similarly, where there are opportunities to improve the journey experience by the purchase of one ticket for a journey by two or more services of one operator, or by

two or more transport operators, commercial bus operators will respond, and have responded. Indeed, some operators within CPT Wales are currently supporting a study that has been commissioned by the SWIFT authorities to examine the benefits and costs of integrated ticketing for travel within the SWIFT area, whilst other CPT Wales operators have co-operated with rail companies (under the ATCO Zonal Ticketing initiative) to allow the purchase of joint rail/bus tickets - for a journey to Caerphilly, Cardiff, Cwmbran and Newport, for example, it is possible to buy a rail ticket that allows for onward travel from your station by bus. However, when considering any scheme that involves the services of more than one transport operator, the industry *must* be aware of the attitudes of the competition authorities, which in many recent cases have championed the benefits of competition over those of integration: clearly this is a case where "joined up government" is not working, and any pressure that the Assembly can bring to bear on central government in this regard will be helpful

9. Within Wales, one scheme that has now been in operation for almost a year, and which provides for integration on a wider scale, is the All Wales Flexipass, a pre-purchased tourist ticket which allows travel on rail and bus services as well as giving discounts to many tourist attractions: CPT Wales' operators are amongst those involved in the scheme, and CPT Wales' Secretariat acts as the "honest broker" in redistributing the revenue collected amongst participating bus operators.

10. The redistribution of revenue amongst operators is another issue that would need to be resolved if widespread ticket integration were achieved: in this respect CPT Wales has made progress and can see the ways in which this can be managed. The use of Smartcards will be of benefit both here and in implementing the Assembly's objective of free travel for pensioners across Wales, and CPT is pleased that the Assembly has recently announced funding for a Smartcard study.

### **Unitary authorities and Local Transport Plans**

11. CPT Wales supports the way in which groups of unitary authorities in south east Wales have combined into the SWIFT and TIGER consortiums, recognising that transport demand is not confined within authority boundaries. CPT Wales feels that this solution to managing and integrating cross boundary demand should be encouraged, and each unitary authority should not be preparing its transport strategy, and therefore its Local Transport Plan, in isolation. Quality Partnerships on interurban services will fail if neighbouring authorities adopt differing criteria for allocating their transport budgets. In this respect, CPT Wales' bus operators are keen to become involved in the process of preparing Local Transport Plans, since a number of operators have experience of transport links that cross unitary authority boundaries and this experience can benefit integration of transport across the Region.

12. Another way in which unitary authorities can assist in integrated transport is through their provision of schools transport. In many authorities, the responsibility for schools transport rests with the education department and not the transport department, and there is little integration of school buses with local bus services. In addition, with only a minor change in some school opening hours, the provision of schools transport can be made much more efficient, with consequent improvements in the quality of vehicles provided, the perception of public transport, and the environment. For most schools, dedicated school buses provide services for only one school because the hours of school opening within an authority area are usually the same (or very similar) across its area. If some school opening and closing times were

staggered (perhaps even by only a half hour), a school bus could complete two trips for different schools in succession, instead of the one completed now. Apart from the obvious benefits in the reduction in the number of vehicles required, a portion of any savings achieved by the authority could be reinvested in letting the contract for higher quality vehicles, thus improving the transport experience of the children and perhaps favourably effecting their eventual view of public transport, and even perhaps delaying their decision to purchase a car. In addition, some of the savings could be reinvested in the school whose managing board have been flexible enough to accommodate the necessary changes. CPT Wales would welcome the Assembly's support in lobbying unitary authorities to consider such changes.

### **The Assembly**

13. Transport Grant available to unitary authorities in Wales, having reached a peak in 1995/6 of £150 million, fell back in 1996/7 to the 1991/2 level of £110 million. Of this figure, only 12% approximately is spent on direct support for bus services or for concessionary travel (for which the bus operator does *not* benefit financially, being, by law, no better nor worse off after the implementation of a scheme than before). Capital grants for transport have fallen from £80 million in 1995/1996 to £35 million in 1999/2000, and expenditure on the motorway and trunk road network has similarly fallen between 1993/4 and 1999/2000 from £220 million to £100 million. (Source: The Transport Legacy in Wales, Final Report, March 1999).

14. Clearly the reduction in overall transport spend, and the allocation between public transport and road schemes, needs addressing if integrated public transport is to be achieved. Whilst recognising that the resources of the Assembly are limited, the view of CPT Wales is that expenditure on public transport can additionally benefit personal mobility, social exclusion, the environment and health. In this regard CPT Wales has welcomed the additional support made available by the Assembly by means of the Bus Subsidy Grant, and in particular the fact that an element of this grant can be used on non-rural routes.

15. CPT Wales also feels that the Assembly must be pro-active in reviewing the Local Transport Plans of unitary authorities, ensuring continuity between neighbouring authorities and compliance with the aims of the Assembly (and indeed central government) as regards changes to the modal split. This can be achieved by setting targets for traffic reduction and changes to the modal split, and monitoring the results within the authorities' Local Transport Plans, as well as ensuring value for money by incorporating the transport package grant into the Local Transport Planning process and introducing common appraisal techniques for all forms of transport expenditure. Long term, the Assembly must influence the planning process to ensure that the opportunity exists for adequate public transport access for major retail and entertainment sites.

Confederation of Passenger Transport Wales

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