

POLICY REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN WALES

A Technical Submission

by ATCO Cymru

Executive Summary

1. The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers in Wales (ATCO Cymru) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the future of public transport in Wales. We endorse and have made a full contribution toward the submission by the Welsh Local Government Association and have agreed to provide further technical evidence.
2. Our response calls for increased revenue funding to provide greater service support and improved infrastructure maintenance, examines possible reforms for the payment of fuel duty rebate, sets out the means of achieving future expansion of the bus market, addresses community transport and rural issues, proposes a stronger role for the Traffic Commissioner and identifies improved mechanisms to enhance the support for rail services and infrastructure.
3. The Bus Subsidy Grant has enabled many valuable new links to be tried, service levels to be increased and accessible vehicles to be introduced, as a catalyst to stem public transport decline. The review into the future allocation of these resources must take account of the ongoing requirement for funding and the negative public response that would result from any withdrawal of these services.
4. Serious attempts have been made throughout Wales to improve public transport infrastructure. The revenue streams for maintenance are vitally important to ensure that newly introduced facilities are maintained to an 'as new' quality standard. It would be helpful if capital grants contained an element of on-going revenue funding to cover future years repair and maintenance.
5. The Assembly should take the opportunity to initiate and open up a more detailed debate, in an attempt to use of fuel duty rebate as a more effective mechanism for enhancing public transport and of delivering sustainable and quality improvements to bus services in Wales.
6. The Government's plans and policies for high quality bus services, delivered commercially under a quality partnership, cannot on their own address this problem without a substantial and constant stream of revenue funding. It is a major concern that there is insufficient funding within local authority financing to maintain the current network, let alone deliver the necessary enhancements.
7. The onus for improving services lies largely with operators, although there is a significant role for local authorities with regard to improving frequencies, speed, personal security, fares and the number of places served. The key for the Assembly is to work with the local authorities to develop the mechanisms which ensure that more and higher quality bus services are delivered.
8. Through the 10 Year Plan in England, the Government has set bus operators and local government the challenge to deliver the enhanced quality necessary to meet the target of a 10% increase in bus

use by 2010. The Assembly must follow and set strategic objectives and targets for the local authorities to meet through their bus strategies.

9. A revised de-minimis provision should be retained to ensure that the targets can be reached within those networks which are close to commercial viability. Where the bus industry cannot deliver the necessary outputs commercially, the Assembly must ensure that local authorities have the freedom to secure the networks by the most appropriate method in accordance with the principles of best value, using the quality contract mechanism.
10. It is essential that there is seen to be a long term future for rural bus services, if they are to be presented as an alternative to the private car. The value of the rural element of the Bus Subsidy Grant in Wales can not be underestimated but certain parts of rural Wales are still unable to support such conventionally funded public transport services.
11. There has been a shift towards community based transport development and increased funding is needed, together with a review of the constraints that stop it from playing a greater role in the provision of public transport. Consideration needs to be given to developing a structure at the local authority level throughout Wales which will also support and encourage community transport schemes.
12. The Welsh Rural Transport Grant is insufficiently promoted, requires better administration and should become proactive in delivering new types of service. The rural element of the Bus Subsidy Grant should also be able to provide funding for both commercial bus and community transport projects.
13. Continuation of the national Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR) scheme is essential to rural areas in light of increasing fuel prices and necessarily long route mileage. The freezing of fuel duty rebate between 1993 and 1997 inclusive has had a significant impact on transport costs in rural areas and many services became unsustainable.
14. The proposed review of Fuel Duty Rebate for passenger carrying vehicles operating local bus services should consider the advantages to community-based transport schemes and the extension of concessionary travel policy to include community-based transport and taxi services should also be considered.
15. If the forthcoming Transport Act is to raise quality higher performance guarantees are needed, with one standard across Wales, against which all operators, large and small, are measured. The role of the Traffic Commissioners is expected to be important in ensuring service reliability but whilst the monitoring of services has become more professional, the level of funding is currently totally inadequate for the current situation, let alone the heightened task that underlies the forthcoming Transport Act.

16. The Assembly must ensure that the necessary funding is in place to provide a fully computerised, properly resourced Traffic Area Office based in Wales, with its own dedicated Commissioner. The Welsh Traffic Commissioner should report directly to the Assembly and have sufficient resources to enable bus operations in Wales to be monitored and controlled effectively at the local level.
 17. The encouragement and support given by the Assembly to provide new stations and extend or re-open railway lines is most welcome and additional funding is still needed to deliver the additional services.
 18. A clock face, inter-operator, connecting timetable, with regular headways, is a prerequisite of a sustained rail revival. The Assembly must ensure that the National Timetabling Conference is structured to deliver a strategic vision of the railway passenger network, with trains to, from and within Wales connecting and offering the regular even headway timetables necessary to make through tickets usable.
 19. The funding gap does not just extend to new services. Throughout Wales trains run with short formations and overcrowding occurs because the economics do not make it worthwhile to provide additional capacity. There should be a pool of rolling stock available to train operators, owned and managed by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) on behalf of its members.
 20. The continued minimalist funding for the railway in Wales is exemplified by the lack of investment in new rolling stock. This can only be detrimental in the long term, as it has been demonstrated in other areas that new stock is followed by increased patronage.
 21. Although there are substantial rail freight flows in South Wales, elsewhere in Wales they are very few. The rising costs of road transport are increasing the effects of the peripherality of Mid, West, and North-West Wales. Facilitating the development of rail freight would reduce these effects.
 22. England is taking its lead from 'Transport 2010 - 10 Year Plan' which sees a 50% growth of rail in ten years coming from new and better rail services. Wales must therefore follow suit and the Assembly should be given the power to determine and prioritise schemes within Wales and to allocate its share of the RPP funds.
1. Further investment in network infrastructure to remove unreliability is crucial, with local authorities, the Assembly, Railtrack, the train operators and the sSRA working in partnership to provide additional services, improved infrastructure and new rolling stock.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers in Wales (ATCO Cymru) represents those involved in delivering the responsibilities of passenger transport co-ordination for all 22 Welsh local authorities. Within Great Britain, it is one of nine regional groupings of the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers but in recognition of the devolved arrangements in Wales, it has full autonomy in dealing with Welsh affairs.

1.2 ATCO Cymru welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the future of public transport in Wales. As a body made up of officers employed within local government throughout Wales, we endorse the written evidence submitted by the Welsh Local Government Association and have made a full contribution towards it. However in these discussions it was felt that it was necessary to explore certain areas of its content in more depth.

1.3 This submission will therefore concentrate on the provision of further technical evidence that is designed to;

- call for increased revenue funding to provide greater service support and improved infrastructure maintenance;
- examine improvements for the payment of fuel duty rebate;
- set out the means of achieving future expansion of the bus market;
- address community transport and rural issues;
- propose a stronger role for the Traffic Commissioner;
- identify improved mechanisms to enhance the support for rail services and infrastructure.

2. The Call for Increased Revenue Funding

2.1 The Bus Subsidy Grant has enabled many valuable new or improved services to be introduced. Throughout Wales, imaginative schemes have been developed in consultation with the operators and new passengers are being carried in varying numbers. The special allocation of funding has had a significant impact on addressing issues of integration, social inclusion and accessibility. It has enabled new links to be tried, service levels to be increased and accessible vehicles to be introduced, as a catalyst to stem the decline.

However it takes more than a few months and the introduction of a limited number of additional services to change travel patterns. It is therefore likely that only a few of the services will become commercial in the short or medium term. The review into the future allocation of these resources, which is currently being undertaken on behalf of the Assembly by the Babtie Group, must take account of the ongoing requirement for funding and the negative public response that would result from any withdrawal of these grant supported services.

Examples of improvements funded by the Bus Subsidy Grant can be found all over Wales but a

2.2 selection are outlined below:

2.3

- Anglesey have increased market day services and enhanced frequencies on tendered and commercial services. As a result of the grant there has been an increase of almost 420,000 kilometres per annum and the number of bus passengers carried on tendered services has increased from 413,280 in 1997/8 to 517,797 in 1999/00.
- Throughout North Wales over 30% of service buses are now of "super-low-floor" standard, largely as a result of the bus grant.
- In the Gwent Passenger Transport Area a new Sunday network has been introduced between Newport, Chepstow, Monmouth and Abergavenny including high quality vehicles and low fares. It is hoped to develop this into a quality partnership.
- In Wrexham the target of providing urban villages and strategic rural settlements with hourly services from 0800 until 2230 on Mondays to Saturdays and 2-hourly services on Sundays has been achieved with a 90% growth in patronage on one corridor.
- In Swansea new evening and Sunday timetables and services to new housing developments have been introduced.

- In Denbighshire the Clwydian Ranger Sunday leisure network has been part funded with rural bus grant.
- Flintshire have introduced direct, regular services to railway stations providing links with trains.
- In Caerphilly there has been a 50% growth in revenue on a commercial service where the frequency was improved to half hourly and new low floor buses were introduced by using the grant to pump prime enhancements that the operator had not been prepared to risk.

2.4 In England, following the announcement of the Government's 10 year transport plan, extra subsidy grant resources have been made available and it is hoped that a similar allocation will be made available to Welsh Authorities to enable initiatives such as these to continue and further ones introduced.

2.5 Serious attempts have been made throughout Wales to improve public transport infrastructure. The revenue streams for maintenance must not be overlooked, as it is vitally important to ensure that newly introduced facilities, ranging from bus stations and interchange points to the basic shelter at the bus stop are maintained to an 'as new' quality standard.

2.6 These are the key 'points of sale' for the public transport package and such quality maintenance parameters are essential if patronage, once attracted, is to be retained. Without this heavy financial commitment to ongoing maintenance, the local authorities will be unable to fully maintain their side of a quality partnership. It would therefore be helpful if capital grants contained an element of on-going revenue funding to cover future years repair and maintenance.

2.7 A number of local authorities in Wales have been successful in securing capital grants. Once again examples of improvements to public transport infrastructure can be found all over Wales but a selection are outlined below, together with an indication of the anticipated problems resulting from a revenue shortfall.

- Flintshire have been able to create a quality bus corridor in the Deeside area of their authority and now provide bus priority measures, improved road-side passenger information, with bus stop clearways at all the bus stops in the area. However, all these items require on-going

maintenance, yet the capital grant cannot be used for this purpose.

- Swansea have received Transport Grant funding to provide Park and Ride facilities around the city but there is concern as to whether revenue funding is available to provide adequate bus services to and from the park and ride sites.

Aberdare Bus Station was enlarged and refurbished in August 1995. Limited revenue funding is available for maintenance and as budgets are squeezed this problem is getting worse. Similarly a major programme of bus corridor improvements have been carried out throughout the Rhondda Cynon Taff area with the provision of shelters and citystop timetable displays. These additional facilities require maintenance and updating, yet there is a lack of both the required funding and staff resources to do so.

- The TIGER consortium was awarded Transport Grant funding to commence quality improvements on the Ebbw Vale / Brynmawr to Newport and Newport to Chepstow bus corridors. The works include bus priority measures and the provision of improved infrastructure at 372 bus stops over the next two years. These additional facilities will also require ongoing maintenance for which revenue funding is extremely limited.
- A new bus station is being built in Wrexham as a major part of the Authority's public transport strategy but there is concern over the availability of on-going funding for its maintenance.
- Gwynedd and Bridgend both have difficulty in funding the ongoing maintenance of improved infrastructure provided through Transport or Bus Subsidy Grants.
- In Caerphilly, where shelters have been installed at 30 new sites, an additional annual maintenance and cleaning liability of £3,000 has had to be absorbed within the existing limited budget, reducing the funding available to be spent on the longer standing stock.

2.8 Where operators, and to a certain extent local authorities, have invested in new low floor buses with air suspension to improve the ride quality for passengers, the benefits can be significantly impaired if resources for highway maintenance are constrained.

2.9 The Assembly is committed to introducing a free fare scheme in April 2002. It is essential that sufficient funding is available for this scheme and that the Assembly appreciates that additional funding may be required a few months into the scheme if extra costs required to

cope with the increase in demand become apparent. Additional funding will also be required ahead of the introduction date in respect of the increased administrative and publicity costs. The work of the Implementation Group will be crucial to ensuring a smooth financial transition and its recommendations must be taken into account in time.

2.10 As education authorities increasingly reduce their support for school transport to the statutory minimum, there is a real risk that they will withdraw support for the over 16s. This would be a disaster in transport terms, as it sends the wrong signals to people who are about to reach the age when they can drive cars. The problem about local authority spending on school transport and public transport is that whilst the two should be very closely integrated, in reality there is far more money being spent on the free school transport than on supporting local bus services.

2.11 Yet the problem is allowed to be exacerbated. At the moment, although schools are advised to consider the implications for schools transport, they are under no obligation to co-operate with the local authority in terms of their hours. Such changes can prevent buses being used to "double trip". There are undoubtedly good educational reasons for changing hours, but it has a crucial impact on costs. Each additional vehicle costs about £30,000 a year and a school hours change involving three or four buses results in large sums of public money being spent, which could have been spent on mainstream public transport. Schools must be locked more into the transport issues and the Assembly should take a lead in ensuring that fuller account is taken of them in decision making.

3. Improvements to the Payment of Fuel Duty Rebate

3.1 The Assembly has powers to revise the way fuel duty rebate (FDR) is paid in Wales. This provides the opportunity to lead the debate within the UK and help to deliver sustainable improvements to bus services.

3.2 One possible suggestion, which has some support within ATCO Cymru, is that there could be two levels of FDR. The current percentage could be retained for vehicles operating registered local bus services under contract to a local authority, with an increase to 100% for low floor vehicles operating commercial or supported local bus services or for vehicles operating as part of a local authority Quality Contract or Partnership.

3.3 This more flexible approach would encourage operators to enter into a Quality Partnership (QP) with the local authority, as well as providing additional resources to help operators convert services to low floor operation. The extra FDR available for an all day bus working could increase by around £5000 p.a. and thus offset most of the additional depreciation incurred for new vehicles. It would also serve to discourage wasteful competition.

3.4 In conjunction with this proposal, the minimum definition of a QP should simply be a letter from a local authority confirming that there is a QP agreement with the operator. This would be better than restricting it to the new Transport Act definition of a legally binding QP,

as this would be likely to rule out the majority of existing and new QPs, most of which are established on a voluntary basis. Operators would still be free to operate their own commercial services with non low floor vehicles or outside of a QP but would not be entitled to FDR.

3.5 In the long term the Disability Discrimination Act provisions will ensure that almost all services will be low floor operated, whilst there will undoubtedly be an increased trend toward Quality Partnerships and Quality Contracts. As such, the FDR cost to the Assembly will rise but the increase would be gradual over about 5 to 10 years. This will enable provision to be made and will help to advance the delivery of quality public transport in Wales.

3.6 The above is not intended to be a definitive solution. Indeed, a balance needs to be struck to prevent the widespread deregistration of many commercially operated local bus services, which are operated by 'respectable' modern non low vehicles and are dependent on FDR for their viability. A sliding scale of FDR, determined by vehicle specification, would address this concern without having to undermine the quality profile inherent within a QP. In the case of unco-ordinated competition, where two buses an hour on paper provide only an hourly service to the public on one or other operator's bus, the rate of FDR to the newest entrant could be further reduced, penalising the lack of useful service being offered, unless that new entrant can demonstrate market growth.

3.7 A number of such variations have been discussed briefly within ATCO Cymru in an attempt to change FDR into a more effective mechanism for enhancing public transport. The Assembly should take the opportunity to initiate and open up a more detailed debate.

4. The Means of Achieving Future Expansion of the Bus Market

4.1 The current structure of the bus industry has emerged as result of the Transport Act 1985. This brought most of the bus industry into the private sector and eliminated virtually all its 'quantity' controls by giving the operators the freedom to introduce, change or withdraw any bus service at 42 days notice. Yet in the eyes of the customers and the wider community, the perception of a network of bus services is similar to the rail network, one of a 'public service'.

4.2 Notwithstanding this, the Government did not set public service objectives for the bus network in 1985 and did not believe it was necessary to impose an extensive regulatory framework on the bus industry, as has subsequently been the case with the rail industry. Instead it took the view that market forces would make the industry self-regulatory. It was believed that a 'contestable market' for bus services would emerge with new entrants into the bus industry providing the necessary incentive for newly privatised companies to deliver better services to meet the needs of their customers. It recognised, however, that there would be some socially necessary services which could not be delivered commercially by the market, and therefore, it gave local authorities the duty to set out its policies for securing these and the power to award contracts for their provision.

4.3 A major effect of deregulation and privatisation has been to drive down the industry's costs. The reduction in costs has had an effect on local authorities' budgets for tendered bus services. In real terms the subsidy budget within the Great Britain reduced from £183 million in 1987 to £110 million in 1997 (at 1997 prices). Once the bus industry settled down and the cost reductions enabled larger companies to successfully resist competitive incursions by smaller operators, the early 1990s witnessed a period of consolidation.

4.4 Once again, major bus groupings have emerged and a number of medium sized operators have been taken over. Much of Wales is in the hands of three national companies Arriva, First Group and Stagecoach. This has led to the re-emergence of local monopolies – areas dominated by one major operator, or oligopolies where more than one operator (usually two) provide services in an area but do not compete with each other. In evidence to the House of Commons Transport Committee, ATCO estimated that over 60 per cent of the population of Great Britain (excluding London) is served by one dominant operator.

Unfortunately in today's conditions of higher car ownership and of jobs and facilities being decentralised away from traditional town centres, the provision of high quality public transport, necessary to meet the Government's challenging target, is no longer an economic proposition in the small and medium sized towns of Wales, let alone its rural heartland. There are few areas in the principality where the 15% rate of return, sought by the major bus groups, is being achieved and operators such as Stagecoach are taking a much harder line. In the Upper Rhymney Valley area of Caerphilly, new low floor buses have been transferred to the larger conurbations to be replaced by older, cascaded buses. The Government's plans and policies for a high quality service, delivered commercially under a quality partnership, cannot on its own address this problem without a substantial element of revenue funding, and incentives for new entrants.

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4.6 Although local authority expenditure on local bus services declined up to 1997, the situation since then has witnessed a dramatic reversal. In Wales, as in the rest of Great Britain, tender prices for contracted services have increased significantly and the number of reductions in commercial bus services has also accelerated. As such, local authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to secure funds to meet this scenario. The savings achieved between 1986 and 1997 have been allocated elsewhere and the remaining public transport budgets are totally inadequate to meet the demands being placed on local authorities to replace withdrawn services.

4.7 Therefore, at a time when the public are expecting public transport to provide an alternative to the private car and its role in overcoming the problem of social exclusion is seen as more important than ever, it is a major concern that there is insufficient funding within local authority financing to maintain the network, let alone deliver the necessary enhancements. In many parts of Wales, funding sources such as congestion and parking charges will be unable to generate the required revenue streams and it is imperative that the Assembly identify alternative sources of funding if the integrated transport strategy is to succeed. The problems of hypothecation versus local authority discretion are recognised but a constant revenue stream to support public transport at a reasonably consistent level needs to be ensured. A start would be to give stronger guidance through the Standard Spending Assessment criteria. Only then will the Assembly's aspirations to deliver more and higher quality public transport services, needed to bring about a revival in passenger volumes, be met.

4.8 The delivery of improved public transport services is further restricted because of a shortage of skilled professionals in three areas. First of all, in spite of relatively high unemployment in Wales, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit bus drivers because of the low wage rates, unsocial hours, ever tightening schedules and fear of assault. Secondly, following local government re-organisation, the staffing levels of local authority public transport teams were further reduced and with the shift away from road schemes, re-training is needed to enable engineers to be directed toward the design and implementation of public transport projects. Thirdly, most of the larger bus companies have stripped out the middle management which existed to keep an eye on quality and who could actually think more laterally about solutions to the problems.

The bus industry in Wales operates within a number of different markets, most of which are local in nature. They include networks in high density urban areas with mixed levels of car ownership, home to school transport services, inter-urban networks and sparse networks in deep rural areas. There are also geographic differences, which suggests that a variety of mechanisms for securing services need to be developed at a local level.

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4.10 A major overhaul of the bus industry is neither desirable nor easily achievable. The objectives of a bus company to satisfy its shareholders by improved profitability and increased market share need not be inconsistent with the objective of growing the market for bus travel. The key for the Assembly, working with the local authorities, is to develop mechanisms which ensure that more and higher quality services are delivered in all of these markets to meet, as far as possible, the objectives of the bus industry and public authorities.

4.11 People believe that the onus for improving services lies largely with operators, although they see a significant role for local authorities with regard to improving frequencies, speed, personal security, fares and the number of places served. Fare levels and personal security are the most pressing issues for bus and rail passengers, according to a survey of public attitudes for the Commission for Integrated Transport. Public transport improvements were seen by the public as the answer to transport problems rather than car restraint measures, with 26% of drivers citing that subsidised public transport, 23% park and ride, 23% more and better bus services and 22% charges for city centre access would make them drive less. The survey found that for bus services to be improved, reduced fares were the highest priority over the next few years, with 33% of bus users and 27% of people overall, followed by frequency and reliability. In contrast, speed is a priority for just 7% of bus users.

In the context of achieving continuous improvement in bus services to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of Wales, partnership is essential, yet the provision of bus services is perhaps the area where the local authorities have the least level of control. There is no other essential local service where elected representatives have less influence. It is a service which is largely in the hands of commercial organisations who have the freedom to introduce, change or even withdraw that service at just six (perhaps rising to eight) weeks notice. Nevertheless it may be possible, through partnership, to get bus operators, local authorities and user groups working closer together to achieve an outcome greater than that which can be achieved by any single body acting alone.

4.12 The Government has produced the Integrated Transport White Paper, the Transport Bill and now in England, "Transport 2010 - 10 Year Plan. Clearly it wishes to see a marked improvement in the quality of all forms of public transport. In setting a target for a 10% increase in bus use by 2010, the Government has set bus operators and local government the challenge to deliver the enhanced quality necessary to ensure this target is met. Wales must follow but the question remains, whether the mechanisms are in place to achieve this target. It is essential therefore that objectives linked to targets, both in terms of outputs and outcomes, are developed for each market. Bus services need to be more attractive and cost effective to the user, with increased off bus sales to reduce boarding times, if they are to support modal shift from the car.

In a densely populated urban area, the outcome will be focused on increasing the number of former car users travelling by bus. The output will be a network of all-day high frequency services on routes with extensive bus priorities, though it must be recognised that physical

constraints make each area and therefore its solution different. Such a network could be commercial; hence the mechanism for service delivery could be the quality partnership model. However even here the Assembly needs to ensure that sufficient funding is made available if the participating local authorities are to put in bus priorities, produce better information and provide enhancements at bus stops to match the bus operators provision of new vehicles, better trained staff and perhaps improved services.

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4.15 In a lower density urban area, the objective may be the same (although the target may be less ambitious) and the agreed output might still be a network of all day high frequency services. Under this scenario, the network might not be entirely commercial. Unless the level of subsidy is modest, enabling the local authority to make a de-minimis payment linked to a quality partnership, it would be difficult to guarantee the provision of the desired network other than through a quality contract. In rural areas, which cover much of Wales, a contractual partnership would almost certainly be required in the first instance.

4.16 The following fundamental principals therefore need to be applied:

each local bus service market should be identified

the objectives for each market should be agreed

targets should be set for each market expressed as outcomes

outputs, in terms of level and quality of service to be provided which are necessary to meet the targets, should be agreed.

the local authority should have the ability to select the appropriate mechanism or strategy for securing the necessary outputs assuming that they cannot be delivered commercially with or without a 'quality partnership' agreement

4.17 Local authorities need to be able to apply the appropriate strategy, in accordance with the principles of 'best value'. Legislation on 'best value' applies the appropriate controls and audit mechanisms to ensure that value for money is achieved and if adequately funded can provide the means of delivery.

4.18 Local authorities through their bus strategies, should identify the various local markets for bus travel and set objectives and targets for each in terms of outcomes linked to the strategic objective set by the Assembly. The bus industry should retain the opportunity to deliver the outputs necessary to meet the objectives in any of the local markets commercially, by means of the quality partnership mechanism. A revised de-minimis provision, as commended to the Assembly in our earlier submission ("*Supporting Local Bus Services - The Case For An Extension Of The De Minimis Limits In Wales*" June 2000), should be retained to ensure that the targets can be reached within those networks which are close to commercial viability. However, where the bus industry cannot deliver the necessary outputs commercially, the Assembly must ensure that local authorities have the freedom to secure the networks by the most appropriate method in accordance with the principles of best value, using the quality contract mechanism.

5. Community Transport And Rural Issues

5.1 Most rural areas in Wales have scattered and dispersed populations. Rural people need

access to a range of activities which have become increasingly centralised in larger urban settlements. In many parts of West, Mid and North Wales most of these urban centres have lower populations and a smaller range of facilities and services than their South and East Wales counterparts.

5.2 The value of the rural element of the Bus Subsidy Grant in Wales can not be underestimated but as it is currently undergoing a major review, those arguments in support of its continued and inflation proof funding have been made as part of that process. Nevertheless, certain parts of rural Wales are still unable to support such conventionally funded public transport services which offer value for money. Some form of flexible provision, using demand responsive timetable and routing such as the Vale of Glamorgan's 'Divertabus' services, would help to make rural bus services in certain areas available to a higher proportion of the population. If such services are to become more widespread, some of the more restrictive aspects of the regulations controlling the registration of local bus services need to be considered.

5.3 There has been increasing interest in, and development of, more innovative and cost effective solutions to the problem of rural transport accessibility in order to reduce social exclusion and sustain the rural economy. However with this notable shift in emphasis towards community-based transport (CT), there needs to be a corresponding increase in funding, together with a review of the constraints that stop CT from playing a greater role in the provision of public transport. As a start the Assembly already supports a Wales CT Development Officer to help implement national policy.

5.4 Some of these innovative transport solutions lend themselves to urban areas. Many people living in urban areas are unable to access conventional public transport services because of their disabilities or because public transport does not run at the times or to the places that they wish to travel. This has led to the development of different types of bespoke transport initiatives; some to meet the needs and demands of individual people (e.g. accessible ring and ride services); and others to meet the needs of particular client groups (e.g. group hire and vehicle brokerage schemes).

5.5 Accessibility needs of these types are therefore very specific and localised. Their resolution therefore requires a "bottom up" approach involving the local community and voluntary sector who are familiar with very local needs. Partnership working is essential in large rural areas where there are scarce resources and where application for external funding is commonly made.

5.6 An example of successful multi-agency working can be seen in Powys, where the Powys Community Transport Forum has been established for eight years. It is from the public transport budget in partnership with the voluntary sector and has overseen the development and targeting of community-based transport policy in the county. Powys now has the benefit of a partnership that provides full time officer support for a user group for transport schemes (including dial-a-ride, community car and taxicard projects), and acts both as a clearing house

for funding and a centre of expertise working to improve service quality and safety through a review of the current and future training needs for drivers and passenger assistants.

5.7 The resolution of community-based transport needs in these circumstances has to overcome three main barriers:

- The development of effective measures to involve local community groups and individuals, on a voluntary basis, to solve their transport needs;
- Encouraging community groups to co-ordinate their transport schemes, (existing and proposed), with mainstream public transport services, other community transport schemes and the services of the statutory transport providers (e.g. the health trusts, the LEA and Social Services);
- Easy access to funds to implement the chosen transport solution.

5.8 Local authorities are well placed to encourage and promote the development and co-ordination of these schemes because of their detailed knowledge of the local public transport network, the deficiencies in the network of services, and the areas where supported conventional public transport and other types of innovative transport service (e.g. some post bus services) do not offer value for money. In addition they are often involved in the support and promotion of existing community-based transport schemes and have as a result developed extensive contacts with local communities, the voluntary sector, transport providers (external and internal), and other public agencies involved with transport provision.

5.9 Nevertheless the various transport services and schemes are often uncoordinated, resulting in a patchwork quilt of isolated and unlinked statutory, community and voluntary sector based transport. There is a need to ensure that all schemes of these types complement and supplement each other in a series of partnerships with each other and the local authorities. In this way recipients of these various forms of transport can gain access to the various forms of transport available, including mainstream public transport as and where appropriate.

5.10 The present uncoordinated nature of these schemes often means there is a duplication of resources and an inability to direct existing and potential users to the most appropriate type of transport provision. As a result existing services are at best not realising their full potential or at worst are undermined by other well-intentioned schemes. The SWITCH consortium of local authorities in West Wales have completed a study of Rural Transport and are seeking funds from the Assembly through the Transport Grant mechanism to develop demand and vehicle management centres to address these shortcomings. In Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys and other authorities, umbrella organisations to represent the views of voluntary sector transport groups have already been set up to facilitate a more co-ordinated approach to these types of scheme.

5.11 The former Rural Transport Innovation Grant (RTIG) was difficult to access and its

replacement, Welsh Rural Transport Grant (WRTG), should become proactive in delivering new types of service. Yet the WRTG (as successor to RTIG) is still not being delivered in full. Of £250,000 available for 1999 – 2000, only about £100,000 was taken up. There is a definite need for these funds and the Grant is insufficiently promoted and requires better administration.

5.12 The CT structure in Wales needs to be developed to support and encourage transport schemes to apply for grants. Funding both within Wales and elsewhere in the UK is managed differently; Assembly funding of some £700,000 p.a. for environmental projects and £600,000 p.a. for the promotion of volunteering is successfully administered through Environment Wales and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) respectively. Both bodies actively promote their grants, employ development officers to assist applicants and have expert grant committees to determine applications. The Scottish Rural Transport Fund of £600,000 p.a. is also governed by an independent grants committee.

5.13 For the longer term, it would seem appropriate to review the WRTG with the aim of adopting current best practice. As an example the administration of the Welsh Rural Transport Grant by local authorities would enable awareness of proposed new schemes and the encouragement of better focused and co-ordinated schemes on the ground. The present Rural Transport Grant is inflexible and better take-up could be achieved if the available budget was distributed among the more rural authorities, provided the rules are changed (see below).

5.14 As small scale, community based transport is recognised as an effective way of meeting rural transport needs, consideration should be given to allowing local authorities to use RBG funds for both commercial bus and CT projects. If there is to be an integrated transport system, a more integrated approach to funding should be achieved.

5.15 The present system of grants for revenue support of rural bus services and other more community-based transport schemes is inflexible. As a result best value in the provision of transport services is often not achieved. The financial resources of local authorities are severely limited. The development of new community-based transport initiatives is therefore dependent on external sources of funding (e.g. The rural element of the Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG), Rural Transport Grant (RTG), National Lottery Grants, private funding and sponsorship). For small scale schemes involving the acquisition of small vehicles, the distinction between revenue and capital funding is unhelpful. Similarly the rules governing use of money from RBSG and RTG, including the use of match-funding for RTG, also makes access to funds by small community based groups with limited resources onerous and time-consuming.

5.16 In order that these schemes have a secure and sustainable source of funding, particularly given the present escalating costs of fuel, it is essential that grants are indexed to transport inflation each year and there is a commitment to longer term funding. It would be sensible if the grants were earmarked for five years, provided they were consistent with the five year spending proposals for local authority Local Transport Plans and Transport Grant

Submissions.

5.17 Continuation of the national Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR) scheme is essential to rural areas in light of increasing fuel prices and necessarily long route mileage. The freezing of fuel duty rebate between 1993 and 1997 inclusive had a significant impact on transport costs in rural areas and many services became unsustainable. Its full reinstatement, thereby making up the lost ground, is in the interests of rural communities, local authorities and operators, as it is essential that there is seen to be a long term future for rural bus services, if they are to be presented as an alternative to the private car.

5.18 The proposed review of Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR) for passenger carrying vehicles operating local bus services also needs to address the eligibility of demand responsive bus services. It should also consider the advantages to community-based transport schemes of including vehicles operated by these groups in the FDR eligibility rules. These rules should be relaxed to ensure that all vehicles operating in voluntary and community-based transport projects, and registered with the relevant local authority, should qualify for FDR whether or not they carry the general public or operate to a timetable.

5.19 Considerable change to concessionary travel schemes is underway nationally. The NAFW is playing a pivotal role in this respect and should continue to do so in seeking to resolve a number of outstanding issues - the extension of concessions to community-based transport and taxi services; the impact schemes may have on rail journeys; the future role of Cerdyn Cymru.

5.20 Continuity of funding is the single most important requirement for community transport. Operators, including community transport schemes, require security for meaningful investment and passengers (and potential passengers) also need that security. The NAFW has recognised the necessity of proper funding for travel concessions and has set up a partnership group to consider the future of the Rural Bus Grant (RBG). A similar policy is required in relation to all forms of transport funding, recognising that the goal should be to achieve

financial sustainability or, where that is not possible, firm long term support.

5.21 It is suggested that the amalgamation of the current The rural element of the Bus Subsidy Grant and Welsh Rural Transport Grant into a single grant regime, administered by local authorities, would have the following benefits and offer a more flexible and co-ordinated approach to funding:

- Revenue support would be available to both local bus services and community based transport schemes, thus encouraging best value in the provision of subsidised transport;
- Grants would be awarded for both services and associated facilities including vehicles without the need for match funding;
- Administration of the grant would be by local authorities, thus enabling them to provide co-ordinated services through appropriate partnership schemes with the local community, voluntary sector and other transport providers;
- Grant levels would be earmarked by the Assembly for at least five years to coincide with local authority Local Transport Plan and Transport Grant programmes;
- All vehicles operated by community-based and voluntary sector based transport projects supported and registered with the local authority would be eligible for Fuel Duty Rebate;

5.22 For the longer term, consideration needs to be given to developing a CT structure at local authority level throughout Wales. In Wales very few local authorities employ full time CT officers. CT development officers are essential and it would seem appropriate that they sit in the voluntary sector, the base for most CT schemes. In England, the Countryside Agency has a transport remit and devolved budget. Working with rural partnerships that include statutory, private and voluntary organisations the Agency funds officers to develop rural transport plans and improvement packages, and has some £250,000 available for each partnership. A similar scheme in Wales could create a national network of CT development officers at county level and one suggested model sees the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) taking the lead role with officers employed by the county Voluntary Councils.

5.23 Others areas for consideration in the future will include the sector's compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and with private hire and hackney vehicles forming an essential part of the public transport network in many areas, especially in the evening, a national review of the taxi licensing process is long overdue.

6. A Stronger Role for the Traffic Commissioner

6.1 If there is to be an integrated transport system, the quality of the bus and rail systems must be improved. The performance of train operating companies is formally measured on a regular basis, though bus operations are not. However whilst the Commission for Integrated

Transport's recent survey shows that on the whole there is reasonable satisfaction with bus services, these findings have been taken from current users who are resigned to the dowdy image associated with the bus.

6.2 People must be encouraged to view the bus in a more positive light and although unexciting, reliability is a key issue to resolve. The bus must become regarded as a mode for leisure or commuting, which offers a genuine alternative to the car. Much higher performance guarantees are therefore needed and there must be one standard across Wales, against which all operators, large and small, are measured.

6.3 The underlying aim throughout the forthcoming Transport Act is to raise quality and the role of the Traffic Commissioners is expected to be important in ensuring delivery. This is recognised by the Senior Traffic Commissioner, who in a recent letter to the National Chair of ATCO stressed that there is a need for a consistent approach throughout Britain and that in keeping with Government policy to encourage public transport use, higher operating standards should be demanded. In applying this policy the problems that the operators' face on roads, over which they have no monopoly of use, is fully understood, yet there can be no justification for buses running early.

6.4 It is therefore encouraging that collectively this lack of tolerance of an operator's failure to run to timetable is becoming more apparent. Over the past year, expectations of the industry have gradually been raised and the North Western Traffic Commissioner has just adopted the toughest standards yet when judging the performance of Stagecoach East Midlands. Where companies were once called in for only running 70-80% of services on time, they are now in the dock for a 90-95% reliability level, with the preferred window of tolerance now having been reduced to seven minutes - two minutes early and five minutes late. The Senior Traffic Commissioner expects to reduce this further so that 90% of all services run no more than one minute early and five minutes late.

6.5 It is not in doubt that the Traffic Commissioner for Wales, who is responsible for enforcing quality and reliability of both the commercial and supported networks in Wales, will adopt these standards. However, whilst the monitoring of services has become more professional since the Vehicle Inspectorate became involved in this function, the one and a half full time equivalents presently allocated to cover the whole of Wales forces the Traffic Commissioner to be largely reactive. The level of funding is currently totally unequal to the current situation, let alone the heightened task that underlies the forthcoming Transport Act.

6.6 We do not suggest that local authorities assume greater powers, though clearly they have a legitimate role in terms of contract enforcement and a wider interest in looking at network performance. Indeed, there will continue to be advantages gained from both sides working together in partnership to pool their resources and experience and where cost effective, it may be possible for the Traffic Area Network to pay the local authorities to undertake some of their monitoring duties.

6.7 In spite of Public Inquiries being held in Wales, the Traffic Commissioner and the Traffic Area staff are still based in Birmingham and are viewed as being remote by operators, the public and the local authorities. In recognition of the devolved funding regime in Wales, the Assembly must ensure that the necessary funding is in place to provide a fully computerised, properly resourced Traffic Area Office based in Wales, with its own dedicated Commissioner. The Welsh Traffic Commissioner should report directly to the Assembly and have sufficient resources to enable bus operations in Wales to be monitored and controlled effectively at the local level. This is essential in order to deliver many of the bus-based policies that the Government proposes.

7 Improved Mechanisms To Enhance The Support For Rail Services and Infrastructure

7.1 Railways in Wales face a funding challenge if they are to survive. Already the effects of road improvements have led to losses of patronage along parallel rail corridors. Many lines lack capacity on key sections which, together with infrastructure that was last renewed in the 1960s, has introduced unreliability into the network at a time when it needs to be attracting new users in order to assist in the delivery of reduced road traffic levels. The social status of the Welsh railway network means that without substantial capital and revenue funding it will fail to maximise its potential contribution to the integrated transport strategy.

7.2 In recent years, the Assembly has encouraged and supported local authorities in Wales to provide new stations and extend or re-open railway lines yet, even with this government support for schemes, additional funding is still needed. The Rail Passenger Partnership (RPP) funding process may be able to assist but it is a slow cumbersome process. The new franchise for Wales and the Borders offers an opportunity for a major improvement in rail services. However, the opportunity needs to be taken by the Assembly to ensure that these services are included as part of a revised Passenger Service Requirement (PSR) for Wales. Strong representations need to be made to the shadow Strategic Rail Authority (sSRA) to this effect.

7.3 Many of the current problems relate from the period of decline during the 1960s and 1970s, when track layouts were simplified and passing loops were removed. As the railway enters a renaissance, with a significant growth in passenger and freight traffic, both actual and proposed, it is clear that without investment, it will be capacity that constrains ultimate growth.

7.4 In South Wales the local authority investment, which has resulted in the reopening of railway lines and stations, and most recently in signalling and track improvements to improve the network capacity, will remain under-utilised unless the necessary funding for the increased service and rolling stock is provided. The investment was made on the expectation that increased services would follow but in the new railway industry, unless these services are commercial, substantial revenue funding is sought by the train operator.

7.5 New railway stations and re-opened lines represent an on-going maintenance liability to Railtrack, leading to increased charges to the train operator. At these stations the operators

also incur a financial cost from stopping a train (braking and acceleration plus the time penalty for the passengers to board), as well as a knock on delay to following trains caused by the additional stopping patterns. Even more costly is the additional rolling stock required for operating the extra services.

7.6 The need for these additional services will increase in importance as the shift from the private car to public transport takes place. The Assembly needs to bridge this gap, if it is to create a virtuous transport circle. Its role should be to promote integrated transport, using the opportunity to generate more business.

7.7 Positive action is also needed to ensure that new services are not denied regular clock face timetable integration with long standing ones, simply because they are experimental and the argument that it is because they are not economic will always prevail unless such action is taken. A clock face, inter-operator, connecting timetable, with regular headways, is a prerequisite of a sustained rail revival and the Assembly needs to consider how timetable slots can be allocated across the network to maximise the incidence of clock face interval services. Such timetabling principles are vital if the integrated transport policy is to have meaning and coherence.

7.8 The National Timetabling Conference, set up by the industry after the first Rail Summit, must do more than provide a mechanism for balancing the fragmented process for timetable planning. It must be structured to deliver a strategic vision of the railway passenger network, and as such, the initiative must come from the sSRA to deliver a thorough operator commitment to interval timetables. It is important to ensure that both "main line" operators, such as First Great Western, whose future timetable enhancements are almost certainly commercial and the more marginal frequency increases promoted by the local authorities and the "regional" operators, such as Wales and West Trains receive a fair allocation.

7.9 If it is to be charged with facilitating journeys across more than one operator by through ticketing, it is therefore essential that a further requirement be added to ensure that trains connect to make such tickets usable and that even headway timetables are delivered regularly to make those connections.

7.10 The funding gap does not just extend to new services. Throughout Wales trains run with short formations and overcrowding occurs during the summer holiday, Christmas and daily peak periods because the economics do not make it worthwhile. This is largely because the return on the money needed to hire additional rolling stock is not high enough. This also affects the provision of strengthened or additional trains to annual events such as the National Eisteddfod, the Royal Welsh Show or international rugby matches at the National Stadium in Cardiff. There should be a pool of rolling stock available to train operators, owned and

managed by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) on behalf of its members. This should swing the economic balance toward the provision of additional services at specific times of need. It is suggested that this stock is made up of Pacer units and suitable locomotive hauled stock currently held in store.

7.11 It had long been assumed both within the railway industry and local authorities that electrification of the Great Western main line between London and Swansea would be undertaken by the year 2000, when the existing fleet of High Speed Trains would become life expired. Privatisation of the railway industry stopped the expansion of electrification and although additional new diesel trains are being delivered to enhance services as far as Cardiff, the ageing diesel fleet is being extensively overhauled and remains the core service provider.

7.12 In North Wales, electrification of the line to Holyhead has long been sought, as it would provide more efficient stock utilisation and the ability to run certain through services without a change of traction. Yet whilst the benefits of electrification are acknowledged, the planned rolling stock procurement of both the operators on the North Wales Coast line is diesel.

7.13 Despite claims that new diesel engine trains are environmentally friendly, there can be no doubt that electric traction is environmentally superior to diesel from the point of noise, emission and sustainability. However, electrification brings with it high infrastructure costs plus the higher initial capital cost of an electric unit. Railtrack have no desire nor any compulsion to electrify the lines in Wales as it will involve them in much unnecessary, at present, investment for which there is no strong commercial case to be made. The Assembly should therefore undertake a full value for money assessment into the case for electrification. It may be that something akin to the "sparks" effect that has followed electrification of the East and West Coast Main Lines is just what is needed to turn the fortune of Welsh railways.

7.14 The Assembly needs to exert greater influence in the way train services are developed. The continued minimalist funding for the railway in Wales is exemplified by the lack of investment in new rolling stock. This can only be detrimental in the long term, as it has been demonstrated in other areas that new stock is followed by increased patronage. Yet apart from Central Trains Class 170s and First North Western's Class 175s, no new trains have yet appeared. The image of a rail service running life expired locomotives and coaches on daily services is exemplified in the South Wales valleys and must be confined to the past. Similarly, the replacement of Class 150 Sprinter trains by Class 142 Pacer trains with lower capacity and lower comfort levels has resulted because of the lower leasing charges and of greater concern has more recently led to the operator bidding for RPP funds to strengthen trains which are now overcrowded.

7.15 Although there are substantial rail freight flows in South Wales, elsewhere in Wales they are very few. There is no freight whatever on the Cambrian system, only occasional traffic diverted from the North and West routes on the Central Wales line, whilst on the North Wales Coast line, there are only flows to and from Mostyn Dock, rail ballast from Penmaenmawr, nuclear flask trains from Wylfa, and occasional traffic to Anglesey Aluminium.

7.16 The rising costs of road transport are increasing the effects of the peripherality of Mid, West, and North-West Wales. Facilitating the development of rail freight would reduce the effects of peripherality. A recent study commissioned by a number of organisations to look at the viability of railfreight in North and Mid Wales identified some potential flows, namely the extraction of slate waste from Blaenau Ffestiniog and this is currently being given serious consideration by a local consortium.

7.17 There are two regulatory changes which would greatly assist the development of railfreight in Wales. Both are within the remit of the Assembly to change, or exert influence on other bodies. Firstly, there is the Freight Facilities Grant (FFG), which currently can only be awarded for the transfer of freight from road to rail. It cannot be used to establish new flows, such as are under consideration at Blaenau Ffestiniog. An amendment to the conditions relating to FFG would be an important element in encouraging developments of this nature.

7.18 Secondly, whilst the Rail Regulator is reviewing track access charges relating to rail freight, the present charging regime appears to mitigate against Railtrack investing any resources in facilities for new freight flows especially given the existing limits on access charges for freight. Support from the Assembly in emphasising this to the Rail Regulator might help to encourage greater freight related investment by Railtrack.

7.19 The Assembly has limited powers for rail, compared with those enjoyed by the Scottish Parliament, yet the task of driving the regeneration of railways in Wales is more difficult. The creation of the Wales and Borders franchise and the likely length of the franchise term, makes it imperative that the aspirations of all the players are encompassed and that the influence of the Assembly on Welsh railway developments is not diluted by its minority position within the sSRA.

7.20 There are relatively minor schemes in Wales which could and need to be taken forward quickly but are unable to proceed because the limited investment programmes of Railtrack or the train operators will not allow them to proceed. In the longer term, additional powers will have to be given to the Assembly to effectively deal with, and progress rail matters in Wales.

7.21 England is taking its lead from 'Transport 2010 - 10 Year Plan' which sees a 50% growth of rail in ten years, with much of the investment required coming from these extra passengers. Nevertheless there must be some pump priming to attract this growth and the ten year plan recognises that "new and better rail services can, for instance, have a significant influence on patterns of development, contributing to regeneration and the creation of employment, leisure and tourism opportunities". In this, local government has a key role to play, as "in setting its investment priorities the SRA will work with local and regional; planning bodies to take account of their expectations and priorities".

7.22 Wales must therefore follow suit. To this end, local authorities have already begun to specify service levels which they believe the SRA should implement. The support of the

Assembly, both moral and financial, in order to achieve their delivery will be essential.

7.23 In order to create the new railway so deserved by Wales it is suggested that:-

- A base level of service has to be determined, upon which enhancements can be built and protected. As a minimum this should be the PSR plus those commercial services provided at day one of the first franchise.
- The opportunity is taken to obtain service enhancements as part of a revised PSR issued for the new Wales and Borders franchise. This would include within the new franchise services currently funded by local authorities to safeguard their future.
- The new PSR should be more specific in ensuring commitments by being designed to encompass more customer focussed needs, such as manning of more stations and the provision of a quality and secure station environment, with improved car parks, bus interchange and disabled access.
- Using the present guidelines, it is unrealistic to expect a bid for RPP funding to enhance services in Wales to be able to compete with schemes in other parts of the country where railway use is growing. Therefore, if an RPP bid is determined to be the most appropriate way to obtain service enhancements, such bids should either be weighted to remove the social railway constraints or, the Assembly be given the power to determine and prioritise schemes within Wales and to allocate its share of the RPP funds.
- Railtrack has too much of its resource base tied into high profile projects like the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, East Coast Main Line and West Coast Main Line. Pressure has to be placed upon Railtrack to bring forward its investment programme in Wales. Without improved capacity, the potential for growth in services in the passenger and freight sectors is limited.
- The partnership approach is important but new scheme investment by local authorities should generate returns from private sector partners, determined by contract if necessary, before work starts.
- The Assembly should request assurances from the sSRA that the new Wales and Borders franchise will not prevent any train operator based outside Wales from running services to destinations in Wales during the life of the franchise.
- Funding for the Welsh railway network is to be provided by the sSRA but the Assembly must ensure that additional funds to allow the network to grow are also identified.

7.24 The railways in Wales are facing a challenge from the improved highway network, the

private car and perceived unreliability of service. The present scene is dominated by a sub-standard and somewhat inappropriate PSR, particularly if the railways are to play their part in modal shift. Further investment in network infrastructure to remove unreliability is crucial, with local authorities, the Assembly, Railtrack, the train operators and the sSRA working in partnership to provide additional services, improved infrastructure and new rolling stock, as well as to market those services which will always require subsidy. All these factors are vital elements for the railway renaissance.

APPENDIX

A list of rail schemes and service enhancements has already been presented by ATCO Cymru to the Assembly. Listed below are some broad objectives which need to be considered:-

- Capacity constraints to be removed by bringing forward investment programmes to allow the network to accommodate additional services. This would include those locations identified in the Railtrack Network Management Statement.
- Extension of Great Western trains to West Wales plus the extension of the proposed half hourly London to Cardiff service beyond Cardiff.
- Full implementation of SWIFT Strategy, once capacity constraints are resolved, in respect of service frequency enhancements for the Valley Lines.
- Provision of a properly timetabled train service for West Wales, not based on rolling stock availability but on regular interval clockface services with connecting, dedicated rail feeder buses at strategic locations.
- Restoration of Swanline services at clock face timings and reduced journey times. Enhanced services on the Maesteg Line.
- For relatively modest investment, the Heart of Wales line could be transformed from its light railway status leading to the provision of enhanced passenger services and its restoration as a freight route, thereby easing pressure on the North-South Line through Hereford.
- On the Cambrian Coast line, a two-hourly service along the coast and the provision of more through trains to the coast. A minimum hourly service is needed on the main line.

- Provision of an hourly service between Shrewsbury, Wrexham and Chester.
- Infrastructure works to raise platform heights at selected locations and investment to bring back into use, derelict stations.
- Continued commitment by the train operators to the local authority supported Community Marketing Groups and Rail Officers.
- Provision on the Conwy Valley line of an hourly service and transfer of the local authority funded journeys to the franchisee.
- North Wales Coast service enhancements to provide an hourly service between Holyhead/Bangor and Manchester, with direct services to Manchester Airport; a service between North Wales and Liverpool and more services running between North and South Wales.
- To progress in the longer term the reopening of the Caernarvon to Bangor and the Gaerwen to Amlwch lines.