

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 31 January 2001

Time: 2.00 to 5.30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

POLICY REVIEW: REPORT FROM EXERT ADVISOR

Purpose

1. To advise the committee of examples of best practice and other sources of data available on integrated public transport, and recommend that further information be commissioned in some areas.

Background

2. The evidence presented to the committee, and the presentations made so far, have started to provide data upon which the committee's policy options can be developed. However, I detect some gaps in the information currently available, and advise seeking further input.

3. By the date of the committee, the visits will only just have commenced. I should like to set out the context, purposes, and possible outcomes of the visits in this report. In particular, why the visits are suggested, what is to be seen, what could be learnt, and how Members policy options could be developed from them.

Position of Public Transport in Wales

4. What has been inherited, and what are the trends? For benchmarking purposes, I have set out key indicators at **Annex 1**. Our baseline is that, in 1991, only 8.6% of all journeys to work in Wales were via public transport.

Best Practice Visits

5. The main purposes of the visits are set out in **Annex 2** along with my appraisal of what is to be seen and the possible outcomes for Members' consideration. It is my intention to produce briefing

notes prior to each visit and work with the Clerk and Members concerned in the production of a Rapporteur report back to Committee, as part of the evaluation process.

Information Available

6. I set out in **Annex 3** the information available that can be used in the Review. There are not, in my view, glaring deficiencies that should hold up the Review, but there are some areas of deficiency upon which I believe extra information should be sought. These are:

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- **community transport / extent of presently unreported car sharing / car pooling / car club arrangements** - there is some anecdotal evidence that the September fuel crisis led to considerable car sharing and other arrangements, not all of which have been reported. It is not clear what survived the crisis, and recent rail problems. The committee may wish to commission an analysis of "third level" services (by which I mean everything between reliance on the private car on one hand, and conventional bus services on the other). This would pick up what exists, what is in prospect, and any suppressed demand in the field of car sharing/clubs and pooling;
- **fuller information on forward investment plans of private sector players** – the committee may wish to invite the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) to supplement their evidence;
- **fuller picture on local authority road maintenance** (given that most public transport is road based and dependent upon good road maintenance) - WLGA could be invited to provide a report.

"What Works " in Wales?

7. Against the above matrix of general points, common ground is established, in the submissions and presentations so far, these are highlighted in **Annex 4**.

European Best Practice in Transport

8. The Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) has produced a report on European Best Practice in Transport – Benchmarking (November, 2000) which I feel is a "near proxy" to what we are trying to establish in Wales. The summary conclusions of that report form a good starting point for discussion, and can be found at **Annex 5**.

A Few Sound Bites

9. From responses and presentations so far, some catch phrases have emerged which, better than many words of analysis, capture the essentials of the problems faced, and the questions to

be answered in this Review.

- "Crack public transport, and we largely crack sustainability"

(Environment
Agency)

- "Effective PT is the litmus test for sustainability"

(Environment
Agency)

- "We need to catch up on 20 years transport underinvestment"

(TIGER)

- "Perceived car costs have been stable over time, whilst PT costs, particularly rail (where all track costs are covered by the fare) have risen"

(SWITCH)

- "Resources – not reorganisation – is what PT needs"

(WLGA)

Conclusions

10. The Committee is invited to note the examples of best practice and other sources of data available, and agree to commission the additional information referred to in paragraph 6.

Denys Morgan

Expert Adviser

January 2001

PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN WALES

Table 1: Distance travelled / person in Wales / mode, in 1995/96

1995/96

Walking 162

Car driver 2910

Car passenger 2148

Other private 288

Local bus 222

Rail 125

Other public 76

All Modes 5930 * (NTS)

* For 1985/86, the comparative total was 4653. Great Britain figures show a 39% decline in bus patronage between 1975/76 and 1995/96, against a 47% increases in car travel. These data include journeys under one mile, but exclude walking stages of multi-modal trips.

Table 2: Variation in bus and rail work journey patronage, by LA area, between modes
(source 1991 Census)

BUS 2.2% in Powys to 14.4% in Cardiff

RAIL 0.1% in Ceredigion to 4.5% in the Vale of Glamorgan

ALL PT 2.6% in Powys to 16.5% in Cardiff

Table 3: % work journeys by public transport, all Wales (source 1991 Census)

BUS 7.4%

RAIL 1.2%

TOTAL 8.6%

By all objective measure, public transport use has dwindled considerably over the last 30 years. More accurately, the growth in personal transport and mobility has been predominantly achieved by massive increases in car mileage. Typically, the average journey length has increased from circa 8 miles thirty years ago to circa 21 miles today, against a background where the total number of journeys has also increased. As the above data show, public transport has not figured in that increase, not even maintaining its base market.

This is a clear trend, with minor interruptions apparent against specific legislative measures such as deregulation. Over time the effects here have tended to be in the nature of vehicles and services operated rather than in the quantum of service delivered. It has also masked a larger deterioration of certain services, such as rural services, evening and weekend services, against lower levels of deterioration in core urban services, for example.

This evidence implies that the problems are deep seated, and invite major initiatives and effort to reverse. In the Minister's emerging 10 year Wales Transport Plan, there are likely to be targets as to the numbers of journeys to be undertaken by public transport, in different circumstances, as a proportion of total travel. The situation must therefore be viewed as, firstly, arresting the decline, secondly, consolidating the core position, and, thirdly, promoting massive expansion to achieve the new targets. In quantum terms, this task should not be underestimated. Put crudely, of all distance travelled by all people in Wales during the years in the 1990's for which figures are available, circa 3.5% was undertaken by local bus and circa 2% by rail. Against this background, great increase in public transport patronage will be accompanied by smaller decreases in car and total travel, and it will be necessary to target the largest public transport increases on areas where the greatest effects will be apparent, meaning, inevitably, the urban "journey to work" movements. Other, vitally important, initiatives will be needed in rural and other urban fringe "isolated" communities, and other aspects of public transport, but the effects on the quantum will be less.

ANNEX 2

BEST PRACTICE VISITS

- **Edinburgh**

This visit will encompass both what the local authority in partnership with government and operators, and regulators have achieved, and also a visit to the Scottish Parliament to understand their approach to these matters.

In my judgement, Edinburgh, of all UK conurbations, has made the largest strides in the direction of public transport support, mostly road based. As a matter of political policy, since 1974, and the term of office of the now defunct Lothian "Metropolitan" Administration, road building as an option has been downgraded in the urban area. Much of this was dictated by the historical nature of much of central Edinburgh, where demolition and major roadworks were not a realistic option, even if resources had allowed. The result has been a major and significant shift in the sharing of available urban road space, now heavily tilted in the direction of bus based public transport, to an extent possibly greater than anywhere else in the UK. The visit will demonstrate this position to Members, allow the designers and operators to be subject to your scrutiny and allow judgements to be made on the applicability of what is witnessed to Wales. Edinburgh's aspirations towards the next generation of public transport, both guided busways and LRT (trams) will also be explained.

The Scottish Parliament's approach can also be examined and explained with a visit to Holyrood.

- **Amsterdam**

Amsterdam, along with several other continental conurbations, have highly integrated modes of transport, with co-ordinated road based public transport, both tram and bus, metro operations, rail services, and, perhaps uniquely in the case of Amsterdam, canal services. The interchange between modes is efficient and simple, and there is a well developed interticketing arrangement between modes, whereby seamless origin to destination tickets, utilising two or more forms of transport, are available and operate to the mutual benefit of all forms of transport. Simple zonal fare structures and daily, weekly, monthly and season ticketing arrangements all exist to ease the situation of the traveller.

It will be possible to have these arrangements explained and examine how the balance, in Wales, can be tilted towards the traveller, with the objective being ease of travel, convenience to the user, rather than each mode operating in strict silos, militating against the users interests.

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- **Oxford**

Oxford, arguably, has the most advanced "park and ride" operations of any medium sized UK urban area, and is of similar nature size and characteristics to some Welsh towns.

Oxford's system has developed over 30 years, from modest beginnings, and now has several bespoke commuter car parks, with minor retail, car valetting and other services, bringing "life" to what would otherwise be unattended seas of cars. Oxford's experience on encouragement of modal change, of personal and vehicle security and the beneficial effects on "taking out" significant numbers of vehicles which would otherwise enter the town centre can all be examined by Members.

- **London**

A visit to the Transport for London organisation has been arranged to examine the existing and developing policies for encouraging public transport in London. It is recognised that London, by its nature, size and complexity is unique, but nevertheless, there are several public transport initiatives that Members will find of interest. On road, highly developed traffic management techniques to give advantage to buses are in place, including bus lanes, selective detection at traffic signals, bus only turns, bus gates, high specification bus stops and shelters, including real time passenger information systems.

- **Leeds and Bradford**

This visit is to examine the Scott Hall Road (Leeds) guided bus system, one of the first in the UK, which has been operational for well over a year. In my judgement, this is an exemplar of a system that could have widespread applicability in Wales, representing a partnership between the public and private sectors. NAW/Local Government would provide the running track, and the operators would provide services, giving a step change increase in public transport amenity and reliability at approximately one quarter of the track cost of providing new highway.

The same presentation will cover a far more ambitious scheme, presently in the planning phase, for Manchester Road Bradford.

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- **Sheffield**

Sheffield is one of only a handful of UK conurbations which have succeeded in planning and implementing a LRT (tram) system. Of particular interest in Sheffield is the on street running proportion of the network (circa 30%) which is higher than most. This will give Members an insight into the implications of such a system in Wales, which would only be likely in the largest conurbations, and even then, the present viability for such systems would be marginal. Also, any system in Wales would doubtless have to rely upon large elements of street running, so the Sheffield experience would be particularly relevant.

There will also be the opportunity to scrutinise how the transport policy of Sheffield, linked into a PTA/PTE type arrangement, was operating and developing.

- **Frankfurt**

In addition to being able to examine transport practice in another western European country, this trip is predicated on meeting with the Frankfurt Main local regional administration. German Lande have considerable interventionist and spending powers over regional public transport, and the interrelationship between national, regional and local administrations, and service operations in a German context, can be examined and scrutinised by Members.

BASE INFORMATION AVAILABLE

I am satisfied that the base information for this Review is available, inter alia, in the below:

- Traffic and volume information for each mode, nationally, regionally and locally;
- The NAW Transport Data Maps are a useful contribution to the base;
- DETR documents covering the Transport White Paper, "daughter" documents for each mode, and national statistics;
- Financial information, picking up "Better Wales" projections for the 3 years 2001/02 to 2003/04;
- European, UK, other devolved nation comparative data;
- TG bid comparative data between LA's;
- Some, but not complete, data on LA sector expenditure on transport related functions, particularly road maintenance;
- LTP collected information from local authorities, both technical and financial;
- LA and LA consortium procured transportation studies;
- Certain private sector ridership and investment information, but not all.

ANNEX 4

"WHAT WORKS" IN WALES?

Common ground has been established in the following areas:

- Bus subsidy grant (BSG)
- Fuel duty rebate (FDR)
- Quality bus partnerships
- De minimus rules
- Concessionary fares policy

Action on some of these points is already in hand by the Administration, and further variation of

them are possible policy options. The BSG has undoubtedly given a shot in the arm to Welsh local bus services and the route mileage has been increased. Examination of BSG effectiveness must now follow against evidence of other initiatives and which one, or combination, can be proved to provide the greatest increase in ridership as opposed to mileage.

All the above help sustain local transport and should be endorsed and developed. De minimus, in particular, is a policy area worthy of close scrutiny given that the Scottish Parliament have abandoned limits, allowing "what works best" locally to flourish. There is room for further action on FDR, perhaps with particular respect to specific users, and for PT.

Concessionary fares are to be abolished as from 01/04/02, for which NAW and WLGA are gearing up. This is an important all Wales initiative not currently replicated elsewhere in the UK.

- Corridor approaches
- Regional partnerships
- Local transport plans
- Green (Travel) Plans
- Individual LA / consortia TM support for bus priority

These are providing the basis for comparison and development, and all consultees quote them and support them. They are important building blocks in local transport development. LTP's are argued to be the basis of better regional co-ordination, and for regional and local finance and service level decisions. However, closer co-ordination of LTP's within each regional area must be ensured by NAW, and a report on LTP performance is currently being examined by the Transport Forum and being considered by the Administration.

- Bus lanes / sharing road space
- Telematic advantages for buses
- Traffic management techniques to assist buses
- Better quality roadside furniture

All these issues are associated with the current "tool box" of local government and have been variously quoted by consultees as being of advantage and to be supported. There are many examples of co-ordinated and good value for money bus support traffic management techniques exemplified in the submitted LTP's, in the WLGA submission and in the draft 10 year Plan. I will not repeat them all here, rather sticking to the generic subject of TM< support and the widespread acceptance of its validity and expected expansion in the consultation exercise. A major policy issue is the extent to which road space should be redistributed in favour of multi occupancy vehicles, away from single occupancy vehicles, particularly in urban areas, and the changes of attitudes that is implied.

- Community transport
- Car clubs / local car schemes
- Car sharing / green transport

All consultees see the relevance and value of these matters. They are supported as important third level operations which must be enhanced, developed and enabled. To this can be added all forms of transport which fit in the "gap" between total reliance on private cars, and conventional PT using conventional buses. This gap included those specifically mentioned, plus taxis, community minibuses, social service vehicles, postal buses, and, in certain cases, school organised minibuses. However, much work needs to be done on the regulatory, insurance, secondary legislation and "enabling" areas where current rules preclude many worthwhile ideas from proceeding.

Other issues raised which need further work:

- Revenue support issues for road based PT
- Road maintenance boost needed to support PT
- Concept of binding compacts between NAW and collective LG
- Promotion of methods to reduce the need to travel

I would wish to advise further on these issues later in the process.

ANNEX 5

COMMISSION FOR INTEGRATED TRANSPORT:

European Best Practice in Transport – Benchmarking (November, 2000)

CfIT produced its report as advice to DETR, and is predominantly a desk study of available statistics available to compare UK transport with similar other European countries in terms of inputs, outputs and outcomes. I believe it is legitimate to use this information and translate to Welsh circumstances, upon the basis of other comparisons and methods used to compare the constituent nations of the UK, rather than to reinvent the wheel.

CfIT considered inputs and outputs were:

- Investment in infrastructure for all transport modes
- Increasing the modal share for public transport
- Reducing the need to travel through land use planning
- Increasing levels of cycling and walking

CfIT also considered that an integrated transport policy should increase accessibility while delivering the following outcomes:

- Reduced congestion on the roads without eroding economic competitiveness

- More inclusive society, with improved access for all to goods and services, and to employment
- Improved transport safety record, particularly for child road casualties and pedestrians and cyclists

The CfIT background data is available for Members' information. The main results show that the modal share for the car is the highest in Europe, although car ownership is lower. Usage, not ownership, is the issue, and persuading many motorists to transfer to public transport in whole or in part replacement of journeys is the challenge.

A further CfIT piece of work on comparisons between the UK and Germany shows that PT in Germany receives higher subsidy and generally runs higher quality services than many in the UK. CfIT suggest more work on this subject.

Cycling and walking both have higher modal shares, the latter following extensive pedestrianisation and restrictions on car traffic. Walking is a viable alternative, given that there are safe routes, up to one kilometre. This, allied to short distances between homes and shops, leisure facilities and workplaces can start to make a difference.

In planning terms, the UK trend has been the opposite, with the distance travelled to work doubling over 30 years, and local community facilities gradually withdrawn. This is an area where transportation and local land use planning need to be brought together, because the UK trend towards low density housing means greater travel distances to essential services, and making cars attractive over PT, which it is difficult to adequately provide in such dispersed circumstances.

CfIT also make the cultural point that PT has been better valued in countries like Germany, Denmark and Holland, being higher on political agendas, and attracting a greater commitment in both investment and individual travel behaviour.

CfIT accepts that the indicators for comparison are not perfect, and need more work doing on them, but they are the best available at this time. The paper concludes that the UK is behind on many issues, the exception being overall road safety, where the UK record is good, although the average conceals poor performance in the areas of child accidents in residential areas and pedestrians and cyclists in general.

The results make interesting reading for our Review, and I highlight the following areas:

Modal split

- The UK fares poorly, with the highest proportion of journeys made by car.
- A reduction in the modal share by car in the UK would provide a good measure of policy effectiveness.
- Fares and subsidy issues will greatly affect the results

- Modal split figures must be related to overall distance travelled data
- Reducing distance travelled is as important as modal transfer for sustainability

Safety

- UK overall figure good, in comparison, but pedestrian and cyclist deaths high
- Greater consideration for needs of these modes needed

Land Use

- UK third most densely populated country in comparison
- UK land use regarded as extravagant
- UK trend towards lower living densities, rather than the reverse
- In medium term, how to increase PT usage in suburban areas and to replace car commuting where this has been encouraged by lower density developments
- The lower the density the more difficult it is for PT to provide effective services

Environmental Damage

- Transport soon to be the largest net contributor to CO2 emissions (overtaking power generation and industry)
- Increasing car usage is causing energy consumption and rise in emissions
- Local air pollution attention needed, both in technical advances and methods of reducing individual vehicle emissions
- Cutting car use growth likely to be the most effective way of reducing transport related pollution.