

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 7 March 2001
Time: 2.00 to 5.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

PUBLIC TRANSPORT REVIEW: SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Purpose

1. To assist the Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in setting out expectations for public transport and means of implementation over a 5 year timescale. Officials were asked to produce a paper setting out possible courses of action as a contribution to taking this forward and it is not a statement of the Assembly Government's views.

2. Several strands of concurrent work need to be brought together. Consultation on the Transport Framework is expected to start on 20 March 2001 with responses due by 18 May 2001. A review of community transport has started and is scheduled to conclude by 31 July 2001. Both are being managed by the Transport Directorate. Air studies are being prepared by the DETR and the results should be available by the summer. All of these will help the Committee to formulate their conclusions and recommendations. The Transport Directorate is also making a contribution to the Strategic Rail Authority's consideration of bids for the Wales and Borders Rail franchise.

Suggested way forward

3. We suggest the Committee narrow the issues down:
- Set out the key quality issues underpinning public transport concentrating initially on bus, community transport and rail with examples of what works.
 - Contribute to the production of guidance to local authorities on the preparation of bus strategies including community transport, and on the interlinked quality partnerships and quality contracts.
 - Review the operation of the bus fuel duty rebate to bus operators.
 - Consider organisational issues for delivery of improved quality services.

Investment and Service Developments

4. We do not consider that the Committee should, in this review, set out aspirations for particular types of investments. The Committee's review can make a difference by ensuring that there is a public/private partnership to

improve quality and that the local authority organisational arrangements are fit for purpose. If this can be achieved more coherent local transport plans will follow and the case for investment will be stronger. Increased investment should be targeted and evaluated and work flowing from the Transport Framework on establishing relevant criteria will assist in that process. Together this should assist us in taking a strategic view when investment decisions are taken.

Way Forward

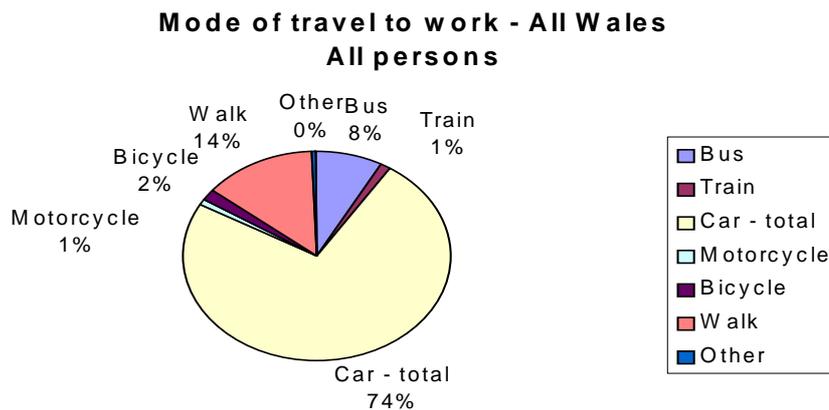
5. Key pieces of work have to be undertaken:
- An analysis of good practice in relation to quality should be undertaken and commended to local authorities, bus and rail operators.
 - An analysis of the current literature on voluntary **bus quality partnerships** and how these can be developed on a statutory basis is required. Evidence received by the Committee will assist in preparing more detailed guidance. This will need to be completed by September 2001 for consultation with Local Authorities, bus operators and others who have contributed to the Committee's review. Final guidance should be issued early in 2002 by the Assembly Government. Local authorities have to complete bus strategies by April 2003.
 - An analysis of literature on **bus fuel duty rebate** together with the work of the Commission for Integrated Transport now underway will be necessary. This could be on a longer time scale.
 - An analysis of organisational structures needed to deliver improved services. This would include:
 - existing local authority statutory arrangements.
 - the voluntary regional groupings, SWIFT, SWITCH, TIGER, TAITH and the Mid Wales Partnership.
 - arrangements elsewhere in the UK including Greater London Assembly and Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) and in Europe.
 - a new type of body bringing together PTA type powers and traffic management.
 - need for a new body to cover the whole of Wales or on a regional basis.

8. Options should be ready for consultation in September 2001 subject to possibly a longer time scale on bus fuel duty rebate. The Committee will need to decide how the preparatory work should be undertaken.

Contact: **Denzil Jones**
TRANSPORT POLICY DIVISION

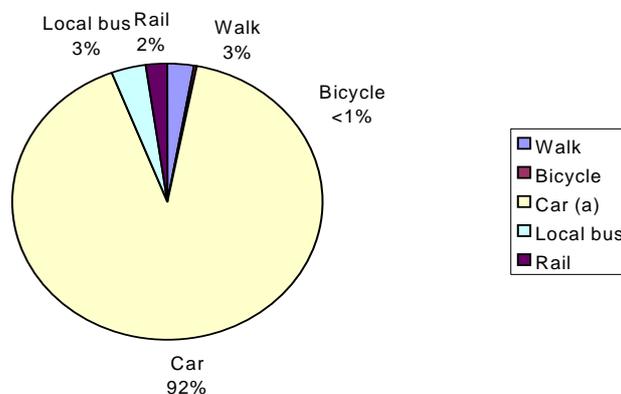
HOW PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS CURRENTLY USED IN WALES

Journey to Work: is one of the key generators of traffic, as well as placing the peak demand on the public transport system. Encouraging modal shift from the car is essential for this journey. The chart shows current usage by mode for this journey. Total public transport usage here = 9%



Total journeys: The overall travel patterns across Wales including journey to work alongside other journey generators show an even lower share for public transport against the car, namely 5%. This shows the challenge which the Assembly must address in promoting accessibility for those without cars and offering a more attractive alternative to those with cars.

**Comparison of amount of travel in Wales 1992-99
(average miles per person per year)**



BACKGROUND PAPER

Vision of integrated public transport in Wales

1. The emerging vision outlined in Policy Review of Public Transport: Emerging issues EPT-03-01(p4) is essentially about improving the quality of services whether they are provided by buses, community transport, rail, taxis or aircraft. This paper concentrates on buses, community transport and rail. The key change required is to convince people that in addition to using their cars they can also travel by different means. And for people without cars they should have access to employment, leisure and welfare facilities by reliable public transport. Elements of a quality service include:

- Journey Time
- Service frequency
- Service Reliability
- Modern rolling stock/vehicles
- Service Comfort/Support Services where appropriate
- Customer Service
- Accessible and reliable public information
- Convenience and attractiveness of station locations (both to settlements and to other public transport networks)
- Ease and speed of connections with other transport modes (good interchanges, sensible timetabling and through ticketing arrangements)
- Physical accessibility (particularly for disabled passengers)
- Personal security and operational safety
- Affordability
- Effective staff skills with appropriate training underpins quality services
- Ability and willingness to innovate also underpins quality services

2. What can the Assembly do?

Transport Act 2000

- It requires Local Transport Plans (already completed) to be placed on a statutory basis; and requires that, as part of these Plans, local authorities should include a specific bus strategy for carrying out their bus functions. **The Assembly has set a target for these strategies to be in place by 2003.**
- It provides formal powers for local authorities to implement Bus Quality Partnership schemes (which allow joint authority-operator activity to develop infrastructure and service improvements and which already exist in many areas on a voluntary basis). **The Assembly may issue guidance to local authorities on the carrying out of this function.** Local authorities will also have the power to enter into Quality Contract schemes, whereby they specify bus services in a particular area and let contracts for the provision to bus operators. Contracts, as opposed to Partnerships, are limited to single bus companies, and may be regarded as rather like franchises for particular services. **They can only be taken forward with approval of the Assembly.**
- It allows local authorities to subsidise and set minimum targets for operators to ensure service provision, promote transport integration and quality.
- Local authorities will also be able to require bus operators to co-operate in the provision of joint ticketing, and the Act places a duty on local transport authorities to secure the provision of bus passenger information in their area.
- It creates a mandatory duty for local authorities to provide a concessionary fares scheme so that all pensioners and disabled people should be entitled to travel at a discount of at least 50% on buses, using a free bus pass by April 2001. (Subject to further legislation men over 60 will be included). **It gives the power to the Assembly to vary the elements of this scheme, which will enable us to take forward the introduction of free fares for this group in April 2002.**
- It gives a more flexible power for the traffic commissioners to impose a financial penalty on bus operators who run unreliable services. **The Assembly has the power to specify to the Traffic Commissioner the level of penalties to be set.**
- It requires the Strategic Rail Authority to consult the Assembly on all matters affecting Wales, and the DETR on the appointment of a representative for Wales on the SRA Board.
- **It enables the Assembly to pay fuel duty rebate (now funded by us but administered by the DETR).**

- **It enables the Assembly to pay grants to bus operators instead of bus fuel duty rebate or introduce variations.**
- **There are powers in other enactments which have a bearing on public transport including payment of bus subsidy grants and capital investment through Transport Grant.**

Action

3. Evidence of good practice in establishing quality services needs to be pulled together.

4. The Assembly will need to issue guidance on quality partnerships and also consider the relevance of quality contracts. There is already a great deal of literature available in the form of academic studies and research commissioned by the DETR and others. We need to commission immediately an analysis of existing literature which together with evidence gathered by the Committee will enable guidance to be prepared for consultation in September.

5. There is a need to review the operation of the bus fuel duty. Again we need to analyse existing research and consider the outcome of work underway especially that being undertaken by the Commission for Integrated Transport. This can be on a longer timescale than the work on partnerships.

Delivering the Vision

6. It is essential that the organisational structures can deliver quality services. Public transport provision does not coincide with local authority boundaries especially in the more urbanised areas. There is the additional difficulty of ensuring that each authority has the appropriate skills given the pressure on their resources generally. Local authorities recognise the need for cross border co-operation and the establishment of SWIFT, SWITCH, TIGER, TAITH and Mid Wales Partnership is tangible evidence that much is being done to bring about coherent provision. Some are at a more advanced stage than others and the SWIFT consortium have successfully put together long term proposals to improve bus and rail services which are being supported by Transport Grant.

7. The Committee need to consider whether Local Authority consortia can handle effectively both planning and implementing improved services. Authorities need to have the capacity to consider innovative approaches. In addition to a fragmented local authority system, service delivery is a matter for a large number of commercial operators and it is essential to ensure that the most effective management arrangements are in place. In order to make the best use of public transport, traffic management arrangements have to be fully integrated alongside service provision. The Committee need to consider whether the local authority consortia are able to take this forward on the current voluntary basis or whether modifications should be considered. In considering this a study of arrangements elsewhere, including the evidence gained from

Committee's visits would help in understanding the issues. For example in Scotland there is a power to direct local authorities to work together.

8. The establishment of a Passenger Transport Authority would require legislation and the ones currently in existence do not have powers over traffic management. In addition consideration should be given to a regional solution rather than one covering the whole of Wales. The funding arrangements would be complex and an understanding of arrangements in existing Passenger Transport Authorities needs to be obtained to consider this further. For the purposes of this review an analysis of options should be undertaken which would enable the Committee to formulate proposals for consultation purposes, perhaps on a 'green paper' basis.