

# ATCO Cymru response to the National Assembly of Wales Enterprise & Business Committee Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 ATCO Cymru is the Welsh region of the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers. The Association exists to;
- secure the association of persons directly concerned with the formulation of policies for the securing of public passenger transport services,
  - exchange information and views,
  - assist in the formulation of policies and standards,
  - promote appropriate matters of common interest in the transportation field with the objective of improving passenger transport service on a nationwide basis.
- 1.2 The Association provides a forum for regional members to meet together, share experience and develop initiatives. It works with those in the bus and rail industries and the community transport sector. The Association also shares information with, and gives advice to, Local Authority associations and Government in England, Scotland and Wales on transport matters.

## 2. Integrated public transport

- 2.1 ATCO Cymru considers the limited amount of integration in the public transport network as a key barrier that needs to be addressed. It believes that Wales needs a modern, accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system that helps to develop the economy, promote social inclusion and equality and protects the environment.
- 2.2 There are many good public transport services in Wales (although examples of bad practice can be found too). However too many of the good services are less successful than they should be because they are isolated and not part of a properly integrated public transport system. We believe that improvements to the public transport system, making it into a proper integrated public transport system could bring about substantial benefits, not just because of their own value, but because they enable all other parts of the public transport system, and any future improvements to it, work much better.
- 2.3 The four key features of a properly integrated public transport system are:
- Fully integrated ticketing
  - Appropriate timetable coordination
  - High-quality interchanges
  - Integrated public transport information

### **3. Fully integrated ticketing**

- 3.1 Improved ticketing arrangements are a key component of integration between services and between public transport modes. A single integrated ticketing system and more easily understood ticketing arrangements reduce barriers to the use of public transport and improve transfers between connections. This enables more seamless travel, and brings benefits in terms of affordability, convenience and time-saving. The provision of integrated ticketing, facilitated by the widespread use of smartcards, is an important part of transport integration.
- 3.2 A study undertaken on behalf of the Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG) into the benefits of simple and unified ticketing structures found that the introduction of such systems can lead to substantial patronage growth in the range of 6% to 20%, with some modes experiencing increases of the order of 40%. In London it is estimated that a third of the increased use of public transport since 1999/00 can be attributed to Oyster and other ticketing simplifications.
- 3.3 In addition to patronage increases there are benefits in terms of increases in recorded passenger satisfaction, evidence of resulting modal shift, increases in revenue, reductions in transaction and administrative costs, social benefits, reductions in fraud, wider contribution to city life and identity, acquisition of accurate data on passenger travel behaviour enabling better capacity and network planning, and faster boarding times enabling buses to run more reliably, faster and frequently.
- 3.4 It should be noted that this has been achieved in London through a highly regulated and franchised route network but the return to regulation and the introduction of quality contracts in Wales must not be seen as the panacea in itself. Success comes at a price and London has the highest subsidy levels per capita in the UK, consuming 42% of public spending on buses for 15% of the population. However, this is cheap in comparison to European cities. Spend per capita was £103.43 in 2009/10 - almost five times the level in the PTE areas (£23.31) and not far off ten times the level in the English Shires (£13.47).
- 3.5 ATCO Cymru believes that to be effective integrated ticketing must be a simple, single system, with a full range of tickets, valid on all public transport services without exception, at a fare level similar to current single-operator tickets. The introduction of a limited range of highly or premium-priced through-tickets with a restricted validity, limited use, limited purchasing opportunities, which are difficult to publicise, will not deliver integrated ticket or integrated public transport.
- 3.6 In Wales every bus operator has its own ticketing system and fare structure. Some of these are fairly simple. For example Cardiff Bus and Newport Bus effectively use a flat fare system within the respective city limits, but others are less simple for users to understand. The local rail system around Cardiff and the Valleys has its own separate (mostly zonal) fares system. There are also numerous limited multi-bus operator and multi-modal tickets, add-ons and examples of through-ticketing.

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- 3.8 There are numerous limited multi-bus operator and multi-modal tickets, add-ons and examples of through-ticketing. There are one-day and weekly bus network rider, PlusBus rail & bus tickets, Caerphilly, Rhondda and Aberdare bus plus rail tickets, RailLink bus services, further rail and bus rover, ranger, explorer and flexi-passes, as well as numerous local agreements where one operators accepts tickets (e.g. return tickets) issued by other operators (especially where evening services are provided under contract by a different operator).
- 3.9 In North East Wales, there is a network bus ticket called the "BwsAbout," which gives unlimited travel on specified services within Flintshire and Denbighshire, as well as allowing cross border travel to both Cheshire and Wrexham on journeys that are fully or partly funded by the local authority. In Flintshire, there is the DeeRover ticket, which allows unlimited travel across border to both Cheshire and Wrexham on all subsidised journeys. There is also the "CymruConnect" a combined rail/bus ticket, for rail passengers wishing to go to a main town served only by bus and not the train. Additionally, across North Wales and covering all six Taith Authorities, there is the "North Wales Rover," which is available for travel on all trains and most bus services throughout the area. The ticket operates on zones, so passengers can choose which zones they want the ticket to cover.
- 3.10 In rural areas, where a high percentage of services are tendered, it allows the authorities to specify certain ticket types. The Powys Day Rover is one example that could potentially allow you to travel from Shrewsbury / Oswestry / Machynlleth to Swansea / Cardiff / Abergavenny on a single ticket.
- 3.11 The larger operators in Wales, such as Arriva, First and Stagecoach offer a range of local and national ticket products for travel within a defined area for varying periods purchased from the driver or on line for the longer term tickets. Other operators, such as Cardiff Bus and Newport Transport of a range of daily, weekly and monthly tickets for use on their networks.
- 3.12 Because of competition issues the vast majority of these operate as through-tickets (where the 2<sup>nd</sup> operator simply accepts the tickets of the first operator without financial compensation) or add-ons (where the 2<sup>nd</sup> operator receives a set additional amount that is added to an existing ticket by the 1<sup>st</sup> operator. There are no multi-operator travel cards where revenue is shared by passenger journeys or passenger miles.
- 3.13 In most areas there are no day, weekly or longer season ticket that is valid on all bus and rail operators, though the [Wales Flexipass still exists](#). For most trips involving more than one operator (whether bus-bus or bus-rail) it is impossible to purchase a

single through ticket. Where they exist they are usually more expensive than the fare for an equivalent journey of the same distance with a single operator. In summary, existing through-ticketing / integrated ticketing arrangements are limited, confusing and expensive.

- 3.14 Through the Welsh National Transport Plan the Welsh Government has made a commitment to introduce a Welsh Transport Entitlement Card for bus and rail services ('Go Cymru'). According to the NTP this "would include integrated ticketing, to allow 'seamless' transfer between services and operators, by 2014". It is currently being developed as an e-purse, which will facilitate cashless, rather than offer an integrated ticket; a pilot valid centred on Newport and valid on Newport Bus and Cardiff Bus is currently under way.
- 3.15 There are though at the moment a number challenges. Firstly, an actual fares and ticketing system would need to be developed, identifying available tickets, ticketing structure, fare zones / stages, fares levels, central processing, revenue distribution / reimbursement mechanism, sales / purchase mechanisms, management costs, etc. Any such scheme would need to be planned carefully so as to not fall foul of competition legislation and to take account of conditions that apply to public transport ticketing schemes. Consultation with operators and the competition commission would be essential. These tasks have some resource implications, if these issues are to be taken forward.
- 3.16 A further issue is to ensure universal acceptance at a fare similar to current single operator fares. Concerning bus services, there may be an opportunity to make membership of such a scheme a condition of payments under the Regional Transport Services Grant, the successor to Local Transport Services (LTSG) and the Bus Services Operating Grant (BSOG - the old fuel duty rebate). These are likely to be rerouted via the Regional Transport Consortia from April 2013.
- 3.17 However, whilst this provides an opportunity to instigate change, it is unfortunate that grant levels are at the same time being reduced by 25%, which is expected to lead to substantial upheaval in terms of fares increases, deregistration by bus operators and fewer council-supported services. It is therefore difficult to see how a new integrated ticketing system can be introduced as an additional grant condition for some time until financial conditions improve and a more proactive funding regime is in place that can be used to encourage and pump prime such initiatives.
- 3.18 Concerning rail services, it would be absolutely essential that membership of the ticketing scheme is a condition of the next Wales rail franchise, promoting greater bus integration. This could be further enhanced were the free fare bus pass to be extended to the new rail franchise in the off peak.
- 3.19 However, whilst the concessionary fare scheme has increased demand and expectations for longer journey opportunities, requiring integration between services, it is going to be increasingly challenging to prioritise and balance meeting these with providing for more local requirements.

## 4. High-quality interchanges

- 4.1 Public transport interchanges provide a central focus and point of integration for public transport services. Changing between bus and rail services is essential to complete many journeys by public transport but this can be reduced in a number of ways.
- 4.2 An intervention that would have a benefit to the whole mid Wales region in terms on integration between modes, as well as increasing the attractiveness of the service itself, would be the long awaited hourly train service on the Cambrian Main Line. If the frequency was increased there would immediately be a better natural or organic integration (at Welshpool, Newtown, Caersws, Machynlleth, Borth and Aberystwyth), which would not require on-going scheduling of connections with the bus services.
- 4.3 However there is an inherent dislike by passengers of the need to change service and/or mode, particularly where it is perceived to be unnecessary. Passengers travelling from Brecon to Cardiff prefer to stay on the through bus rather than change to rail at Merthyr, though for some shorter journeys the integration of rail and bus services for longer journeys is a necessity. One such market that could be developed is the Cambrian where there are only 7 stations in around 80 miles.
- 4.4 The inconvenience that such changes cause compared to a direct journey - known as the 'interchange penalty', is a factor that works against the shift from private to public transport. Our experience suggests that the vast majority of passengers do not want to change between modes, but are prepared to make bus / bus connections.
- 4.5 The quality and safety of the facilities provided at interchanges is therefore a key influence on the passenger perception of public transport services. It needs to be addressed in order to ensure that the negative impact of the 'interchange penalty' is not further exacerbated. From a passenger point of view interchanges must be designed to reflect the three main activities they may wish to carry out there; that is to move between one service or mode and another, to wait for their next service and to use the time that they spend waiting or transferring to carry out other daily activities (such as buying a coffee or newspaper or using a cash machine).
- 4.6 Key elements of seamless bus/rail interchange include:
  - Good feelings of personal security (through staffing, open layout, good lightning), especially outside core hours,
  - Provision of accurate, well-placed, easy-to-use signage and information,
  - High quality waiting facilities, including protection from the elements, seating, lighting, toilets, ticket purchase and refreshments.
- 4.4 High quality interchanges are also always public transport hubs, and as such will also help to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of an urban area, including:
  - Supporting the continued economic development of the local area and acting as a catalyst for socio-economic and physical regeneration in local communities

- Minimising the need to travel, by concentrating new jobs and homes around accessible locations
  - Improving access to facilities and services and providing links between neighbourhoods and employment, education and other opportunities
  - Removing barriers which prevent disabled people and others with reduced mobility from travelling freely and
  - Creating more attractive buildings and public spaces, improving personal safety and security and enhancing the urban realm and creating of a 'sense of place'
- 4.5 In South East Wales the current picture is decisively mixed. There are 18 bus stations in the region ranging from recently rebuilt / modernised ones (e.g. Bridgend, Blackwood) to bus stations in dire need of investment (Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil). There are also numerous other key interchange points (e.g. rail stations with nearby bus services, major crossroads).
- 4.6 Using grant funding, a number of infrastructure improvements have been made to bus/rail interchanges in recent times across North Wales e.g Flint Station, Shotton, Rhyl, Prestatyn with a view to facilitating modal shift from one type of transport mode to another and improving disabled access.
- 4.7 Since 2010 Sewta has invested about £2.7m in upgrading interchanges (11% of its total available RTP grant). This figure (and the proportion of total funding) is likely to increase substantially over the next couple of years as major works are planned for Cardiff, Newport, Brynmawr, Merthyr, Abergavenny, Severn Tunnel Junction, Chepstow and other locations.
- 4.8 The development of an Interchange Best Practice Audit has set the standards in South East Wales, focussed on strategic opportunities for improved physical interchange. The National Transport Plan (NTP) commits the Welsh Government to “Create a series of strategic modal interchanges (by 2014)”. This commitment was highlighted in the reprioritisation of the NTP in summer 2011 but further improvements and expansion of public transport interchanges facilities will require substantial capital funding.
- 4.9 Unfortunately capital funding for regional/local transport schemes in Wales has fallen by 79% compared to the 2004/9 average, and as a consequence delivery of many of the schemes proposed and developed or under development for some time will not be possible for some time.
- 4.10 Another key issue is integration of interchanges in regeneration schemes. Key interchanges must be identified in all city and town centres as a priority, and good quality interchange facilities should be required core components of all regeneration / redevelopment schemes, and not as an afterthought. There is a danger that transport facilities are overlooked on such schemes, especially if there is no pressure from the funding bodies or policy frameworks to provide these facilities. have to be provided. It would be good if the NTP could flag up city and town centres as a priority for improving interchange, and provide additional transport funding through

the NTP if needed, to ensure good quality interchange facilities are provided at the same time as regeneration.

## **5. Timetable coordination**

- 5.1 At the most basic level, passenger transport integration means that the routes of bus services should be planned in such a way that they call at local stations and meet other bus routes, and that their timetables are set so that passengers can interchange between rail and bus or bus and bus without lengthy waiting times. Public transport integration utterly relies on timetable coordination to function. In practice this means all services should be planned as a network, trunk services first, with more local services taking account of the area served and the timetables and planned accordingly.
- 5.2 This is the method used in networks commonly seen as highly integrated, such as London or most continental European cities. The 1985 Transport Act, the current legislative framework for provincial Britain, on the other hand, does not prioritise timetable co-ordination in any way, replacing it with a more consultative approach.
- 5.3 Despite the development of Quality Bus Contracts and statutory Quality Bus Partnership schemes, competition policy is still seen as a key deterrent to inter-operator co-ordination timetabling (and ticketing), though in rural areas, having largely tendered services makes it easier for the local authority to create a network. This is less necessary in the urban, more populated areas of Wales.
- 5.4 With all too apparent pressures on budgets and the ongoing changes to commercial services the ability to manage and integrate services is going to be increasingly difficult and due to other priorities in these difficult times, achieving integration is seen by operators as only being of a marginal benefit. Local authority attempts to manage the network in these financially constrained times are limited to managing rather than raising expectations. Yet in terms of public perception, this is seen as a worsening situation, especially when journey opportunities for all manner of needs are reduced.
- 5.5 The 2010-2012 Competition Commission market inquiry into Local Bus Services chose to take a strong ideological line based on competition that since 1986 has led to bus wars in Britain's busiest cities at the expense of passengers' clear preference for integrated public transport. ATCO Cymru's evidence to the Competition Commission, with Wales having experienced some of the most damaging bus wars in the late 1980's and early 1990's, was based on the need to delivery co-ordinated competition through voluntary partnership arrangements.
- 5.6 There are a number of well integrated services in South East Wales. But overall there is very little timetable integration, and buses often compete with trains. The reality is of course that because of the lack of integrated ticketing and the availability of through bus services to many of the destinations served by the trains connections with trains is currently not a priority for many (existing or potential) passengers.

- 5.7 ATCO Cymru believes that a major factor in the lack of timetable co-ordination is the fear of competition issues and possible fines from the Competition Commission. It supports the voluntary introduction of more efficient and effective bus networks that enable operators, the regional transport consortia and the local authorities to work together to ensure the proper planning of a well co-ordinated public transport network. It will continue to work in partnership with the operators to this end, and the changes emerging from the Bus Funding Review in Wales, though financially punitive, are anticipated to increase these partnership opportunities.
- 5.8 The increased role for the regional transport consortia in managing the distribution of bus funding and the development of bus network strategies, will provide the context for an overview to be taken of the existing network and the objectives and priorities for the network to be determined. Timetable co-ordination is therefore likely to feature very strongly in the establishment of a mechanism to implement such network strategies, and funding to pump prime their development, rather than the proposed cut would be very helpful.
- 5.9 It should be noted that one of the reasons for the competition between trains and buses in many parts of Wales and the limited amount of inter-operator timetable integration is the lack of demand. Even with better timetable coordination, demand is likely to be constrained as long as there is no ticketing integration, as interchange trips would continue to cost substantially more than single-operator trips. The two aspects of integration need to be integrated.

## **6. Integrated public transport information**

- 6.1 The provision of accurate information is essential to delivering integrated public transport. The best public transport service will not be used without information, signposting its benefits and how to use it. For integrated public transport to work the information must show that services are integrated into one network. The information must also be consistent, reliable and repeated both throughout a journey and throughout the system, in order to remove the hesitancy and the need for constant re-assurance when undertaking multi-leg trips.
- 6.2 The availability of reliable, accurate, accessible and timely information can help to improve the image and attractiveness of public transport, and helps to ensure journeys involving an interchange are easy and convenient. Good information about public transport services enables passengers to know their options and make informed decisions, removing uncertainty and increases passenger confidence.
- 6.3 Public transport information in Wales is inconsistent and often inadequate. Whilst some clear high-quality information is produced by Traveline, operators and local authorities, there remain considerable gaps. In some parts of the region timetable information (both electronic and printed) is patchy and/or of poor quality. Cardiff, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Newport and Wrexham all use real time information for bus services. The real time data enables passengers to make trips with a high degree of

confidence but it is not without its issues in terms of electronic displays not working from time to time or buses failing to be picked up.

- 6.4 Fares information is even more limited and too many bus stops display no information at all. Even where quality information exists, it is not consistent across the region and often difficult to obtain. Integrated public transport information is also particular mixed. The Traveline Cymru Journey Planners incorporates all modes and provide multi-modal trip suggestions. But too many timetables of bus routes do not even make reference to the rail stations served by the very bus routes, too many bus stops at railway stations do not even have the same name as the station, and rail station information on buses is too often non-existent.
- 6.5 ATCO Cymru supports consistent high quality standards for public transport information provision across the region, for all modes and all services. The National Transport Plan also commits the Welsh Government to “Improve the provision of effective transport information, including personal travel planning sites and at-stop information, by 2011”.
- 6.6 Working with Traveline Cymru and bus and train operators should enable the development of an at-stop bus information programme that includes all modes and all types of information necessary for passengers. The identification of existing good practice should form the basis to create a consistent standard for all timetable brochures, displays, maps, etc, based upon best practice examples, and develop a comprehensive and multi-modal regional public transport information strategy which will set out the proposals and the delivery arrangements.
- 6.7 These tasks have some resource implications. Some of the funding of the proposed Regional Transport Services Grant may be used for provision of integrated information, but in the context of a 25% cut in funding for 2013/14, when compared with 2011/12, this is likely to be very limited. Another avenue may be through the development of a bus information scheme under the Transport Act 2000, though funding to include multi-modal information would be restricted.
- 6.8 Concerning rail services, it would be helpful if the next franchisee would be required to provide high-quality multi-model public transport information. The coordination of rail and bus timetables is made difficult, as quite often the local authorities or consortia are simply presented with changes to rail timetables. Some authorities in north and west Wales have Community Rail Officers, whose roles are to liaise with train operating companies, Network Rail, Local Authorities, local businesses, educational establishments, community/parish councils, user groups etc. and promote the use of the local rail lines, as well as develop publicity and promotional campaigns, expand existing markets for the line and develop new ones.

## **7. Support for integrated public transport policies**

- 7.1 The key factors that limit successful integration can be summarised in three categories, legal, administrative and financial.

- 7.2 Despite the changes made in the Transport Act 2000 and the Transport (Wales) Act 2006, bus services in provincial Britain are still effectively governed by the 1985 Transport Act, with its emphasis on competition. As a consequence there are severe limits of what bus operators can do to integrate services and fares. Local authorities are reluctant to take the lead as their primary role is defined as reactionary, leaving the commercial network to its own and procuring socially-necessary services that would otherwise not operate.
- 7.3 ATCO Cymru does not believe that Quality Bus Contracts would solve the issues described above. We would like to work with the Welsh Government to develop a system that enables and facilitates integration through voluntary partnership instead of hinders it, and most importantly, puts passengers first.
- 7.4 Responsibility for supporting of bus services, as it is, currently lies with individual councils. Yet passengers do not care about council boundaries. Responsibility for the regional rail system lies nationally, yet most rail trips start and end within the region. ATCO Cymru has provided a forum for co-operation and mutual aid between local authority and for discussions with Welsh Government, users representatives and operators.
- 7.5 Yet more needs to be done to ensure that passengers are faced with a system that appears and work seamlessly for them. ATCO Cymru believes this requires further collaboration and more integrated working, and its members are currently discussing how plans to set regional standards in public transport service delivery are best organised.
- 7.6 The current arrangements and funding levels for funding public transport in Wales are not very conducive to delivering proper public transport integration. The current proposals to regionalise support for bus services, together with the requirement to develop regional bus network strategies, are a step in the right direction. However the simultaneous reduction of funding by 25% is a major concern that will severely undermine the associated good work that is emerging from the Bus Funding Review, as well as the ability to improve integration.
- 7.7 In terms of capital investment, funding is required to deliver the full package of public transport integration that will deliver economic growth and support regeneration and accessibility for employment, facilities and services. Integrated ticketing as well is likely to require some funding to be developed, to be set up as well as start-up financing for the first couple of years while the system beds down.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 In evidence-taking sessions, the committee will hear many comments on the bus and rail services in Wales, and the integration of public transport services. There will be examples on good practice, of which there are many, and there will be examples of bad practice. However, the best way to judge what is happening is to stand in the street. If you stand in Dumfries Place in Cardiff or at Abergavenny railway station, and observe the bus and rail services, then do the same thing in Swansea, Wrexham,

Liverpool or Birmingham, you will see a standard of integration and service delivery that is not consistent in quality. On the other hand, if you go to London or virtually any city in Spain, Italy, Belgium, France or Germany you will see a standard of service that is palpably better than that in Wales and the rest of the UK. That is a strong way to judge what is happening, and where we should look to learn about well-integrated public transport network.

- 8.2 Despite the good examples and recent progress, integration within the public transport system in Wales is still manifestly worse than in London or equivalent conurbations in continental Europe. ATCO Cymru does not believe integrated public transport will deliver a well-working high-quality system on its own. But it is a necessary and essential ingredient, without which a modern, accessible and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity for all and protects the environment cannot be delivered.
- 8.3 Because proper full integration of public transport is essential to a well-working high-quality system, unless a step-change is achieved in public transport integration, the Welsh Government will fail to deliver its vision as set out in the Wales Spatial Plan and transport will do less than it should in providing accessibility for all and supporting the Welsh Government's goal of economic growth and jobs.

For ATCO Cymru:

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