

# Cross-Party Group Minutes

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## Meeting Minutes:

<b>Cross Party Group Title:</b>	Public Transport
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2024
<b>Location:</b>	Microsoft Teams

## In attendance:

<b>Name:</b>
Aaron Hill, CPT Cymru
Adam Marshall, Arriva
Alexander Still, MSSS
Anna Banks, MSSS
Barclay Davies, Bus Users Cymru
Bob Saxby
Chris Owens, Alpine Travel
Cllr William Denston Powell, Transport Focus
Colin Thomas, Newport Transport
Craig Hampton Stone, Cardiff Bus
David Beer, Transport Focus Wales
Deb Harding, CCRA
Gareth Stevens, Cardiff Bus
Hannah McCarthy, MSSS

- Helen Boggis, MSSS
- Ioan Bellin, MSSS
- Jenny Rathbone MS
- Jonathan Coles, Adventure Travel
- Kaarina Ruta, WLGA
- Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport
- Kirsty Rees
- Lee Robinson, TfW
- Lewis Brencher, TfW
- Mason Steed, Energy Saving Trust
- Morgan Stevens, Newport Transport
- Natasha Asghar
- Olivia Jones
- Richard Cope, ATCO
- Rob Pymm, First Bus
- Sarah Leyland, Powys County Council
- Scott Pearson, Newport Transport

**Apologies:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Title:</b>
Peredur Owen Griffiths MS	
Delyth Jewell MS	

Adam Keen Martin Gibbon Brendan Kelly	Managing Director, Adventure Travel Managing Director, Stagecoach South Wales RMT

### Summary of Meeting:

Chair Carolyn Thomas MS opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. The CPG was joined by newly appointed Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport, Ken Skates MS.

Ken Skates MS provided an update from his first 5 weeks in the role:

- 3 main priorities – deal with difficult issues, bring some unity where there has been discord. Deliver on FM ask on devolution to North Wales, third concern is service delivery – bus bill in this term.
- Bus bill to be brought forward in the autumn, to pass this term. Readiness for franchise summer 2027.
- Primarily here to listen to concerns, ideas, and suggestions. In the process of arranging meetings with Westminster colleagues, individual MS, opposition spokespeople. Will be meeting with many bodies represented here today, TFW, active travel and passenger groups.

The Chair opened the floor to questions.

- Jenny Rathbone MS - Need to prioritise socially important bus routes. Concerned about timeline of bus legislation. How will you get more bus priority routes installed asap? How to improve cost effectiveness of road maintenance?
- Aaron Hill - Timescales and slippage of bus bill. Lack of detail and timeline of great concern regarding stability and certainty. Driving modal shift requires huge culture change, how can members of this group help change the narrative around bus and see it as a positive?

The Cabinet Secretary responded

- Focus of empowering rather than punitive. Investing in infrastructure and services to ensure people have a desirable alternative to the car, not simply a second-rate option. Will require heavy investment. Want to get to a point where utilising public transport is more desirable than car.

- Electric and hydrogen buses. Glider system made huge difference in Glasgow. Transformation of public transport will be key theme going forward.
- September or January Bus bill introduction doesn't make difference to timeline due to senedd election. Summer 2027 for franchising introduction key time. Would have liked it to already be considered.
- Timetable change from June onwards for Valleys lines, metro infrastructure. TfW announcement soon on lines identified.
- Learner travel provision – largely down to resource available. LAs really stretched currently. Carries with it a major cost.

Further questions were taken.

- Carolyn Thomas MS - raised concerns regarding inflationary pressures and huge increases in public transport costs. Suggested targeted pilots for fare capping or free transport for young people.
- David Beer – Bridge in funding only for next 12 months but what about until 2027. How will network be supported until then? What is the mechanism going to be for taking in passenger view and taking into consideration local knowledge of what people need?
- Lee Robinson - TFW in process of drafting methodology for working with stakeholders to bring in franchising, including LAs. Co-creating plan for future.
- Scott Pearson – SMEs, protection through franchise system. Importance of SMEs, any guarantees or assurances? Regional importance – supportive of CJsCs?
- Carolyn Thomas MS – importance of passenger confidence regarding timetables, and reliability. Regional pilot, working with stakeholders, older people's commissioner, local authorities. Assistance for those with disabilities.

The Cabinet Secretary responded:

- Bus plans very important in informing stability in the sector. Regional transport plans being devised on regional basis to ensure we have best possible network to 2027. As we move towards franchising, role of county Cllrs will be crucial to inform decision makers.
- Acutely aware of need to protect SMEs. Provide employment as well as transport in rural communities. Believer in regional working, mechanisms now in place.
- Importance of role of commissioners. At every stage of planning and delivering policy. Confidence in services is number one issue in driving patronage. Punctuality making massive difference for TfW. Rail patronage

in Wales recovered well in Wales compared to most of UK. Connections between rail and bus important. Value of warm friendly bus drivers.

Further points were raised by the floor.

- Craig – Cardiff bus – Concerns about language ‘for too long operators putting profit before people’. Financial uncertainty between grant ending and franchising – challenging to make strategic investment decisions.
- Jenny Rathbone MS – integrating learner transport with public transport. In urban areas ensuring bus routes serving secondary schools. In rural areas like to see view on allow member of public travelling on school services. Hub and spoke attitude to rural areas, electric bike to bus?
- Chris Owens, Alpine Travel – If you provide quality reliable service, people will use it. Has been so much turmoil, what happens after 12 months funding package. Manchester recommissioned buses. Need communication with industry, road map for where we should be investing. Currently investing in tourism, not public transport.
- Natasha Ashgar MS – apprenticeships to support bus industry.

The Chair introduced the next agenda point, priorities for the CPG going forward:

- Aaron Hill – Huge focus on buses so far in the CPG. Opportunity to expand that. Culture shift in how public transport perceived.
- David Beer – London travel watch work on safety and personal security. Importance of value for money. One ticket concept part of bus review. People need affordability now. Attractiveness of public transport in terms of household bills. Ability for operators to put offers out knowing they are being supported in turn.
- Craig – Customers wanting reliability. Bus priority plans, Cardiff council released plans in March. Lee Waters MS transferred responsibility to LAs. People want increase in reliability, we can do that when priority plans enacted.
- Sarah Leyland – integration, in rural communities. If we are to have integrated, we need to look at issue of concessionary pass on section 22 vs 19. Powys CC. Section 19 – dial a ride service, membership based, can’t accept concessions. Section 22 can accept concessions.
- Cllr William Denston Powell – Really encouraging meeting, attendance and breadth of topics. Security of passengers, Delyth developing work on this topic. British Transport Police, have a Welsh based representative on board until recently.

The Chair thanked attendees and closed the meeting.

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