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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-475/513/515  
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/03468/14

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Chair Petitions Committee

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November 2014

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Petitions Committee Inquiry into Bus and Community Transport Services.

A wide range of detailed issues are outlined in your letter and so I thought it might be helpful, in the first instance, to provide relevant extracts from recent information we have provided to the Enterprise and Business Committee which relates to bus and community transport services.

Once the Petitions Committee has had a chance to review this information, I would be happy to consider any more specific or detailed information requests you may have in order to assist with your inquiry.

Enterprise and Business Committee – 16 October 2014

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## TRANSPORT

Transport has a critical role to play in improving Wales' economic competitiveness and providing enhanced access to jobs and services. The current transport investment programme ensures that it is focused on improving Wales' economic competitiveness. It is without question that an affordable, effective and efficient transport system is important in tackling poverty and is integral to delivering interventions and policies for growth and jobs.

Therefore we continue to provide substantial investment in major transport infrastructure improvements, such as road improvements on the M4 Corridor around Newport, A465 Brynmawr to Tredegar A487 Caernarfon – Bontnewydd and Cardiff Eastern Bay Link. In recognising the role that rail plays in promoting economic growth and enabling greater access to jobs and services, we have chosen to invest to bring forward improvements in network capacity and the accessibility and quality of stations.

We also continue to invest very substantial resources in transport services including the rail franchise, the concessionary fares scheme and grants to support bus service provision.

A key focus of the work of the Department is the development of a new National Transport Plan, which will be published for consultation before the end of the 2014.

It will provide the context and evidence to inform decisions on all transport investment and will present information such as the level of accessibility different communities have to employment sites and key public services. Using that information, it will identify the type of interventions needed to improve accessibility.

It will also set out our priorities for future investment by others. For example, the priority locations for new railway stations which would need to draw down UK Government funding to progress.

### **Investment in rail, bus and community transport**

On rail, our programme of investment continues across Wales. In 2014-15 we are delivering the following:

- National Station Improvement Programme schemes at Aberystwyth, Rhyl, Pontypridd and Ystrad Mynach.
- National Station Improvement Programme Plus scheme access humps at numerous stations across Wales.
- Access for All improvement projects at Chirk and Ystrad Mynach.
- Cardiff Area Signal Renewal scheme projects at Pontypridd, Barry and Tir Phil.
- Completion of the North-south journey times/capacity improvement project.
- The completion of a new station at Pye Corner on the Ebbw Vale Line.

In 2015-16 we will deliver the following:

- Mid Tier Access improvement programme schemes at Radyr, Llandaf, Chirk, Machynlleth and Ystrad Mynach.
- National Station Improvement Programme scheme at Port Talbot.
- Work will also commence on further access upgrades for Barry, Cathays, Flint, Llanelli, Taffs Well, Treforest, and Treherbert.

An update on the South Wales Metro was published in August 2014 and can be found on the Welsh Government's website:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/det/report/140826-cardiff-metro-update-report-august-2014-en.pdf>

In 2014-15 under the Metro Phase 1 package of schemes we will deliver the following:

- Completion of Newport Bus Station.
- Extension of the Ebbw Vale Line and construction of a new station at Ebbw Vale Town.
- Completion of a package of several active travel routes.

In 2015-16 we will deliver the following:

- Improvements to the Ebbw Vale Line to enable frequency enhancements.
- A package of bus priority schemes across South East Wales.
- Station improvements at a number of stations between Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil.

The introduction of improved TrawsCymru longer distance bus services in north Wales on the T3 Barmouth to Wrexham and the T2 Bangor to Aberystwyth routes commence in November. These improvements will include:-

- More frequent services throughout the day (the frequency of the T3 is to be increased by 20%).
- The introduction of cycle carriage facilities on the T3 service are enabling people to access popular sections of the Sustrans National Cycle Network in north Wales at Dolgellau - Mawddach Trail and the Llangollen Canal.
- More affordable tickets will be introduced on both routes aimed at encouraging young people to use the services such as the Bwmerrang Ticket which will offer discounted weekend travel.

Work is underway to better coordinate bus and rail services in the Conwy Valley through the introduction of joint ticketing, improved bus services for rural communities allowing them to more easily access rail stations and key centres in the Valley. This will be complemented by the provision of improved information for passengers.

With regard to the North Wales Coastal Quality Bus Partnership Scheme, we are working with local authorities and bus operators to introduce a package of improved bus services linking key centres along the north Wales coast stretching from Holywell to Llandudno. The objectives of the Scheme are to improve the frequency and hours of operation of services, provide better links to key health care facilities and provide better integration with the rail network.

Community Transport Improvements in Meirionnydd includes funding provided for Gwynedd Council to improve the availability of accessible community transport services in the Dolgellau area.

## **TRANSPORT FUNDING OF SPENDING PROGRAMME AREAS**

Compared to 2014/15, there is a £35.271m increase in the total Transport budget for 2015/16, comprising a revenue decrease of £6.529m and a capital increase of £41.8m.

|              | 2014/15<br>Supplementary<br>Budget<br>£'000 | 2015/16<br>Change<br>£'000 | 2015/16<br>Proposed<br>Budget<br>£'000 |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Revenue      | 306,970                                     | (6,529)                    | 300,441                                |
| Non Cash     | 108,691                                     | -                          | 108,691                                |
| Capital      | 296,349                                     | 41,800                     | 338,149                                |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>712,010</b>                              | <b>35,271</b>              | <b>747,281</b>                         |

### **Sustainable Travel**

| Action                | Expenditure<br>Category | 2014/15<br>Supplementary<br>Budget<br>£'000 | Change<br>£'000 | 2015/16<br>Proposed<br>Budget<br>£'000 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------|
| Sustainable<br>Travel | Revenue                 | 77,304                                      | (25,095)        | 52,209                                 |
|                       | Capital                 | 52,566                                      | 19,881          | 72,447                                 |
|                       | <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>129,870</b>                              | <b>(5,214)</b>  | <b>124,656</b>                         |

This budget supports investment in integrated transport, active travel, concessionary fares, smartcards and bus, rail and local roads.

**Concessionary Fares:** Following a detailed negotiation, a new three-year concessionary fares agreement was reached with the bus industry. The budget shows funding for the concessionary fares scheme of £60.5m in 2015/16. This amount is supplemented by the local authorities and an administration fee.

A new Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG) (replaced Regional Transport Services Grant (RTSG)) was introduced 1 April 2014. The BSSG maintained our previous level of funding granted under RTSG of £25m and the commitment for a minimum set percentage to be allocated to community transport. This grant is provided to local authorities to help them subsidise socially-necessary bus and community transport services. Each authority determines which services to support, based on its assessment of local circumstances and priorities using this grant and their own resources.

Overall there is a revenue budget reduction of £25.095m. The funding requirements of the bus operators in delivering the concessionary fares scheme in 2015/16 requires a reclassification of a proportion of revenue to capital to reflect the associated capital expenditure they incur, for example the acquisition of additional vehicles. Consequently there is a reduction in revenue of £29m. This is offset by a net reallocation of funds of £4m for the BSSG to support other bus services.

The increase in the capital budget of £19.881m is due to the increased capital requirements for concessionary fares of £29m offset by a net reduction of £10m between financial years for additional capital allocations from central reserves and for re-prioritisation of capital schemes in line with delivery.

## PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT SIX MONTHLY UPDATE AS AT SEPTEMBER 2014

|                            | Commitment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | September Update                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1/023                      | Prioritise the objectives of the National Transport Plan to ensure that the existing transport funding is used effectively, the level of resources enhanced and that future investment decisions are made against these overarching strategic priorities.            | No update to published version                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1/024                      | Consider using the provisions of the Transport Wales Act 2006 to establish one or more Joint Transport Authorities.                                                                                                                                                  | Professor Kevin Morgan's report was published on the Welsh Government website<br><a href="http://wales.gov.uk/docs/det/publications/140522-governing-metro.pdf">http://wales.gov.uk/docs/det/publications/140522-governing-metro.pdf</a>                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1/030                      | Work with partners to enhance the quality, reliability and safety of local bus service provision.                                                                                                                                                                    | No update to published version                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1/031                      | Continue to improve services such as the Trawscambria network and the popular on-demand Bwcabus scheme.                                                                                                                                                              | A new TrawsCymru T1 service, funded by WG, was introduced linking Aberystwyth – Lampeter – Carmarthen in August 2014 designed to connect with Bwcabus at key hubs and through fares are offered. Preparations are being made to introduce further TrawsCymru services later in 2014/15 on key routes linking Aberystwyth to Bangor, Wrexham to Barmouth and Aberystwyth – Cardigan – Haverfordwest. |
| 1/032                      | Retain free bus travel for pensioners and disabled people and their carers.                                                                                                                                                                                          | A new three year reimbursement arrangements has been announced, following negotiations with the bus industry, covering 2014-17 for a reimbursement total of £189m.<br>The funding available to local authorities to enable them to reimburse bus operators in 2014-15 will be £67.75m.                                                                                                              |
| <b>EST Contributes to:</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 5/040                      | Extended eligibility for the concessionary travel scheme to seriously injured war veterans & armed forces personnel living in Wales.                                                                                                                                 | No further update to published version                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 9/026                      | Prioritise the National Transport Plan by improving access in deprived communities and retain free bus travel for pensioners, disabled people and their carers, and extend eligibility to seriously injured war veterans and armed forces personnel living in Wales. | No further update to published version                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 9/027                      | Prioritisation of the National Transport Plan to improve access to key sites and settlements, particularly in rural areas, with an emphasis on improving the quality and provision of healthy and more sustainable travel choices.                                   | Analysing accessibility to key services and employment sites is a key focus of the evidence based being developed for the new National Transport Plan. The results will be published as part of the consultation on the new draft Plan.                                                                                                                                                             |
| 10/005                     | Continue to encourage and support the development of community transport schemes that meet the needs of those living in rural areas.                                                                                                                                 | No update to published version                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 10/006                     | Examine the best options for providing local bus services to ensure that rural communities have services which are reliable and which                                                                                                                                | Analysing accessibility to key services and employment sites is a key focus of the evidence based being developed for the new National Transport                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|  | <b>Commitment</b>                                               | <b>September Update</b>                                                                |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | provide access to local services and a means to travel to work. | Plan. The results will be published as part of the consultation on the new draft Plan. |