

**ATCO Cymru response to the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise & Business Committee discussion on the practical issues involved in developing an integrated transport network for a City region.**



Thank you very much for the invitation to your discussion of the practical issues involved in developing an integrated transport network for the Cardiff & Valleys City-Region.

ATCO, the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers, is the professional body for local authority officers whose work involves responsibilities for passenger transport. In their authorities ATCO members are responsible for the provision and promotion of bus services and supporting associated infrastructure, rail issues, securing or providing education and / or social services transport services and developing and implementing policies under which passenger transport services are secured or promoted.

ATCO Cymru works with the Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Government on bus and school transport issues. ATCO members were at the core of developing the regional transport consortia's public transport policies and plans, including the Sewta work that found its way into the Metro proposals and the South East Wales Integrated Transport Task Group report.

**Regional organisation**

- Overall ATCO supports the idea of an integrated public transport network for south-east Wales
- We believe that a separate regional body focussing on public transport is essential for programme delivery and continued management of a fully integrated public transport system.
- The most important success factors are organisational stability, multi-year capital funding, an independent revenue funding stream and consistent standards of service delivery, and the ability to plan and implement strategies across Council boundaries, whilst still taking account of local circumstances.

**Governance and leadership**

- There are a number of delivery structures that could form a blue-print for south-east Wales, e.g. a Passenger Transport Authority / Executive, TfL; a German-style Verkehrsverbund.
- Welsh Government must lead on establishing a framework to ensure that there is organisational stability, that cross boundary / cross cutting themes are addressed and stable funding is in place.

- As noted above regional-level decision-making could be led by local government acting collectively, national government control or a joint-control approach. Because of the need to satisfy national government in terms of use of funding and to deliver many projects and manage services jointly with local government, a mixed approach is preferable.

### **National & Local Transport Planning**

- Strategic city-region transport planning needs to be undertaken at city-region level
- In addition to setting frameworks, national transport planning would lead on national issues affecting more than the city-region area, e.g. the rail franchise. It could also lead on issues that can be delivered nationally and where national consistency is advantageous, e.g. bus registrations, some passenger information services (particularly real time), smartcards.
- There would need to be substantial coordination between the national and regional (and local) transport planning, both on nationally-led issues that are essential to the city-region (e.g. rail franchise) and on regional(/local) issues of national significance (e.g. Cardiff Central).
- Local authorities transport planning would support the regional level, e.g. in project development and delivery, and lead on local issues.

### **Implications of proposals for local government reorganisation**

- ATCO does not envisage any benefits of this. As stated strategic public transport planning needs to be undertaken at city-region level and delivered in cooperation with local authorities.
- ATCO does not believe there are substantial inefficiencies in local government transport units, and does not believe local government reorganisation necessarily leads to best practice being adopted.
- ATCO does however recognise that transport issues cross local boundaries and a regional, strategic approach is necessary.

### **Priorities for Not for Dividend Company / Strategic Advisory Board**

- We do not know of any city-region with an integrated public transport network that does not have a separate regional body focussing on strategic transport planning and continued system management.
- The remit of such a body should include delivery of Metro, bus quality, concessionary fares management, information provision, integrated ticketing, possibly some highways (to ensure bus priority).
- It may also, in coordination with regional transport partnerships for north/mid/southwest Wales, undertake day-to-day management of some national services, though Traveline Cymru is an alternative option.

- The Metro plan will need to be a land-use and regeneration tool as well. A separate city-region spatial planning body may therefore also be of benefit, leading on strategic regional spatial planning and economic development of key sites. Coordination would be essential to unlock the regeneration potential that the Metro brings to places that are not currently thought of as having real potential to be developed into transformational sustainable communities.

### **Skills required;**

- In a technical sense key functions would be strategic transport planning, scheme development, scheme delivery, network planning and operation of some network functions (e.g. ticketing, information).

Such a body would need a substantial establishment of staff (perhaps at least 50) working continuously on the Metro (i.e. not secondees or consultants) and with its own set of directors.

### **Metro issues**

- While Sewta was not fit-for-purpose to be a delivery body as set out above, it would have been better to build upon the consortia instead of rejecting them. This seems to have contributed to a loss of 1-2 years in the development of such a delivery body.
- The most urgent issues which do not appear to be addressed to date include securing stable and long-term funding for the regional delivery-body and to set up a core team of permanent transport planning, implementational and operational officers to take forward the Metro plans into deliverable schemes, implement these and lead day-to-day management of the proposed integrated public transport network.
- In terms of governance arrangements, as stated above, there are options. To prevent further delay the option that is best suited out of the ones that can be implemented now (whether that is a Joint Board or a Joint Committee or a Joint Transport Authority) should be progressed quickly.
- One of the biggest constraints on reliable bus operation is the impact of delays on the highway network, caused by congestion, roadworks (including poor co-ordination of schemes) and the lack of bus priorities and local parking control. To deliver a stronger and more reliable bus network, with reduced journey times, consideration of how responsibility for traffic management on key routes and the co-ordination of roadworks / road closures could form part of the new body's responsibility must be a high priority. A more efficient operating environment will reduce operating costs and free resources to improve the network for passengers.

**For ATCO Cymru:**

**Richard Cope (Chair)  
Huw Morgan  
Charlie Nelson  
Christian Schmidt**

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