

POLICY REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT
National Assembly for Wales
Environment Planning Committee

RESPONSE FROM TRANSPORT 2000

October 2001

About Transport 2000

Transport 2000 welcomes the National Assembly for Wales' Policy Review of Public Transport and the opportunity to submit a response.

Transport 2000 is the leading lobby group promoting sustainable transport policies in the UK, working for less car and lorry traffic and greater use of walking, cycling and public transport. The organisation brings together a wide range of environmental and voluntary groups, trade unions and transport operators and also has contributions from local authorities and Passenger Transport Authorities.

Introduction

There is a need for closer ties between transport and the agendas for recreation, health, social services, education, employment, land use and financial policy, and Transport 2000 is pleased to take this opportunity to contribute to the debate. Transport will not become better integrated unless the implications of decisions in other areas are taken into consideration.

Bus

Although bus travel is the most popular form of public transport in Wales, it is probably the most poorly perceived. Investment is essential in upgrading the vehicles, reducing the average age, and providing infrastructure to enable buses to complete journeys in a timescale that compares favourably with private car.

Average bus users would certainly prefer to travel by car, mainly because they perceive themselves to be safer and more comfortable than on public transport, and to have more freedom. These issues must be addressed.

Bus strategies need to take account of the objectives of Local Transport Plans with greater investment in bus lanes, High Occupancy Vehicle lanes (HOV), 'no car' lanes, and better access to information. Improved provision of information would raise perception of availability of public transport

Bus Quality Partnerships should be developed in order to create a climate in which all parties are working to the same objectives.

Rail

The current changes taking place within Railtrack offer the best opportunity to date to take control of the railways in Wales, with the funding coming from the SRA. This would also ensure continued support for projects such as the reopening of the Ebbw Vale and the Vale of Glamorgan lines.

Wales is ideal for the development of rail/bus links and ways should be found to reconcile rail links with commercial bus services.

Consideration should be given to the vertical integration of tracks and signalling with TOC's, and the Assembly should assume control of rail, both financially and in the improvement of performance and standards, and the regulation of fares. Too many fare types are unregulated and give the rail operating companies the flexibility to increase key fares. A national rail/public transport card should be considered with complete inter-availability of tickets bus/rail on regional basis, with simplified national rail fares and more affordable walk-up rail travel, and investment in rural lines, which is essential to tackling social exclusion and the 30% of the households in Wales with no access to a car. More use should be made of smart cards to link with public transport, as well as leisure facilities.

The overarching body should constantly monitor Key Performance Indicators, both for rail and road based public transport.

Community Transport

Tourist organisations should be encouraged to identify obstacles to making tourist destinations car free. Please refer to Transport 2000 publication 'Tourism without Traffic' (2001) enclosed.

Community Transport – Dial a Ride, Demand responsive services, etc. There are real benefits to be gained from fully integrating door-to-door services into the public transport framework, including progress towards seamless journeys and fully accessible systems. Transport 2000 fully supports making dial-a-ride and demand-responsive services part of mainstream transport provision. Please refer to Transport 2000 publication 'Door to Door Public Transport – A literature review' (2001) enclosed.

Enabling joined-up journeys – car/rail/bus/cycle/walk – would assist in the inclusion of the 30% of households with no access to a car, or would offer a choice for those who do have access to a car. The question of whether main roads cut across potential foot/cycle paths should always be considered.

Role of the National Assembly

The National Assembly is the catalyst for making integrated transport happen in Wales. An all-Wales body is the only way to avoid accusations that "all the investment and effort goes into Cardiff, or South and South East Wales".

Regulatory framework

Research should be undertaken into the potential effectiveness of a PTA/PTE model. The research should address the possible combination of the existing partnerships such as Mid Wales, SWIFT, SWITCH, TAITH and TIGER with local authorities, user groups and Rail Passengers' Committee, all of which have in depth experience and knowledge of their own local areas. The National Assembly for Wales should act as the PTA with responsibilities devolved to regional PTE's. It is important to establish core areas so that modes of transport do not compete against each other.

The British Transport Police for the whole of Wales should be brought under the umbrella of the PTA.

The re-establishment of the Wales Traffic Area and a Traffic Commissioner is essential in order to both maintain and monitor standards.

Role of local authorities

Land use cannot be considered separately from transport planning. Planning policy should be used to provide public transport alongside commercial and residential development, and Railtrack should not be allowed to sell off any railway land until full studies are made of potential public or freight services from that location.

The continuation of speed management is essential to make roads safer for walkers and cyclists. Travel Plans should be developed for all major sites – funding to be available for travel plan co-coordinators

Local authorities should all sign up to European Car Free Day, and use their powers to develop Park & Ride sites, and Light rail options, further explore potential pedestrianised areas in towns and tourist destinations, and encourage more education on climate change and global warming in schools

Summary of recommendations

Recommendations 1 to 5: Transport 2000 broadly supports the recommendations.

We would support the development of a quality kite mark. The awarding of the kite mark should be judged by the overarching body and apply the same standards across the board to ensure consistency of delivery of services.

We have always been critical of under investment in public transport, and this is the opportunity Wales has been waiting for to redress the balance.

Transport 2000 supports all the points in recommendation 3, with particular emphasis on concessionary fares schemes, provision of information, interchanges, community transport and long distance coach provision.

We support the concept of local authorities preparing regional public transport strategies, for this is the only method by which true integrated transport will develop on a local level, and the regional transport strategies should guide decisions on funding.

Recommendations 6 – 9 would be addressed by an all-Wales PTA.

Recommendation 10 is good marketing practice, designed to raise perceptions of public transport in general and brand awareness in particular. A sense of ownership works well.

We have addressed **Recommendation 11** in earlier paragraphs relating to Key Performance Indicators and would welcome **Recommendations 12 and 14** as being essential in proper targeting of effort and in the sharing of best practice. **Recommendation 13** – We support wholeheartedly the concept of the involvement of user groups in the evaluation of schemes.

Tests for Alternative Organizational Structures

Our ideas and suggestions in this paper are well placed to meet the tests as follows:

Relevance to area

An all-Wales PTA with regional consortia made up of local authorities and user groups would meet the needs of the traveling public

Accountability

A PTA/PTE model would ensure effectiveness on a local level, with control at Executive level.

Development of an integrated public transport network

The NafW's ability to progress towards complete integration of all modes of travel depends very heavily on the acquisition of rail responsibilities from the SRA.

Quality of political decision making

An all-Wales PTA with the NAFW as the governing body would empower politicians to make decisions, which would in turn attract able politicians at regional and local levels.

Effective rail powers

If responsibility for rail were to be taken over by the NAFW, the Assembly would be in a position to influence the operations.

Effective bus powers

Quality Partnerships and robust infrastructure would provide the incentive to integrating bus travel.

Effective highways powers

A PTA would render the Assembly in a position to link major highways with the local traffic management of county councils.

Influencing land use planning from a public transport perspective

County Councils would link into the PTA/PTE in regard to for land use planning.

Impact on passenger travel

The enhanced provision of information at national level, and the absorption of the existing consortia such as SWIFT into PTE would have an enormous impact. SWIFT has detailed knowledge of its own area and, given the empowerment of a PTA structure, would be able to implement integration at local level.

Impact on Freight

If responsibility for rail matters were taken over by the Assembly, the transfer of freight onto rail would be more easily managed, with the consequent reductions in emissions.

Capital

A PTA/PTE structure has the advantage of greater leverage in securing the proper funding for investment in rail and bus elsewhere in the UK.

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