

BETTER LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

THE BEACON COUNCIL SCHEME ROUND 5 (2003)

THEME GUIDANCE

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Duncan Price, Department for Transport

Local Transport Division, Great Minster House 3/14,
76 Marsham Street, LONDON, SW1P 4DR

Tel: 020 7944 2241

Email: Duncan.Price@dft.gsi.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Meeting local transport needs more effectively by improving bus services and other forms of local transport and securing better access to jobs and services, particularly for those most in need is one of the seven key priorities agreed between Central and Local Government (a). It is a cornerstone of the Government's Transport White Paper (b) and its Ten Year Plan for Transport (c).
2. Roughly three and three quarter billion journeys were made by bus in England last year, with more than a hundred million journeys being made on light rapid transit. Local authorities spend in the order of one and half billion pounds per year on public transport.
3. The Government's key objectives for local public transport include:
 - Increasing patronage (including in order to reduce the adverse impacts of car travel);
 - Increasing accessibility (of vehicles and transport services – and hence to work, facilities and other services);
 - Improving service punctuality and reliability; and
 - Improving interchange and information.
4. In terms of bus patronage, there has been growth in a number of localities and a key aim of this beacon theme is to spread success (in terms of patronage and other indicators) more widely. Examples of transferable good practice are therefore being sought.
5. Key aspects of good practice include partnership, integration with other services & transport aspects and innovation. Evidence related to outcomes and user & community satisfaction is important in considering proposals.
6. The Department of Transport's website (d) identifies a number of centres of excellence in relation to local transport planning. Some of the centres of excellence are examples of the sort of work appropriate for this beacon theme, including in respect of buses, integrated transport, light rail, public transport information, rural areas, park & ride, accessibility and social inclusion.
7. Proposals for beacons will be considered for this theme if they are connected with bus travel (including the interface with non-public passenger transport), light rapid transit/tram, local rail, taxis & private hire vehicles or more than one of these modes of transport.
8. Proposals are invited from English principal councils and metropolitan joint passenger transport authorities. Joint proposals involving more than one such authority will be considered.

POLICY CONTEXT

1. The Government's Transport White Paper 'A New Deal for Transport Better for Everyone' (1998) sets out transport policy, including in respect of local public transport. It sought:
 - More and better buses;
 - Better information before and during travel;
 - Better interchanges and connections;
 - Enhanced networks with simplified fares and better marketing, including more through ticketing and travel cards;
 - More reliable buses through priority measures and reduced congestion;
 - A cash boost for rural transport;
 - Half price fares or lower for elderly people on buses;
 - Improved personal security when travelling;
 - Easy-access public transport – helping disabled and elderly people and making it easier for everyone to use.
2. Policy in respect of buses was developed in one of the 'daughter documents' of the White Paper – 'From Workhorse to Thoroughbred: A Better Role for Bus Travel' (e). It details a number of the White Paper policy initiatives. For example it indicated there would be greater regulatory clarity to enable Local Authorities to support socially necessary service frequency enhancements on commercial routes.
3. The Ten Year Plan for Transport, published in 2000 set out a long term strategy to deliver a quicker, safer, more punctual and environmentally friendly transport system. It outlined increased funding for local transport and envisaged the delivery over the plan period of up to 25 new light rail or tram lines, up to 100 new Park and Ride services and more comfortable & reliable bus services. A new urban bus challenge fund was put in place to offer new bus links to under-served urban areas.
4. The Transport Act of 2000 included powers to enable local authorities to institute statutory quality bus partnerships and contracts with bus operators. These powers supplement the non-statutory bus partnerships now in place in many areas.
5. The Transport Act also put Local Transport Plans on a statutory basis. Local Transport Plans set out local transport authorities' strategies for integrated transport. The first round of Local Transport Plans covers the period April 2001 to March 2006. Plans should include local objectives for transport, an analysis of problems and opportunities, a long term strategy to deliver the objectives, a costed, affordable five year programme and a set of targets & performance indicators to assess progress.
6. The Department of Transport's guidance on Local Transport Plans (f) recommends establishing a bus strategy in each Plan and sets out minimum requirements and characteristics of good strategies. It also includes guidance related to the role of taxis & private hire vehicles, public

transport interchange and establishing a public transport information strategy.

7. The guidance emphasises the importance of an integrated strategy across the transport modes, of public involvement in strategy development and of partnership in implementation.
8. Outside London, local public transport is being developed in the context of the de-regulated bus market. This framework includes clear and distinct roles for local authorities and operators. In metropolitan areas, joint passenger transport authorities (and their passenger transport executives) lead on much of local public transport on the local authority side.
9. The National Public Service Agreement of 2002 includes a target, which is also one of the performance targets for the Government/Local Government Association statement of shared priorities (July 2002). It is to

‘improve accessibility, punctuality and reliability of local public transport (bus and light rail) with an increase in use of more than 12% from 2000 levels by 2010’.
10. The Ten Year Plan for Transport includes a further target to:

‘achieve a one-third increase in the proportion of households in rural areas within about 10 minutes walk of an hourly or better bus service by 2010’.

DEFINITION

1. Local public transport encompasses bus services, light rapid transit (and traditional trams) and taxis & private hire vehicles. Within the bus mode, park and ride services are provided and a number of services are responsive to demand.
2. Passenger Transport Authorities have a major role in the development of local rail services in metropolitan areas. There and elsewhere a number of authorities have developed heavy rail passenger-related proposals in the context of Local Transport Plans. Rail initiatives may be included in the theme, provided the local authority delivers, specifies or influences substantially the initiative and provided the initiative relates to local rather than mainly long distance travel.
3. Local public transport also includes interchange between modes, such as between car & bus (park and ride) and train & cycle, and between services of one mode. These may be included in the theme, provided the interchange involves local public transport.
4. Local public transport is one part of local passenger transport. Local authority involvement in passenger transport extends beyond public transport, for example to school transport and transport for social services.

Initiatives in the non-public aspects of passenger transport may be considered for this beacon theme, provided there is a clear interaction or relationship with local public transport.

5. The Local Authority role in respect of local public transport is diverse, but complementary to the deregulated bus industry. Besides their specific roles related to local public transport (such as supporting concessionary fares and services that are not commercially viable but are socially necessary); local authorities have a wider role in influencing how a locality develops and are also local highway & traffic authorities.
6. Key underlying values, which should underpin local authority work in respect of local public transport, include linkages to the broader transport context, to broader authority objectives and goals (such as in relation to social inclusion or the environment) and partnership with service providers and users.
7. The key transport objectives for local public transport relate to:
 - increasing patronage (and consequential reductions in the adverse impacts of car travel such as congestion, pollution and accidents);
 - increasing accessibility – both of the vehicles and to the services;
 - improving service quality, including punctuality (i.e. reducing late running), reliability (i.e. reducing cancellations) and information; and
 - improving integration – between services and between local public transport & other activities.
8. There are a great many local factors that influence what is excellence and how it can be obtained in relation to local public transport. Trends in car ownership, availability and use (in turn partly related to general living standards) impact on local public transport patronage and how local authorities should encourage patronage.
9. Conurbations, other urban areas and rural areas are different types of local public transport markets. Within these markets the pattern of development, state of the local economy and urban form affect how excellence in local public transport can be developed. Local authorities will need to work closely with local operators and how excellence is pursued will be influenced by the operators.

CURRENT PRACTICE

1. Local bus services carry the vast majority of local public transport journeys (outside London) and are the focus of the majority of the contribution local authorities can make to improving local public transport.
2. Light rapid transit can make an important contribution in parts of larger urban areas and be a step change in the local experience of public transport. However, new systems are not a viable solution for most authority areas, because of the intense use that is needed to justify their high capital cost and extensive planning.

3. There has been a long term decline in bus patronage outside London, but the Government's Ten Year Transport Plan and most Local Transport Plans (produced by local authorities) aim to reverse the decline and increase patronage. In some localities, such as Brighton and York, there has been substantial recent growth in bus patronage.
4. A number of authorities have designated as centres of excellence for transport, in relation to specific local transport themes. Those particularly relevant to local public transport are summarised below – more details and contacts can be found at local-transport.dft.gsi.gov.uk/excellence.
5. **Bus.** Oxfordshire has a long history of developing bus-based solutions to the problems caused by traffic growth inside Oxford. Following major changes in June 1999, car and taxi journeys into the city centre have fallen by over 15% whilst bus use has increased by 17%. Through its Local Transport Plan, Oxfordshire has started to apply the benefits of this experience across the whole of the county, and is in the process of developing a Premium Routes and Interchange network which will provide high quality services, facilities and priority networks linking the county's principal towns.
6. **Integrated Transport.** West Yorkshire's LTP authorities and key partners are committed to delivering a fully integrated transport system, and have considerable experience in developing three key elements that are helping to contribute towards this:
 - *Interchanges:* West Yorkshire has developed a network of modern bus interchanges in the major urban centres of the county. These developments feature wheelchair accessible waiting areas, better signage, improved lighting and closed circuit television, improved bus information. The latest designs have resulted in significant improvements in user satisfaction, and increases in passenger throughputs;
 - *Smartcard:* The development of multi-modal, multi-operator Smartcard ticketing will benefit passengers by improving interchange arrangements, and improving operator efficiency, through quicker boarding; and
 - *Guided bus:* West Yorkshire has considerable experience in developing guided bus schemes. This includes experience in identifying suitable locations, securing partnership co-operation, branding, marketing, consultation and public ownership, design and development, construction, operation, infrastructure, integration and co-ordination. The introduction of a guided bus scheme on the A61 has resulted in the number of new passengers increasing by 30%, and in 30% of existing passengers making more frequent trips.
7. **Light Rail.** The city's new tram system, Nottingham Express Transit (NET) will transform the way people move around the city and encourage sustainable growth and prosperity. When launched the scheme was the largest public transport private finance initiative in the UK, a partnership

between joint promoters Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and concession company Arrow Light Rail Ltd.

8. After services begin, NET Line One is projected to carry eleven million passengers and take two million car journeys off Nottingham's roads each year. The related reduction in congestion and pollution, together with increased access to work, health, education, leisure and tourism sites will enable Nottingham to remain an attractive place to live, work and visit as well as to attract new jobs and investment. Effective communication about the scheme is crucial to its successful development, and ensuring community support. Key to the success of the communications strategy is the establishment of a fully integrated, joint-funded operation working in partnership with the contractor and on behalf of both the promoters and the concession company.
9. **Public Transport.** Improving public transport information and providing integrated ticketing are two effective ways to improve the standard of public transport provision. Getting timetable and connection information is vital for many passengers and can be provided locally through a range of media, including telephone enquiry bureaux and information in printed and electronic form. Providing integrated ticketing is essential to create the seamless public transport journey that can act as an attractive alternative to the car. The South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan Partnership has placed a strong emphasis on these issues.
10. Some examples of recent initiatives include:
 - The Travel Options Planning Service (TOPS), providing advice to firms with employee specific travel diaries and ticketing offers, as part of broader TravelWise activities.
 - A high quality Traveline Service, operating from 0700-2200 daily, linked to the Yorkshire Regional Information Partnership, Yorkshire TravelNET.
 - A website including a full journey planner, with a map based system being developed as part of the regional TravelNET partnership.
 - Travel Information Centres at main interchanges and in town centres.
 - Help Points providing direct telephone connection to travel advisors.
 - Ticketing initiatives, implemented in partnership with the operators to help provide more seamless travel and address social exclusion.
 - The regional YORCARD smartcard project, including a joint LTP major scheme bid for funding with West Yorkshire.
11. **Rural.** Reflecting the rural nature of Cornwall, the County Council has developed a series of measures to provide essential links between rural and dispersed communities and existing transport networks. In partnership with a wide range of players including public transport operators, interest groups, businesses and the local community, the council has developed innovative projects that optimise transport integration.
12. The potential for bus and rail operators to work together with authorities to provide integrated and seamless travel options is demonstrated in the T34

Helston branch line project, the first "bus branch line" in the UK. Work on the project, which fully integrates rail and bus services was completed in September 2000 and the service now operates between Redruth train station and Helston. The T34 bus service incorporates bus route infrastructure improvements at key locations along the route and its features include through-ticketing, low-floor, easy access buses, and the provision of bicycle racks on the back of the buses. Improvements at Redruth station include substantial new waiting and interchange facilities with a new platform construction for buses. A recent passenger survey carried out at Redruth station indicated a high level of satisfaction with the service.

13. Accessibility. The Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan places strong emphasis on public transport accessibility for disabled people and in terms of access to locations. The area already has a very high proportion of fully accessible low-floor buses, delivered through Quality Partnerships with the operators, as part of the extensive network of accessible bus routes. A key objective of the Plan is to ensure that jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services are accessible by all forms of public transport. Tyne and Wear has developed computer systems to allow analysis of their public transport timetables and property databases. This has provided a means to measure accessibility to key locations in Tyne and Wear. Indicators have been developed to help monitor the implications of changes to public transport routes and land use planning proposals.

14. Cycling and Park & Ride. City of York Council has been at the forefront of promoting cycling and using park & ride facilities for over a decade. Between 15 and 20% of York's residents cycle to work, whilst its park & ride service carries one million passengers a year, keeping two thousand cars out of the city every day. York has shown that it is possible to achieve a modal shift from car use to public transport.

15. Rural. Integration, co-ordination and partnership in the provision of transport services are key to addressing the needs of rural communities in Devon. The council's Transport Co-ordination Service ensures a fully integrated approach to public and community transport and has realised imaginative solutions, including flexibus and taxicar services, and the 'Life in the Bus Lane' project which utilises smartcard technology. The co-ordination extends beyond local public transport.

16. Social Inclusion. Ensuring equality of travel opportunities for all is one of Merseytravel's main goals. Many people without access to private transport can be denied access to jobs, training, education and other essential services without the provision of safe, convenient and affordable public transport. To address this, Merseytravel has:

- established a Community Links Team 'to work at a local level with the community on transport issues that affect their lives';
- helped to develop Merseyside Community Transport, and the Pathways Transport Group to develop a programme of action for the 38

most economically deprived areas of the region that have been targeted for special measures;

- established a multi-agency approach, involving bodies such as Employment Services, Merseyside Health Action Zone, Single Regeneration Budget Partnerships and Local Strategic Partnerships to address social inclusion and accessibility issues;
- commissioned a research project to identify travel needs across the 38 Pathways areas and the barriers to using the current network. This work has formed the basis of an Action Plan which can be used for future developments within the Local Transport Plan and Objective One programmes.

17. A key early outcome of this work is the introduction of the new Merseytravel “Job Link” bus services linking Pathways areas to key employment, education, training and other opportunities generated by the Objective One programme.
18. The Department for Transport operates challenge funds in rural and urban areas to support good practice and is introducing a pilot version of the ‘Kickstart’ initiative involving local authorities and bus operators.
19. Beacon projects will tend to be consistent with the characteristics of good Local Transport Plans, as set out in the Department for Transport’s Local Transport Plan guidance, in respect of bus strategies, public transport interchange and public transport information. However, an average (or lower) Departmental assessment of the Local Transport Plan in respect of buses need not prevent proposals for beacons being accepted from the authorities concerned.
20. The characteristics of a good Local Transport Plan bus strategy include evidence of partnership, integration with traffic management policies, clear assessment & targets and closer integration of conventional bus services with health & community transport and the voluntary sector.

OBSTACLES TO EXCELLENT PRACTICE

1. Demonstrating to others how obstacles to improving local public transport can be overcome is an important output of the beacon programme.
2. Three potential types of obstacle are:
 - Public and group opinions;
 - Difficulties with local bus operators;
 - Local authority resources.
3. A number of projects to improve local public transport have been delayed following adverse public reactions to them. Improving public transport reliability, for example, may involve priority measures on existing highways affecting parking and other road traffic.

4. Local public transport improvements need to be implemented in the current deregulated market. In a number of places, there is intense competition, elsewhere most or all services are operated by a single company. The operators' plans for some areas may focus on managing decline, elsewhere they may plan for growth. Operators have varying degrees of enthusiasm in engaging local authorities.
5. Some bus-related projects are resource-intensive for local authorities and hence difficult to deliver where local authorities' staff or consultant capacity is limited. They may also need non-traditional or scarce skills.
6. The local authority structure is an important context for local public transport work. In metropolitan areas, the joint passenger transport authorities are not the local highway authorities. In shire counties, staff resources related to local public transport may be in various teams or departments. In new unitary authorities, teams may have been assembled recently. All of these may be obstacles or they may work to the advantage of developing good practice.
7. Local authorities areas also present a wide range of contexts (as discussed earlier) – for example rural areas, market towns, large urban areas, areas with heavy development pressures, areas in need of economic regeneration, constricted historic towns and new towns.

OUTCOMES

1. Outcomes of proposals should be considered in terms of the impacts on local public transport passengers and the local communities more generally. Outcomes may relate to both transport itself and the impacts of transport.
2. Outcomes in respect of transport may relate to the transport objectives set out above (Definitions, paragraph 7) or they may relate to other transport objectives. Outcomes should be measurable and related to the proposed beacon activity. Outcomes may be qualitative – for example related to user satisfaction – or quantitative – for example numbers of extra public transport journeys.
3. Non-transport outcomes may also be sought. Some of these may be related to local authorities' roles in providing leadership to the wider community, others may be wider goals influenced by transport, such as social inclusion or access to work.
4. The way outcomes are reached is also important in this beacon theme, in which partnership working is likely to be highly important. Proposals should consider how resources and performance will be managed and how collaborative working with other agencies will be developed. Public involvement is another potentially important process.

5. Performance indicators relevant to the particular project should be developed. Some may be indicators contained in an authority's Local Transport Plan. Others may be derived from the National Public Service Agreement or the Ten Year Transport Plan or could be Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). Potentially relevant BVPIs include numbers 102 (local bus service journeys), 103 (user satisfaction with public transport information) and 104 (satisfaction with bus services).
6. However, conformity with indicators used for other purposes is less important, in respect of these beacon proposals, than having indicators, which reflect the difference the proposals would make and the impact the local authority (with its partners) would have.

INDICATIONS OF BEST PRACTICE

1. Submissions for beacons under this theme will be assessed particularly in respect of evidence and material that can be observed or measured. Evidence about outcomes and the satisfaction of users and the community will be valued highly. Practice that is transferable to other authorities and areas will be sought.
2. The assessment will consider a number of aspects including:
 - Vision and strategy;
 - Consultation and social inclusion;
 - Partnership;
 - Innovation;
 - Processes;
 - Outcomes;
 - User and community satisfaction.
3. **Vision and Strategy.** Are these appropriate, ambitious and well-founded for the local authority area? Does the vision reflect local aspirations and priorities? Is the strategy consistent with the Department of Transport Local Transport Plan guidance including for bus strategies (if appropriate) [see Current Practice, paragraph 20].
4. **Consultation and Social Inclusion.** Has the public been involved constructively in the work covered by the proposal? Have the requirements of particular target groups (eg geographical or demographical groups) been considered satisfactorily? Is the work socially inclusive? How have any tensions between different groups been resolved?
5. **Partnership.** Has there been partnership with operators and other service providers? How have any issues cutting across different service areas been considered? Which other key groups or organisations been drawn into the partnership and how?

6. **Innovation.** Does the work involve innovation? How does it differ from what has been done before by the authority and elsewhere? Has the proposal been improved prior or during implementation?
7. **Processes.** Has the work involved innovative processes and ways of working? How well was it planned and implemented? What key actions on the part of the authority enabled excellence to be achieved?
8. **Outcomes.** What difference has the project made to transport and non-transport outcomes?
9. **User and Community Satisfaction.** What evidence is there of the satisfaction of the local public and those using the service?

REFERENCES

- (a) 'Delivery Our Priorities; A National Public Service Agreement for Local Government' (July 2002) [Attached to ODPM new release 049, 29/7/02]
- (b) 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone. The Government's White Paper on the Future of Transport' (DETR, July 1998)
- (c) 'Transport 2010: The Ten Year Plan' (DETR, July 2000)
- (d) local-transport.dft.gsi.gov.uk/excellence
- (e) 'From Workhorse to Thoroughbred: A Better Role for Bus Travel' (DETR, March 1999)
- (f) 'Guidance on Full Local Transport Plans' (DETR, March 2000)