

CONFERENCE REPORT

**Thursday 28th February 2008
LIVERPOOL**

Conference kindly sponsored by Merseytravel

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Peter Robinson welcomed delegates to Liverpool and thanked the hosts, Merseytravel, represented by Neil Scales and David Davenport, for its kind sponsorship, facilities and hospitality.

He went on to explain that this event was the first to be held under the new format of Conferences rather than Forums and consequently in future, minutes would not be taken but a Conference report would be provided instead.

2. Sustainable Transport on Merseyside - Neil Scales, Chief Executive, Merseytravel

Neil began by describing the structure and role of Merseytravel and highlighted the changing roles that would occur in the near future in the wake of the Local Transport Bill. In short, these would be:

- Ø To develop transport plans
- Ø To develop, build and maintain transport infra-structure
- Ø To operate local rail, ferries and road tunnels
- Ø To administer travel ticketing
- Ø To support non-commercial bus services (currently 20% of network)
- Ø Currently does not control highways, but this will change after the Bill

Merseytravel is now 2 years into its 5 year Environment Sustainability Strategy which covers all operations in Merseyside. As part of it's application it is looking at use of Hybrid Buses and use of Bio-fuels as well as targeting reductions in its own environmental impacts. Intervention to combat traffic congestion remains a major challenge and has to be addressed in Merseyside before it gets out of hand. Alongside this it has been recorded that bus patronage has been falling. However there are a number of identified opportunities:

- Ø Work with partners to encourage sustainable town planning
- Ø Redevelopment of Kirkby around the bus station
- Ø Powers to start build of tram network (but these expire in 2010)

Neil then described some of the initiatives being pursued:

Travel Wise - promoting sustainable travel including cycling, walking, public transport, school travel and business travel plans to reduce car use.

Sustainable Design - good multi modal interchanges; secure cycle parking; Liverpool South Parkway includes 240 park and ride spaces, solar cells and rain water harvesters.

In conclusion Neil summarised that the key to sustainability is clean, accessible, reliable and safe public transport. Encouraging bus travel and arresting the current decline in patronage is a major marketing challenge. To assist achievement of target Merseytravel now employs 4 Environmental Officers but always accepts that it needs a balanced approach.

Question and discussion period addressed the following issues:

All PTE's are pursuing similar strategies to address their respective environmental issues.

Bidston - Wrexham electrification is in the Transport Plan and the Welsh Assembly is on board to fund around 50%. Target for 2014.

All 66 Merseytravel stations are staffed and Merseyrail has enjoyed a 34% increase in patronage over the last 10 years.

Use of Battery electrics for rail operations has been considered but conventional systems are currently preferred.

Improvements to services on Liverpool - Manchester corridor are difficult to influence but Merseytravel is trying hard. Larger flows are towards Manchester.

Bus deregulation had caused problems and there remained a need to achieve stability.

Merseytravel is exploiting all avenues of potential resource to address station improvements and accessibility. DDR plan is in place but requires high capital. However there is no quick fix but the current strategy is based on station usage plan for total accessibility.

There is concern over the demise of the Regional Assembly (summer 2008) and transfer of many responsibilities to the unelected economy led Regional Development Agency. However dialogue continues.

Traffic Commissioners need more resource to police bus operations, particularly in over capacity as exemplified in Manchester, and the Transport Bill needs to reflect this.

3. The North West Smartcard, Gordon Moore, Project Manager, NoW Card

Gordon described the scope of the NOW Card operation which currently encompasses the local authority areas of Cumbria, Lancashire, Blackpool and Blackburn. He is also in dialogue with Gtr Manchester, Bolton and Southport for potential future expansion.

The system covers operations of 1800 buses, all of which are expected to be kitted out with readers by April 2008. It was rolled out in Blackpool in Sept. 2006 and phased throughout the operating region with completion by May 2008 and is expected to be fully live by summer 2008.

The cards have large "memories" and are capable of holding a substantial "purse" of finance and addressing the requirements of a number of differing systems. A high degree of quality control of the data is exercised and upgrades are undertaken quickly when required.

An operations bureau is based in Preston from where cards are issued including the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENTCS) cards. 260,000 of these cards have been issued to date with a further 60,000 to be completed by 1st April 2008.

Experiences to date have been extremely positive with passengers and drivers. Failure rate has been low (0.7%), the technology has proved itself and fraud has been reduced.

Question and discussion period addressed the following issues:

Interoperability - First trial began in Feb.2008. Cross Border live running (Cumbria - SW Scotland) expected to be complete during 2008.

Data protection - only available to individual districts and operations staff. No data released from card.

Live National Running - Not yet clear when this will be achieved. Likely to be some years and will be fragmented as various regions are running at different paces and with differing systems.

Charging cards - this can currently be done on the buses in multiples of £5. Other outlets will follow in the future.

4. Concessionary Travel Research, Paul Fawcett and John Moorhouse

John described TravelWatch North West's research project into possible effects of concessionary national local bus travel, post April 2008. An examination has been undertaken by students from Sheffield Hallam University, under guidance from Paul Fawcett. TWNW is taking forward their findings by examining a number of cross boundary corridors where there are parallel bus and rail services. The intention is to compute a congestability index for each corridor and then use that to rank them in order with the highest ranking being most susceptible to migration from rail to bus travel. The index will be the product of a generalised price index reflecting relative fare differences before and after April 2008 and a generalised journey time index reflecting relative waiting, walking and travel times by each mode.

In discussion a number of observations on the likely effects of the scheme were expressed including:

- Ø that Blackpool trams were not included in the scheme
- Ø that Seniors require good connectivity as much as others
- Ø that the size of the transport market will increase substantially

5. Local Transport Bill - Bus Passenger Representation- Peter Robinson

Peter explained that the Local Transport Bill includes provision for a consumer representation body for bus passengers and comments from the TravelWatch movement had been sought during the consultation period. The TravelWatch network had been considering its views and its response at national level. TravelWatch had campaigned for some time for all modes of public transport to have representation and acknowledged that this was a step forward. However integration still remains a priority and the preference is to have one strategic body addressing the needs of all passengers in all modes.

The DfT consultation offers 4 options:

- Ø developing the role of Bus Users UK (BUUK)
- Ø new dedicated bus passenger consumer body
- Ø new multi-modal consumer body
- Ø development of Passenger Focus (PF) into a multi-modal body

Of these TravelWatch strongly favours a combination of the last two options, as the first two are unlikely to be attractive to government due to the expense of creating a total new organisation. However the PF option will require a total restructure and re-focus of PF to encompass the more regional and local needs of the bus passengers. Whilst the

initial PF response has been enthusiastic it omits any demonstration of its understanding of the differences between bus and rail industries and their passengers concerns. PF is currently felt to be too centralised and research/evidence based and the body will need to be more immediately responsive with a more “bottom - up” approach. Consequently the PF option will require an organisational re-launch if favoured.

Major bus operators have reacted to the proposal with caution and may oppose it.

The consultation period ends on 17 March and TravelWatch submission will be submitted prior to the deadline.

6. Open Forum

Due to overrunning discussion from previous topics the Open Forum had to be curtailed. A number of the written points had been covered in the earlier debates and were felt to have been dealt with sufficiently.

A point was raised about the proposal to provide extra rolling stock for trains and where these may be deployed. It was believed that the actual result would likely be a mixture of new build and cascades of current rolling stock. Equally the financing of the project in line with franchise periods was the subject of detailed negotiations between the DfT and train operators. The position would be continually monitored.

7. Next Conference

The next TravelWatch Conference will take place in Blackpool on Saturday 14th June and will feature presentations from Blackpool Airport, Blackpool Transport and an update on Concessionary Travel.

8. Visits

After lunch a number of delegates visited either Liverpool South Parkway or took a trip on the Mersey Ferries.

9. Attendance

See attached.

Attendance List Liverpool 28th February 2008

Name	Representing
Charles Agate	
Chris Anslow	Lancs CC
Paul Antrobus	Halton BC
John Austin	Austin Analytics
Mark Barker	Northern Rail
Colin Barnett	Bus Users UK
RN Barton	Goyt Valley RUA
Lillian Burns	TWNW
Les Burton	Stagecoach NW
Peter Colley	Kendal & District Bus Users
Fred Consterdine	CASPA
Janet Cuff	Ramblers Association
Chris Dale	TWNW
David Davenport	Merseytravel
Martyn Davies	Merseytravel
Paul Fawcett	TWNW
Tony Garrett	Wirral Transport Users Assoc.
Tony Fawthrop	GM Transport Campaign
Peter Garvey	GM Transport Campaign
Roland Graham	Cycling Projects
Cedric Green	North Cheshire RUG
Leonard Green	Confederation for Passenger Transport
Dennis Harrison	Wirral TUA
Philip Harrison	
Bill Harrop	Transport Pool
John Hart	
Peter Johnston	
Geoff Kerr	
Mike Lambden	National Express
Peter Lamkin	Wrexham-Birkenhead RUA
Chris Laycock	SELRAP
Tom Lunt	
Andrew Macfarlane	GM Transport Camp
Ian McDermott	North Trafford RG
Ken McKelvie	Ramblers Association
Julia Mapp	Cross Country Trains
JS Mitchell	Wirral Transport Users Assoc.
Gordon Moore	NoW Card
John Murray	Rochdale Transport Partnership
John Moorhouse	TWNW
Jenny O'Connor	Government Office NW
John Owen	TWNW

Steve Pearce	Air Passengers
Keith Pennyfather	Macclesfield PTLC
Alan Pettener	E Cheshire Line RUG
Graham Price	North Cheshire RUG
Malcolm Richardson	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
Peter Robinson	TWNW
John Ryan	Wirral TUA
Neil Scales	Merseytravel
David Simper	Blackpool Borough Council
Ken Swallow	CILT
Robert Talbot	Lakes Line RUG
Martin Taylor	Arriva NW
Melanie Taylor	Manchester Airport
Angus Tilston	Wirral TUA
Peter Walton	Waltons
Ian Watson	
Kevin Williams	Derbyshire CC
Mike Wrigley	STORM