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Eric Guthrie
TACTRAN / Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership
Bordeaux House
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Your ref:
Our ref:
28 March 2008

Dear Mr Guthrie

High Level Bus Forum: Key Outcomes

I am writing to inform you of the key outcomes of a meeting of invited leaders within local authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) and the bus industry to discuss and agree the strategic way forward for the contribution of bus to the delivery of local authority policies and improving public transport.

The seminar, which I chaired, and involving John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, was held in Edinburgh on 11 March 2008. A list of participants in the forum is attached at annex A. The forum was held following a period of detailed analysis of the steps necessary to achieve significant bus improvement by the bus policy steering group. The steering group involved stakeholders from within local authorities and RTPs, the industry, bus users and the bus regulatory bodies. Annex B summarises the outcomes of the steering group's deliberations.

The starting point for the discussions was that, despite high levels of customer satisfaction, more can be got from buses. They are almost unparalleled in their scope to achieve the improvements in congestion and emissions we all want to see. If the public and private sectors give even greater priority to bus and bus passengers, then there is a chance of taking the recent improvements in passenger numbers to the next level and making significant modal shift from the car.

It will require the strongest vision and leadership – not only from the bus companies, nor only from central government or the enforcement agencies, nor simply from local government or the regional transport partnerships. People are attached to their cars. Partnership working to bring about the required change is key.

The forum discussions sought to focus on a set of actions that we can all work towards, and which – by the end of the year – will make a difference. On this basis, the forum agreed that local authorities and RTPs should give early consideration to:

- the comparative levels of car parking charges and bus fares, and how they impact on travelling decisions;
- using local regulatory powers to decriminalise bus priority traffic offences - for example, car use of bus lanes. Decriminalisation allows responsibility for enforcement of the regulations to pass from the police – who are unable to give it higher priority – to local authorities. More effective enforcement would lead to improved bus journey times and bus passenger growth whilst also tackling congestion. For our part, we will consider the legislative position relating to camera enforcement;
- providing Park & Ride facilities. Experience has shown that Park & Ride facilities offer an attractive alternative to car drivers and make a significant impact on bus passenger growth, in turn leading to a reduction in congestion in our towns and cities;
- using bus route development grant (BRDG) to stimulate new and improved bus services and facilities;
- the positioning of bus improvement measures within the Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs). The national outcomes, indicators and targets provide ample scope to include bus improvement measures within SOAs. The National Performance Framework allows alignment between Scottish Government bus policies and those of local government in support of the essential modal shift we all want to see; and finally,
- the benefits of partnership working between local government, bus operators and, where appropriate, the regulatory authorities in raising quality and increasing passenger growth. Experience tells us that a collaborative approach is vital to success in the modal shift agenda.

We recognise that change will not happen overnight but that momentum needs to be developed and maintained. Therefore, I look to local transport authorities and RTPs to lead the implementation of the above - with bus operators and the industry regulators – in their own areas. I will follow closely the progress being made around the country.

Looking ahead, I envisage the forum reconvening in about a year's time. In the meantime, John Swinney and I, and our officials, will continue to work with you in advancing this agenda for change. In this regard, I will issue bus policy guidance later this year on a range of issues including Quality Partnerships and Punctuality Improvement Partnerships.

If you have any questions relating to the content of this letter, I am happy to try and answer them, or you can contact my Transport Directorate directly (tel: 0131 244 1502 or email: Martin.Boyle@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely



STEWART STEVENSON

High Level Bus Forum: Participants

Annex A

Joan Aitken	Traffic Commissioner
Robert Booth	Executive Director, Glasgow City Council
Councillor Brian Collins	Chair, SWESTRANS
John Elliot	Convener, Passengers' View Scotland
John Ewing	Director, Transport Directorate, Scottish Government
Jim Grieve	Head of Transport, City of Edinburgh Council
Gordon Hanning	Transport Scotland
Councillor Alison Hay	CoSLA - Environment, Sustainability & Community Safety
Jim Lee	MD, Travel Dundee
Moir Lockhead	CEO, First Group
David Patel	Depute Director, Transport Directorate, Scottish Government
Douglas Paterson	CEO, Aberdeen City Council
Councillor Steven Purcell	Leader of Glasgow City Council
Brian Souter	CEO, Stagecoach Group
Alex Stephen	CEO, Dundee City Council
John Swinney, MSP	Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, Scottish Government
Neil Renilson	CEO, Lothian Buses
Councillor Anne Robertson	Leader, Aberdeenshire Council
Marjory Rodger	Director of Government Relations, CPT
Stewart Stevenson, MSP	Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Scottish Government
Stephen Tetlow	CEO, VOSA
Councillor Alistair Watson	Chair, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Councillor Phil Wheeler	Convener, Edinburgh Council Transport Committee

Throughout 2007 a steering group of stakeholder organisation representatives undertook a detailed analysis of the various issues which needed to be addressed if bus services in Scotland were to be significantly advanced. The following actions statement is a distillation of the steering group's findings and sets the context for the forum's partnership discussions.

Planning

Ensure bus planning considerations are integrated within the revised **National Planning Framework** (during 2008).

Promote **Bus Forums** across transport authorities (during 2008).

Publish **local strategic planning guidance** for transport authorities to join up commercial services, community transport and demand responsive transport (DRT), and use the potential funding from Bus Route Development Grant to develop new services (during 2008)

Work with local authorities and RTPs to develop a national strategy for **Park and Ride** facilities (during 2008).

Mainstream national standards of **bus service information** (during 2008).

Quality

Raise awareness among local transport authorities of the benefits of **Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnerships** (during 2008).

Develop improved guidance to enable wider use of **Quality Partnerships** (during 2008).

Highlight Strathclyde Partnership for Transport's recent initiative to increase the resource going into **bus compliance monitors** (during 2008).

Pilot a **reformed Bus Service Operators Grant regime**, with environmental focus, in 2008, for potential introduction in 2009.

Introduce **Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving** training scheme for small and medium sized operators (during 2008).

Engage with Transport Scotland on the development of **Integrated Ticketing** (during 2008).

Regulatory regime

Set specific Public Inquiry timings for **Traffic Commissioner decisions** on operator/driver non-compliance issues via a protocol with VOSA and Traffic Commissioner (by May 2008).

Provide the legislation to enable **Traffic Regulation Conditions** on emissions standards for bus vehicles to improve air quality. (The regulations came into force on 31 January 2008).

Promote use of **de-criminalised parking** on busways using Edinburgh as an exemplar for other authorities (during 2008).

Look for a legislative opportunity to enable councils to deal with **traffic offences** on yellow boxed junctions (during 2008).