



Transport Conference

Thursday 24 September 2015

St Pancras Church Hall, Lancing Street, Euston

**A report from the NPC Transport Working Party
November 2015**

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INTRODUCTION

Derrick Baker, Chair NPC Transport Working Party

- Welcomed delegates and explained that this was now an annual conference run by the NPC transport working party. This had always been a core issue for the NPC – especially as the organisation had been at the forefront in securing the original bus travel concession from the Labour government in the late 1990s.
- He also referred to the effect that cuts and privatisation was having on the transport sector in the UK, and the worrying trend whereby some politicians are trying to suggest that older people are benefitting at the expense of younger generations.
- It was reported that the Department for Transport speaker, James Padden, Head of Concessionary Travel was unable to attend but had agreed to meet the working party shortly to discuss any concerns that were raised during the conference.

SETTING THE SCENE

Peter Rayner, NPC Vice President and Secretary, Transport Working Party

- All over the country, the NPC is receiving reports of cuts that are being made to those concessions, such as travel before 9.30am, community transport schemes (eg. dial-a-ride) and the number of services that are all beyond the guarantee provided by the Transport Act 2008. Local authorities claim they are being starved of funds by central government and therefore are only able to provide those services for which they have a legal obligation. Given the current political climate, this situation is therefore only bound to get worse.
- In certain areas it is also becoming apparent that whilst older people may hold a bus pass, there are a very limited number of buses on which they can use it. This is effectively undermining the concession by stealth.
- Against this backdrop, we also have to constantly challenge the misrepresentation of bus pass holders as ‘joy riders’, and the need to convince authorities generally from Westminster to the smallest Urban District Council that older folks’ travel should be a ‘value for money’ issue and not seen as a cost to society.
- In spite of a torrent of adverse publicity as to the value of concessionary bus travel it should be recognised that the scheme contributes to savings on social care, Meals on Wheels, commercial benefits in the town centres where it is possible to meet socially, some venues in the centres e.g. theatres and cinemas taking the advantage to fill seats that would otherwise be empty in the middle of the day. The overall evidence shows that, even from a financial viewpoint, there are direct and indirect savings to society which far outweigh the costs. Therefore given inclusion in society older people, far from being tomorrow’s problem, will be part of tomorrow’s solution.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT UNDER ATTACK

Richard Worrall, NPC Transport Working Party

- The Government has imposed unprecedented cuts in support to local authorities since 2010/11, with more to come: our tax contributions are no longer coming back to our local councils to provide the local services we need, so that we pay the same or more for much less service. That, among other things, unavoidably means ongoing cuts in our public transport, which so many of us in the older generation are very much reliant upon.
- South Yorkshire PTE, for example, has seen a budget cut of 30%. That's bad enough, but in reality, the percentage cut is much more than that, because all transport authorities (PTEs and shire counties) are obliged to take part in and fund the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme - ENCTS, the 'bus pass' - and they also have unavoidable fiscal obligations (e.g. debt repayments). In the West Midlands these two items take up over 60% of Centro's budget: what's left is there to provide 'discretionary' services, and the big ones, as far as the older generation is concerned, are:
 - the subsidised bus network (the bus pass is no use if you haven't got a bus to use it on)
 - accessible transport such as Ring & Ride schemes (if you can't use local bus and tram and train services, or only with difficulty, and there's no accessible alternative, you're stuck) and
 - safety and security (do you really want to be in a gloomy bus station late on a Saturday evening with no staff presence?)
- South Yorkshire PTE, for example, has seen a budget cut of 30%. That's bad. Finally, while ENCTS has to be fully funded, the Government is slyly short-changing local authorities charged with operating and funding this national scheme by not making resources available to them sufficient to cover the full cost, and by rolling concessionary fares funding into the overall Formula Grant, so that it is neither ring-fenced nor transparent. This compounds the effect of huge across-the-board percentage cuts in shire county and PTE transport budgets, as they then have to make up the shortfall on ENCTS from their already greatly-reduced resources.
- Everything that is not a statutory or fiscal requirement is under scrutiny, for example, at Centro (but everywhere else as well!), that means that some of the following service areas have been or WILL be cut:
 - socially necessary bus services
 - local 'additions' to free ENCTS passes (travel on rail and trams, earlier start/later finish times)
 - bus station staffing and security
 - passenger information
 - child concession scheme (half fares)
 - staffing across the organization
 - accessible/community transport

- payments to bus operators

Socially-Necessary Bus Services and Networks: this is a major issue, especially, but not exclusively, in rural areas, where often even very low levels of provision and thus access are now under real threat.

- Dorset: cut their budget by £850,000 to £2m in April 2014: 39 routes were unaffected, and the other 39 were either reduced, amended or completely lost: “further cuts are highly likely”, and if the current access standard of a minimum of one trip per week (!) to the local market town has to be abandoned, then there will be recourse to community transport, car sharing and car clubs.
- Durham: budget reduction from £4.6m to £3.3m in 2011-12 led to loss of Sunday and Bank holiday services and late-evening services on ‘non-core’ routes, no further cuts since then.
- Tyne & Wear are avoiding cuts so far by using reserves, but say that, once these are expended, cuts will be “inevitable” (unless, they believe, they make a business case/get approval for a Quality Contract Scheme to specify/procure the whole network).
- Centro: may be phasing out some tendered services by tighten-ing the criteria, which were minimum usage per trip of 5, are currently at 8, with an increase to 12 under consideration, and possibly further reducing maximum subsidy per trip, which was £1.60, and currently stands as £1.40.
- Warwickshire: has withdrawn all support for evening services, is looking to develop community transport services: otherwise they have succeeded so far “in ensuring that the vast majority of communities in Warwickshire retained a level of bus service.”
- Worcestershire: budget reduced to £3m in 2011, then consulted in 2013 on withdrawing all subsidised services from 2014-15, and ended up with reduced coverage funded by a £1.4m budget.
- Derbyshire: the 2009/10 budget of £6m had shrunk to £3.7m by 2014-15, and may reduce to £1.2m by 2016-17

Local add-ons to ENCTS (e.g., earlier starts than 0930, local train and tram travel), for instance:

- Lancashire: no more free use of Blackpool trams, or Community Transport, loss of pre-0930 50p fare for disabled pass holders
- South Yorkshire PTE: loss of older people’s free rail travel
- Durham: “Non-statutory elements of the Concessionary scheme may be subject to review after 2015/16.”
- Northumberland: for 2016-17, may need to review: 9.00 start to concessionary travel; validity before then for medical appointments and free travel for companions of disabled pass users
- Centro: reviewing validity on trams + trains in the West Midlands as part of 15% overall budget savings over the next three years, on top of previous two years’10%.
- Warwickshire: have 0900 start for older and disabled holders of concessionary passes, to be reviewed in 2018;

Bus Station Staffing & Security: Centro: reduce bus station manning

Passenger Information:

- Centro: 10% cut to information, and cut TIC opening hours
- South Yorkshire PTE: stopped producing paper timetables; closing down teams and shops.

Child Half-Fare Concession Scheme: Centro: reduced costs by paying operators less, have costed savings achievable by further changes or removal of all funding.

Staffing Across the Organisation: South Yorkshire PTE: 48% cut in staffing and other internal savings since 2010-11, to achieve 30% overall budget cut

Support for Accessible/Community Transport:

- Centro: funding for Ring & Ride cut from £12m to £7.7m currently and planned reduction to £7m in 2016-17, resulting in introduction of fares, first 60p one-way, now £1 (and rising!), loss of Sunday service (now back in reduced form), poorer levels of service and significant redundancies, effect of cuts mitigated by development of commercial bus arm; cuts to support for CT (Community Transport) schemes under consideration.

Payments to Bus Operators:

- Norfolk and Suffolk: First Bus say that their costs are rising at 2-3% above CPI at the same time as local councils are cutting concessionary fares reimbursements to the operators, to the tune of 3% in 2014-15, presently at 90p (urban) up to £1.20 per trip (rural) and, unless 1/3 of the passengers pay fares, the company does not cover its costs.
- Centro: is also reducing per-journey ENCTS reimbursement rates and at the same time reducing payments to operators for carrying children at half fare (maintained by the operators so far).
- Derbyshire: have reduced concessionary reimbursements since 2011, but see no scope for further reductions.
- Lancashire: have negotiated the reimbursement rate from 59% of average cash fare in 2011 to 55% in 2015.
- The NPC Transport Working Party's position is that stopping or at least mitigating cuts in public transport is best achievable at local level in the respective shire county or PTE areas.
- To do this, you first need to understand what things your authority is looking at to achieve the necessary (huge) savings, and basically, they will be looking at everything, they're doing that right now in readiness for budget proposals by November/December, and the setting of their 2016-17 budget at the latest by the cut-off point of 14 February 2016. They'll have firmed up on options before Christmas, so you need to get in there NOW. It's futile to try and influence decisions once they are taken, or even worse, after they've been implemented!

- Up to last May I would have said, “If you want to change the cuts, you need to change the Government”, but as opposition parties signally failed to do that - and with millions of pensioners voting, whether they realised it or not, for five more years of swingeing cuts in local services - then all we can try to do is make the best out of a very, very bad job!
- Campaigners therefore need to:
 - get the information
 - decide your campaigning priorities
 - enter into dialogue with the elected decision-takers: many of them are trying to make the best out of the truly awful hand dealt them by Government. Blaming those who are not the authors of the problem, especially those who actually hate what they’re being forced to do, may not be the best way to win friends and influence people, which is what you need to do if you’re going to salvage anything from the wreckage.
 - It is far better to identify and respect those among the elected members who are sympathetic to your aims, and can try to influence the outcome when it comes to the decisions on the items you are campaigning on.

Issues arising from the discussion

- The training of public transport staff is very important. For example, when there is a wheelchair user on a bus, but pushchairs in that spot, the person who is in the wheelchair has to wait for another service.
- The big problem with the bus company is the transparency on the budget. We need to know where our money goes, when there are cuts there are private subsidies.
- It costed us to come down to London today £350. This is a robbery, we will not stop campaigning. Please lobby your MP on 4th of November.
- In Oxfordshire people are campaigning on cuts to children services, or on other issues. What people do not realise is that the bus operations will be cut when the government is making people choose the services either on children services or the concessionary bus passes. The bus service is diminishing.
- South Yorkshire have a freedom pass on the trains, trams and it was not limited by the rush hour. But in April 2014 the local authority cut this. We campaigned strongly, sent petitions and now there are no time limits.
- The budget cuts bring us face to face with a choice, cuts on children free travel or on the disabled or elderly. They are all equally important. We need to bring people together and continue fighting together.
- The big problem is transparency, there is massive cuts on home counties, Suffolk etc. We need to get legislation, transparency on the operation of the transport. This is my money, I want to know where my money goes. If it is commercial services, we need to challenge them.
- The time limit is not efficient for either to the local government or to us. There are frequent services before 9.30 and some of them are empty.
- The other question is on the accessibility on platforms, it will take years to get the platform and the trains at the same level.
- There are not enough bus stops in the villages. In order to go to the hospital, one needs to drive to the bus-stop to get the bus. Also, the buses

do not run longer hours. The latest bus is 5.20pm and it makes it very difficult for people who depend on the bus service to get anywhere.

- The political arena is changing; we need to make our voices heard. We need to keep campaigning, the problem with the budget cuts, there is no transparency. The budget numbers are not given to public, so we cannot see and compare this year's budget to last year's.
- Privatization of the transport makes it impossible for pensioners to effort. Especially Virgin trains from East part of the country to the West. The cheaper way is to get on the other rails but this takes longer time and involves changing trains. It is a huge hassle for the pensioners.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Martin Abrams, Campaign for Better Transport

- The Campaign for Better Transport is an independent charity, campaigning more than 40 years for transport, we force government to take action on train fares. We managed to persuade regulating the train tickets not to rocket with the inflation. Public transport is important and we are non-political charity, we put pressure on whoever is in government, whoever in in the opposition.
- Taking the national rail network is a common phenomenon these days. The rents and the price of living in London is too high, the young people prefer to keep living with their parents and travel everyday. I know some young graduates, they travel everyday from Manchester to London and back. If you are going to do some campaigning you need to go solidarity with young people and disable people. They are also affected as you pensioners.
- West coastline is coming as a franchise with Virgin, if you are campaigning you should target this line, this franchising. More and more younger people come to our organization, they had to leave their jobs because of the expense on travel. You should show solidarity. West coast line is coming in to franchise in December, which the Virgin will sell their share, we have to get in now to campaign.
- It is interesting, the new opposition leader came up with the rail issues during his campaign, but not on the busses. We are extremely worried about what is happening to bus services in England and Wales. We cover England and Wales, we do not cover Scotland area. We produce annual research about what is happening locally to funded bus services, and our work is supported by the local government.
- This year we produced a report called 'Buses are in crisis'. In it we looked at the government's record regarding the bus services. We found that around 50 million pounds has been cut from funding local bus service in just 5 years, it does not seem much in transport, it is usually billions. 50 million pounds is a drop in the ocean in the transport terms, but still it is very important. Over 2 thousand routes and services were cut in the last year. This year is a 70% cut on bus services. But we are not targeting the local authorities; we are campaigning against the central government.
- Economically; bus services are far more important to local and central government. 4.7 billion bus trips are made every single year. It generates £64 billion for the government. Not everybody uses the bus services, but it

is vital for people who do. Bus passes are safe thanks to the huge campaigning but now the problem is there are no buses to use.

- Environmentally the bus services are essential. We cannot ignore climate change and approximately one double decker bus takes 75 cars off the road which reduces congestion, and reduces the carbon monoxide. In environmental aspect, there should be an investment in bus services.
- Social aspect; the buses hold the fabric of our society. People over 65 they use the bus service at least once a week. Young people depend on the bus services especially in the rural areas. Rural population is increasing and it is vital the bus services run smoothly there. If you do not have a private car then you are cut off from everything. People need to do grocery shopping, need to attend social events, need to go and see their doctors, hospitals etc. The lack of public transportation also affects the young because they cannot go to after school clubs, they cannot socialize. People have to give up their jobs because of depending on public transportation.
- I have given you the problem. What is the solution? It all comes down to money. Our job is to persuade the government by campaigning. Total transport is where the commission comes under one roof. There are pilot schemes, and this is an opportunity to bring the London model to other parts of the country. The bus services especially in rural areas should be improved, this is essential. We want to see an integrated transport service, one single ticket to be used on buses, on trains, on every type of transport. London started to implement this using the Oyster ticket, but in other parts of the country we still have problems.
- We have the enthusiasm and it is a great pleasure to see the NPC actively campaigning. I would like to continue working with NPC. For more information visit: www.bettertransport.org.uk.

General Discussion

- The NPC continues to gather research on what is happening locally. We are engaging with the Department for Transport regarding the so called Buses Bill and will report back when the meetings are concluded. We are seeking a meeting with the new minister and shadow minister and we continue to seek to protect the Transport Act 2008 and fight for improvements locally wherever possible.
- 'Bus passes but no buses' remains a key issue. Getting buses to link across town, and not all terminate in one place, such as a bus station or a single street needs to be addressed. That is why there needs to be a call for more buses and routes and to get over to decision-makers the social and economic benefits of the bus network.

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REGISTERED ATTENDEES

Sam	Sirdar	Anglia NPC
Peter	Smith	ASLEF
John	Robson	ASLEF
Fran	Postlethwaite	Barnsley Retired Action Group
Brenda	Hincliffe	Barnsley Retired Action Group
Colin	Vincent	Brighton & Hove Order Peoples Council
Mike	Sparham	CSPA
Michael	Peacock	CSPA
John	Bull	CSPA
Felicity	Bull	CSPA
John	James	CWU
Jim	Webb	CWU
Mick	Shill	CWU
Tony	Mastrullo	CWU
Rodney	Downing	CWU
Maurice	Austin	CWU
Alasdair	Baxter	East Midlands NPC
Derrick	Baker	GMB
John	Powell	GMB
Ann	Anderson	Hornsey Pensioners Action Group
Ellen	Lebethe	Lambeth Pensioners Action Group
M	Apps	London Ambulance Service UNISON
Alexandra	Barnes	LTSA
David	Press	LTSA
Francis	Byrne	NARF
Lawrence	Wright	NARPO
Brian	Burdus	NARPO
Owen	Sloss	North Staffs Pensioners Convention
Peter	Rayner	NPC
Ron	Douglas	NPC
Richard	Worrall	NPC
Terry	Murphy	London NPC
Trevor	Taylor	PCS ARMS
Gerald	Griffin	PCS ARMS
Angela	Banner	Redbridge Pensioners Forum
Alan	Banner	Redbridge Pensioners Forum
Tony	Jakeman	RMT Bristol
Glen	Burrows	RMT Bristol
John	Whittingham	RMT Chester
Andy	Warnock-Smith	RMT Northwest
Gordon	Jones	RMT Northwest
William	Skerritt	RMT
Tony	Bridewell	RMT St Pancras
Alan	Jeyes	RMT St Pancras Branch
Kate	Fitzsimmons	Royal College of Nursing
Elsie	Moore	Southend Pensioners Campaign
Claude	James	TSSA
Steven	Whitehead	TSSA
John	Paine	UNISON Oxfordshire County Council

Robert	Vincent	UNISON West Midlands
Ronnie	Morrison	UNITE
Mike	Moriarty	Wessex NPC
Andrea	Stanton	West Midlands Pensioners Convention
Vie	Lawrence	Individual
Bernard	Braby	Individual
George	Day	Individual